In the bottom of the boat, the old prisoner, whose son had been shot, lay like one dead, embracing his murdered boy—his arm wound about the cold neck, his lips pressing the pallid forehead. —Page 97.
II.
THE KING'S MAN.
MASSASOIT'S DAUGHTER.
BY A. J. H. DUGANNE.

MADGE WYLDE.
BY THE AUTHOR OF "CLIFTON."

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THE KING'S MAN:

A TALE OF

SOUTH CAROLINA IN REVOLUTIONARY TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

THE PATRIOT'S BRIDAL.

So did they
Their altar build for liberty that day.—T. H. Chivers.

On a June evening, in the year 1776, there was a brilliant assemblage at the mansion of John Riviere, merchant of Charleston, S. C., to witness the marriage of his niece, Louise Arnoul, with her cousin, his only son, Ernest Riviere.

Old gentlemen were present, shining in bravery of court costume, recalling splendors of the Second George's reign; with flowing white wigs, and vests of crimson—the latter color destined to fall from colonial favor. Old ladies stood erect in stiff brocades and towering head-gear—their high-heeled shoes glittering with diamond buckles. Young gallants sported powdered ringlets and delicate ruffles, their coats heavy with embroidery, and their spotless small-clothes of buff and azure, elaborately worked with gold and silver threads.

While waxen lights shone brightly, and music sounded through the spacious saloons, and the perfume of surrounding gardens was wafted into jalousied casements, the guests disposed themselves into groups, awaiting the bridal ceremony. Two young men, walking apart on a balcony, conversed in a low tone, while apparently observing the animated scene.

"I tell you, Yancey," cried the elder of the pair, "that I will yet be even with them all! Ay!"—he seemed to hiss, rather than mutter—"though our fair cousin's hand and wealth are his, not mine, I will yet be winner in the game,
I!" The sentence closed with an oath that grated harshly on that scene, though uttered only in a whisper.

"You've got the right pluck, Atnee," returned the other young man; "I said you would carry off your disappointment like a buck, you know! The woman's but a woman, and as for the property, who knows what it will be worth to him, when our turn comes—eh, Atnee?"

"Hush! But you are right, Yancey! And our turn will come before another night. Curse it, why could not this mummery have been delayed!"

"Do you think, Atnee, that there will be a fight?"

"Doubtless; and 'tis for that reason old Riviere consented to the wedding being performed this evening. Our gallant bridegroom will pass from the arms of love to the arms of—"

"Death, perhaps!" added Yancey, filling up his companions pause, as he looked him in the face.

"There'd be one rebel less for King George to hang," muttered Atnee, cynically. "We shall have our hands full with these popinjays when the king gets his own again."

"Poor devils!" rejoined his friend, "they're to be pitied, in any case; for if the rebellion could succeed, these new-fangled notions of freedom would end in the loss of all their two-legged property, you know."

"No doubt of that, Yancey! If the Puritan vandals ever get southward, we might have a rump-parliament liberating every black in Carolina."

"And a Yankee conventicle on every plantation, perhaps. Roundheads against cavaliers," said Yancey, laughing.

"Exactly—the old quarrel!" rejoined Atnee. "Their nonsense about freedom is only the psalm-smiting fanaticism of more than a century ago, and honestly come by at that; for their fathers fought against ours at Naseby and Worcester. Shame that any Southern cavalier should league with drivellers of Massachusetts Bay!"

"But our Southern Huguenots, you know—"

"Ay!" muttered Atnee, with a malediction. "These French have rebel blood in them, and 'tis their example that disgraces Carolina! We shall let out some of that French blood ere long, Yancey."
"Your uncle and cousin Ernest are true Huguenots, Atnee."

"And need bloodletting, too," muttered the young man, with a significant scowl. "But look! the priest is here, and I must act my part in the farce, as well as others! You shall see, Yancey, how gallant a groomsman your discarded lover can make!"

Speaking thus, the young man turned from his confidant, and advanced lightly into the center of a throng that now gathered in the main saloon. With handsome face arrayed in smiles, and graceful figure bowing to friends on either hand, as he placed himself beside the radiant bridegroom, Robert Atnee would never have been taken for a discarded lover, nor suspected to be, what in truth he was, one of the deepest-plotting Tories in Carolina.

Clad in sacred robes, his wide-flowing surplice depending nearly to the floor, the reverend clergyman now raised his hands and eyes, invoking a blessing upon the nuptials he was about to solemnize. On his left stood Ernest Riviere, his slight but well-knit figure attired in a suit of light-blue, worked with a border of silver vines, and lined with fawn-colored satin. His square-toed shoes glittered with brilliants. Diamonds clasped his vest, and shone upon his knees, contrasting strongly with the plain black scabbard of his dress-sword, the only ornament of which was a ruby, gleaming upon its pommel.

Near Ernest was his father, and his cousin Robert Atnee, and at his side stood Louise, her heart audibly beating, as she felt the assuring pressure of his hand. She wore a dress of white satin, ruffled with point laces, through which her arms and neck appeared like alabaster. Clusters of pearls were netted in her dark braids of hair, and glistened also among the ringlets that fell in profusion around her polished throat. A necklace of similar gems, interspersed with sapphires, sustained a small cross of gold, and an aigrette of diamonds clasped her girdle, confining the full richness of the bridal robes. Just in her nineteenth year, this young girl united a charming simplicity with all the grace of early womanhood—that season of sunshine when the heart uncloses, flower-like, to drink sweetness from all impressions and surroundings. She was of medium height, her figure slight but modeled with the waving symmetry that we admire in painting or statuary.
Her features were calmly expressive, and to a careless observer might indicate too quiet a temperament; but one who looked into her large black eyes, of earnest depth, or marked the thoughtful breadth of her placid forehead, would feel that, gentle as she appeared, her nature was capable of courage and endurance.

It was, as has been said, a June evening, laden with balm and perfume. The skies, seen through lattice and embowering pines, were thick with stars, and no presage of storm, or shadow of uprising cloud, interposed to mar the beauty and promise of that quiet night, when Louise and Ernest laid their hands together, pronouncing the solemn words which made them one.

But scarcely had the wedding-ring—emblem of endless love and constancy—been placed upon the bride's taper finger, when a sudden sound, like thunder breaking through the calm atmosphere, startled every guest with its significant vibration. It was the roar of cannon booming and reverberating in sullen distinctness. Many a cheek became pale at the moment, and many hearts stood still, as old and young exchanged glances of import, and a murmur ran from lip to lip:

"The British!"

Ernest Riviere supported the form of his bride, who clung to him convulsively.

"Courage, dearest! remember you are a soldier's wife!" he murmured, pressing a kiss upon her forehead.

"Wife!" The sweet, strange word recalled Louise to consciousness of her new relationship.

"'Tis the enemy's first gun," said the merchant Riviere. "'Tis the haughty summons of King George cast at us from the cannon's mouth."

Ernest Riviere heard the words of his patriot father, and felt a Huguenot spirit burning within his own bosom. Another crash, sounding nearer than the previous one, shook the housewalls, and was multiplied by a hundred echoes through the streets of Charleston. All remained silent but the bridegroom, who lifted his arm, and, as if replying to his sire's last remark, exclaimed:

"That is the first gun from Sullivan's Island—the defiant answer of Liberty to the insulting mandate of her foe!"
At this moment a quick tread was heard beyond a circle of ebony faces and white teeth which had crowded the open doors of the saloon. The sable janitors made way for the passage of a figure that seemed greatly out of place in that scene of love and peacefulness; for it was that of an armed man, whose iron-shod boots clattered harshly on the threshold, while his heavy saber rattled as he advanced further. He paused in front of the bride and bridegroom, and taking no notice of clergyman, host, or wondering guests, drew out a letter from his gauntlet, and, making a military salute, presented the missive to Ernest Riviere, who hastily tore it open.

"Tis from—" Old John Riviere pronounced these two words, and remained breathless, awaiting his son's perusal of the paper.

"From Colonel Moultrie," responded the bridegroom, in a lower voice; "I am summoned to the fort!"

Louise, gazing up bewildered, with cheeks grown pallid and lips parted in terror, felt her strength suddenly deserting her, and with a faint moan, sunk upon her husband's heart. Supporting her with one arm, the young man dismissed the ill-omened messenger by a motion of the hand. "Say to Colonel Moultrie I will attend," he said, in a firm voice.

"At once, Captain!" responded the soldier, with another military salute.

"At once!" repeated the bridegroom, clasping his insensible wife to his throbbing heart, while a dozen sympathizing women crowded near to assist her.

And now, pealing from church-towers, was heard the sound of alarm-bells. Then followed quick beats of drums, and the note of a single trumpet; presently, the clatter of horse-hoofs in the streets.

Ernest Riviere heard three calls of the trumpet, ere his bride's eyes opened under his misty gaze. The last peal seemed to rouse her from stupor. She flung her arms around the neck of him she held dearest upon earth, and sobbed for a moment with agonized emotion. Then, controlling her grief, and fixing a glance, lit with high enthusiasm, upon the troubled face of her husband, she murmured, "Go—Ernest—beloved! your country calls you!" and fell back into her uncle's outstretched arms.
Ernest pressed one kiss on his wife's lips, as another trumpet call sounded from a distance. The next moment he was gone. Those who listened heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs beneath the balcony, and then receding into the distance. Robert Atnee and his friend Yancey looked out into the still starlight, and the former whispered:

"He rides to his death."

"I think so," answered the other, "if Moultrie be fool enough to defend Sullivan's Island."

CHAPTER II.

THE DEFENDERS OF CHARLESTON.

The names of those whose swords have won,
Redeemed the green sod where they lie,
Transmitted still from sire to son,
From heart to heart, can never die!—G. Hill.

Hours before the bridal and separation of Ernest Riviere and his cousin Louise, a score of anxious-featured men were assembled on a point of land between the town of Charleston and a stretch of marsh and sandy beach terminating at an insulated projection below, called Sullivan's Island. From the slight elevation which this party occupied, a view could be obtained of the wide sweep of channel that extended to the harbor bar, where two confluent rivers formed the roadstead of Charleston.

Sullivan's Island, comprising about three miles of sandy soil, overrun with palmetto thickets and dense growths of myrtle and yellow jasmin, constituted a natural barrier against the ocean at the opening of Charleston Bay. Lying at the mouth of an estuary into which the two rivers, Ashley and Cooper, mingle their tides, this island commands on one side the whole channel entrance, and on the other is separated from the mainland by a long, narrow strip of shoal and marshy water. On its seaward extremity, at the time of our story's opening, a rough fortification of spiked palmettos and other hastily-collected materials was in process of erection by
numbers of patriotic volunteers; boats were plying between the island and shores above, conveying soldiers and supplies; and every effort was apparent on the part of Charleston's defenders to make ready for a vigorous resistance to the approaching British fleet.

The foremost figure of the group to which allusion has been made as gathered on the main shore above Sullivan's Island, was a man of at least forty years of age, who stood upon the edge of the bank, watchful of the coming and going of a line of flat-boats and light barges engaged in the transportation of military munitions. His features wore a bluff, good-humored expression, and an air of soldierly promptitude marked his mien and figure. His hair, thick and long, fell back from an expansive forehead, in a mass upon his shoulders. Firm lip-muscles and fixed eye evinced a determined spirit and self-reliant character, while a nonchalance that appeared natural relieved his manner of all assumption of sternness. This marked individual was Colonel William Moultrie, afterward a Major-General in the patriot service, and immortal in history as the heroic defender of the fortified position which to this day bears his name.

A few paces behind Moultrie stood a man about the Colonel's age, but in physical appearance quite unlike that robust personage. He was low in stature, spare of limb, and sallow in complexion, but his frame had evidently been hardened by endurance and exercise. His eyes were quick and piercing, his forehead marked by lines of thoughtful experience. This man was Francis Marion, a ranger Captain during the Indian wars, and a Major in Colonel Moultrie's regiment.

The moon moved placidly amid her host of starry attendants, casting floods of silver upon the river-banks and placid waters between them. Charleston reposed in great beauty, above all bustle of transportation and warlike preparation. Detached mansions, white-walled and picturesque, contrasted pleasantly with the green darkness of surrounding groves and gardens. A palmetto wilderness filled the background, like a frame inclosing some pictured landscape.

Far down, beyond the fortified island, the British fleet could be despaired, it having just succeeded in effecting an
entrance over the sandy bars that intersected the channel between the fortified island and another insulation immediately opposite. The passage on which the hostile ships had entered was narrow and shallow at low tide, and, moreover, ran closely parallel with a hard, sandy beach, that marked the line of Sullivan's Island. On this sandy beach the rampart of palmetto logs, called a fort, seemed hardly yet in condition to sustain a single broadside from the British squadron.

Such was the position of Charleston, and the danger menacing her brave defenders, on the evening of June 27th, 1776. The fleet gathered at her harbor's mouth numbered more than fifty sail, comprising vessels of war, transports, and attendant craft. Two fifty-gun ships and four frigates anchored in front of the palmetto fort, and several thousand regular soldiers were landed from transports upon the long island that lay toward the ocean opposite that called Sullivan's. At daybreak a combined attack by land-forces in boats, and cannonading from the ships, was expected by the Americans, and they made ready, in their humble way, to withstand it.

Then it was that a summons from the British Admiral, launched from a cannon's mouth, was answered by that lowly battery which dared to dispute his advance. Scarcely had the echoes of those opening voices of conflict died in the far-away forests, when the quick ears of Marion and Moultrie caught the tramp of horses sounding at some distance, approaching from the town. They both turned toward General Gadsden, who nodded significantly, remarking:

"It is Lee!"

"Ay, 'tis Lee," said Marion. "He has heard the lion's roar, and the watch-dog's bark in answer."

Moultrie smiled and said:

"That dog will bite as well as bark, Francis, let the General doubt as he may."

He spoke thus, in allusion to an opinion that General Lee was believed to entertain, to the effect that no stand could be made against an assault of British war-ships.

Several new figures now collected about the principal persons. Near Major Marion was a man of fine proportions and courageous presence, who leaned upon his rifle, looking downward to the palmetto fort. He wore the frock and
leggings of a ranger, and his manly features were shaded by a tasseled foraging cap. Beside him stood a square-built negro lad, about fifteen years old, with an intelligent countenance, who attentively surveyed the white-sailed vessels that crowded the harbor's mouth.

"I is sartin sure, Massa Jasper," remarked the black boy, addressing the ranger, "dose ships is gettin' in a trap dat dey won't get out of, de Lord willin'."

The soldier turned his eyes from the fort to the fleet, but made no reply to his sable companion.

"Look dar," persisted the negro, rubbing his hands; "dem boats is landin' Britishers on de Long Hole; and de Long Hole is right under de Sullivan guus. Look dar, Massa Jasper! Jes' you see, Massa Jasper!"

"I see," responded the soldier. "The British troops are disembarking on yonder island, or 'Long Hole,' as you call it. But you forget, Caesar, the ships are between them and our fort."

"No matter for dat," cried the black, shaking his woolly head. "Dem ships look mighty grand, but Massa Colonel Moultrie, he poke fire into 'em, sartin sure, sar."

"But, Caesar," said the ranger, "don't you know that the ships carry heavy metal, and that we can only keep them from landing by fighting hard behind our palmetto logs?"


"Pooh, pooh, nigger," interrupted a harsh voice. "The enemy's first broadside-will knock that miserable mud-wall to pieces."

Sergeant Jasper, the ranger, and Caesar, his colloquist, looked up surprised, and beheld a grim, scarred face close by. Both were about to reply somewhat roughly, when a movement of Colonel Moultrie, who had heard the man's speech, anticipated their own.

"What!" he cried, bending a searching look upon the fellow who had uttered the disparaging remark. "You think they will knock our ramparts to pieces? Well, sir, we shall be behind the ruins, and prevent a landing by our bodies."

Marion's eyes glistened, and his sallow cheeks flushed, as
this Spartan declaration fell from his senior officer's lips. Jasper lifted his rifle, and brought the stock hard down upon the sward, with a ringing emphasis. Caesar, the negro, who was Moultrie's own servant, vented his satisfaction in a characteristic half-yell:

"Ha-yah!" he cried, "dar's de way—dar's de way we serve 'em out—for sartain."

The man thus rebuked averted his scarred face, and turned away, just as a near beat of hoofs upon the bank announced the arrival of General Lee, who, leaping from his horse, grasped the outstretched hand of Colonel Moultrie.

"Colonel Moultrie, that fort can never be successfully defended," were the first words of General Lee, after he had shaken hands. "You will be assaulted at daybreak by the entire British fleet, and have nothing to oppose but a pile of palmetto-logs."

Moultrie's eyes flashed. "You forget, General," he cried, "my men will be behind those logs."

"Still, I counsel the immediate abandonment of yonder island defense," rejoined Lee. "Recollect, sir, we have to deal with fresh and veteran troops—backed by the cannon of a well-manned squadron."

"But you would not counsel retreat, General?" interposed Gadsden.

"No, sir!" cried the impetuous congress officer. "It is my purpose to oppose their entry to the city with all the forces at my command, and to fight, sir, while a man remains at my side; but I hold it madness to attempt the defense of yonder fort."

"I act under orders from Governor Rutledge," said Moultrie, quietly, "and those orders are to prevent the enemy from passing Sullivan's Island."

"Very well, sir!" said Lee, in a chafed tone, and turning away. "I dispute not Governor Rutledge's authority, though it conflicts with my judgment. I shall prepare, Colonel Moultrie, to cover your retreat."

Moultrie inclined his head, with unruffled composure of countenance, and then advanced to meet a troop of horse that approached at a gallop. Among the foremost riders the chief recognized young Captain Pinckney, destined to become like
himself a Major-General of the Continental army, with Ernest Riviere and some thirty other youthful volunteers. Riviere had exchanged his wedding-coat for a military frock, the uniform of Moultrie's command, but still wore his white small-clothes and embroidered waistcoat. Saber and pistols were buckled beneath a blue sash, that had been worked with silver thread by Louise Arnoult, and inscribed with the motto, "Love and our Country."

In a brief space all who were destined for Sullivan's Island took their places in flat-boats, bidding adieu to comrades who remained at Fort Johnson and the camp of General Lee.

"When you are forced to give way, Colonel, I shall hasten to protect you," were the last words of that General, in acknowledging Moultrie's parting salute.

"Thank you, sir—if we need assistance," was Moultrie's rejoinder, in embarking, with Marion, Pinckney, and Riviere, in the last boat which left the bank.

General Lee rode away at the head of his staff, and none remained at the landing, save a few straggling citizens, and servants in charge of the horses.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROGUES' INTERVIEW.

Is there no chill upon the warm, fresh current of thy heart?  
Do not thy red lips blanch with fear, or pulse convulsive start?  

F. W. Fish.

Among those who watched the embarkation of soldiers for the fortified island, the reader will recollect that individual who had obtruded his scarred face and unwelcome opinion upon the colloquy of Sergeant Jasper and the negro Caesar, and had received a signal rebuke from Colonel Moultrie himself. This ill-featured man lingered by the river-side for some moments after the last bateau departed from the upper beach.

He was apparently of middle age, strong-limbed, and of
muscular development in chest and throat, and had, without
doubt, undergone years of exposure and danger. His com-
plexion was of that bronzed hue which results from constant
contact with elemental changes. Boots and breeches clothed
his nether limbs, and a slouched mariner's hat and jacket of
frieze concealed his upper proportions.

After satisfying what might or might not have been a mo-
tiveless curiosity, this man turned from the beach, and walked
slowly toward the town—many quivering lips and tearful eyes
being averted from his unsympathizing gaze, as he passed
groups of citizens on the starlit bank. Reaching the streets
inhabited by the seafaring population, he paused, near the
river's bank, at the last of a number of low, weather-beaten
huts, which struggled along the water front. The tenements
appeared lonesome, for the embarkation of troops at a point
below had attracted the residents of this squalid neighborhood
in common with denizens of more refined purliens. Some few
disconsolate-looking females were creeping homeward, after
parting from husbands or sons at the lower beach, but the
general aspect of the locality was gloomy and deserted.

Matthew Blake opened the door of his hovel, that abutted
on a point of land sheltered by a high wooded bank, round
which the river swept in an abrupt curve; so that, in fact, the
dwelling occupied a small promontory jutting into the stream.
Entering, the man stood in a single room which was far from
being so uncomfortable as the forbidding exterior might have
indicated. Its single window was, it is true, half obscured
by articles of ragged clothing inserted in broken panes; its
rafters were black with smoke, and discolored by rain that
had penetrated the ruinous roof. But there was, nevertheless,
an air of rude comfort, joined with neatness, that could hardly
have been looked for in the abode of one like Matthew Blake.
Over the rough flooring was spread a fragment of carpet,
antiquated in pattern, and nearly threadbare, but of a costly
fabric. Near the door was a ship's locker, entire, with
mahogany facings, carved intricately, and bearing tarnished
patches of gilding; and in a corner of the apartment was
another nautical relic sufficiently curious.

This was a merchant-ship's caboose, once a fixture of some
East-Indiaman, as was evident from the royal crown and
"Company's" arms, which yet appeared in faded colors on its mouldings. It now served the purpose of a bedstead, its front being draped with discolored crimson cloth, looped over a bar of gilt wood. Between the curtain folds, appeared a small bed, gayly adorned with bunting.

The remaining furniture of the apartment was homely enough. A ship's cooking-stove, with a rusty pipe, some stools and a deal table, with a coarse canvass hammock, swinging from the rafters, composed its details. The caboose was the only object calculated to arrest a visitor's glance.

Softly closing the door of the hut behind him, the scarred man moved on tiptoe across the floor, and pausing before the caboose, drew aside its hangings, disclosing an occupant of the small couch—a female child, beautiful as a cherub, and wrapped in profound sleep. As he did so, a remarkable change came over the man's countenance. The sneer left his lip, the scowl vanished from his dark brow, and he seemed to hush his breathing as he bent over the slumberer. Under the light of a swinging lamp which hung from the ceiling there appeared a moist light in his eyes, as if a tear struggled up from their hard corners. Silently gazing, and then softly dropping the curtain, he was turning away from the bed, when a thin, pale hand parted the drapery, and again discovered the young child.

In the faint glow of a solitary lamp, the contrast between the two occupants of that hut was an extreme one. The man's massive form, with his shaggy hair massed on his broad shoulders, appeared almost gigantic; while the child, delicately moulded and of scarce five summers, possessed that unearthly loveliness which conveys an indefinable impression that it has no affinity with mortal things. Over her forehead, clear as light itself, a cluster of golden ringlets hung moist and soft, and clung around her pure white neck. It was a wonder of wonders how so gentle a child could be kin to the uncouth figure to whom she stretched out her baby hands.

The man stooped to kiss the lips upturned to his own, and aid his hand tenderly as he might on her silken hair. The child raised her eyes, of a soft, dark, hazel hue, and fixed them lovingly on his face, but her lips murmured no greeting.

For this beautiful child was a Mute!
The illumination of her innocent soul radiated from forehead and eyes, but her affections were voiceless.

Nevertheless, there was strange eloquence in the dumb twining of the little arms about that fierce man's neck, and in the close pressure that he imprinted on her lips, as if he were stamping with a kiss the sole treasure of his existence.

And in the smoothing of her pillow, as the child fell back on her curious couch; and in the look with which he regarded her sweet face, as she lapsed once more to quiet slumber; there was more revealed of the man's heart, than Matthew Blake would have let the world see.

But, dashing his hand across his eyes, they became hard again, and he closed the caboose curtain, as if to shut himself away from another life, and be himself once more.

Matthew Blake took from a shelf an iron candlestick, with a bit of candle in the socket, which he lit at the pendent lamp. Stooping, then, he doubled back one corner of the loose carpeting which covered the floor of his hut, and proceeded to lift a portion of the plank flooring. This effected, a narrow passage presented itself, into which he was about to descend, when a low knock at the hovel-door caused him to start hastily back, restore the planking, and adjust the carpet in its former place.

Muttering discontentedly, as he replaced his candlestick and unbolted the hovel-door, the scarred man demanded gruffly who wanted him outside, and was answered by a low voice, and the hasty entrance of a visitor, muffled in a cloak.

"Hush, she sleeps, wake her not," muttered the host. "What errand now, Master Atnee?"

"Business, Matt," responded the other, throwing back his mantle collar, and disclosing a face both younger and handsomer than that of the scarred man.

"If it be your business, we'll talk about it elsewhere," muttered the latter, with a motion of his head toward the caboose. "Your secrets are not such as bring good dreams to sleepers."

"Ha! ha! Matt," laughed the visitor, "do you fear that deaf and dumb baby will overhear us?"

"Whatever I fear, I'll go elsewhere to talk of your business, Master Atnee," returned the man, doggedly; to which
the visitor rejoined: "Very well, Matt, as you will," and turned at once to the hovel-threshold.

Locking the crazy front door of his hovel, the scarred man then followed his conductor in silence through the silent streets, under obscurity of trees and house-walls, till they approached that quarter of Charleston in which were situated many ancient mansions, built by early settlers of the colony. Turning from the main road toward one of these, the two wound their way through an avenue of shrubbery, till they gained a rear building; and the younger pedestrian quickly led the way to a door which admitted them into a lighted apartment.

"Here we can be both at home, without scruples on the score of innocence," remarked the young man, in a sneering tone, as he proceeded to divest himself of hat and mantle, discovering thereby the figure of a man about thirty years of age, with handsome though haughty features, and an air of high breeding. Clad in a costly suit, finely ruffled, he seemed to have just left some gay assembly. His hair was powdered and curled, and fragments of a white rose clung to one of the embroidered button-holes of his silken vest; while flushed cheeks and somewhat glassy eyes betrayed some recent indulgence in wine.

"I'm dry as a red-skin, Master Atnee," was the response of Matt Blake to the young gentleman's remark, on entering; whereupon the latter pointed to a case of liquors which stood on a table near by. The guest at once seated himself, and proceeded to inspect the square bottles, and to pour from the contents of one of them, which revealed the pungent odor of Jamaica spirits to his well-pleased olfactories. The host, meantime, threw himself in another arm-chair, and appeared to await impatiently the deliberate motions of his thirsty guest.

The apartment wherein the two were met, was a small chamber, apparently a detached building from the mansion to which it appertained. In fact, it formed a connection between the dwelling-house and a stack of out-houses, containing stables and other offices belonging to the owner of the place. Its single window was barred and closely curtained, but the arched ceiling was pierced by orifices communicating with the outer air, and sufficiently ventilating the interior, which had
otherwise been too confined. Little furniture was noticeable, beyond table and chairs, though a variety of weapons, implements of hunting, and articles of clothing hung about the walls. A double-barreled gun crossed a couple of rifles, just above the fireplace, and that aperture itself was filled with saddles, bridles, a game-bag and several knapsacks. On one extremity of the table stood an ebony writing-desk, and the remainder of its surface, saving that portion containing drinking vessels, was piled with a heterogeneous collection of military and naval uniforms, hunting-coats, wagoners' frocks and the like, while a complete aboriginal wardrobe, comprising head-gear, wampum, feathers and moccasins, presented an outfit suitable for any copper-colored Apollo. Interspersed with these things, were maps, drafts and plans of roads or military works, together with pistols, daggers and other offensive armor—a reckless confusion characterizing all, so that they resembled mostly the paraphernalia of some vagrant Thespian's impromptu dressing-room.

Taking no notice, however, of the disorder around him, the scarred man leisurely filled his glass with rum, and swallowed the fiery beverage at a draught. Then, pushing the flask and glass toward his host, he said, with a smack of his lips: 'That was for thirst! I'll drink presently to your health, Master Atnee.'

'Drink, in the devil's name,' responded the other, curtly; 'and then be good enough to give me your attention.'

'In the devil's name I'll do nothing, Master Robert Atnee,' returned the other. 'But in the name, and for the sake of this good Jamaica rum, that I now drink your health in, I'll listen to any thing you have to say.' So saying, the scarred man refilled his glass and raised it to his lips.

'Stop, Matthew,' interposed the host, 'you shall drink no more till you and I have a few words together. Nay,' he added, observing the other's forehead contracting sullenly, 'there'll be time to dispute by-and-by, and I'll join you in a dozen glasses, Matt. But at the present moment, put down that liquor and listen to me.'

The young man spoke in the tone of one accustomed to exact obedience, and the scarred individual responded by setting down his untasted second glass.
"Well, Master Robert—what would you?" he asked, gruffly.

"Listen, Matt; you know that Moultrie and the rest have gone to their mud-castle?"

"I saw the last of their flat-boat squadron, and doubtless the last of the popinjays themselves."

"And, my cousin was among the volunteers. You know that, Matt?"

"The fool, Riviere, who leaves his bride on her wedding-night, to lend his body as a merlon for a log-fort. Ay, Master Atnee, I saw your patriotic dunce of a cousin in the boat with his Colonel and the ranger Marion."

Master Robert Atnee leaned back in his arm-chair, and shading his face with one white hand, appeared to regard his companion through the parted fingers. The guest returned this scrutiny by a sidelong glance, which perused the young man's face. The features of Robert Atnee were regular, and might perhaps be termed classic. His forehead was clear and high, his skin transparently fair, with blue veins distinctly traceable. His eyes were blue, his lips full, and curved usually with a haughty expression, which, with firmly-cut nostrils, imparted an almost disdainful air to his whole countenance. Redundant ringlets, silky and soft, fell like gold about his shoulders, as if scorning the powder and ointments where-with fashion had burdened them. Altogether, the person of Atnee was one which woman might look upon with interest, if not with love.

"You were present at your cousin's wedding, I doubt, Master Atnee," remarked the scarred man. "I saw a crowd of gallants and ladies through the hall-casements, as I passed down to the beach."

"I was there," replied Atnee; "and 'tis of this I must talk to you. The accursed marriage is over, and Riviere calls the girl his wife."

"'Tis a pity she preferred not a loyal king's man," said the guest. "This rebel Riviere must lose his head ere long, though he survives to-morrow's work, which I venture to say will be of the hottest. Now, had the damsel chosen her other cousin—yourself, Master Atnee, who have sense enough to serve the strongest side—why, she had done a wise act, and—"
"Peace, Matthew Blake," exclaimed Atnee, with a gesture of impatience. "I asked not your opinion as to my cousin's choice. Suffice it, she is the wife of Ernest Riviere, and as such, Matt, do you hear me? I hate her, as I once loved her. Come, drink, and then listen."

The young man hurriedly filled his glass, and his companion, well pleased, grasped his own unfinished goblet. The two vessels clinked together, and Atnee drank and replaced his own upon the table. The scarred man sipped slowly, and remarked: "I am ready to hear what you have to say, Master Atnee."

"You are sure, Matt, that Riviere has gone to Sullivan's Island?"

"If a man's eyes can make sure, I saw him embark. He is long since there, with his fellow-volunteers, who will have a fine game of shuttle at day-break, with Sir Peter's bomb-ketches."

"Matthew Blake," said the host, slowly, "Riviere must never come back from Sullivan's Island."

"That is to say, alive," suggested the man, with a keen glance at his companion.

"You are right, Matt. He must never come back alive, to claim his bride and fortune," cried the other, quickly.

"His bride-and fortune, eh, Master Atnee?"

"I said so, Matt, and you shall hear all, that you may learn your own interest, as well as mine; yesterday, could I have wedded my cousin, Louise Arnoult, this dunce, Riviere, might have gone his way, and no bad blood would have been between us. To-night, and henceforth, he is my foe, and stands between me and my right. He must die."

"And you marry his widow; is it so, Master Atnee?"

"Marry!" exclaimed the young man, bitterly. "No, Matt Blake, 'tis my inheritance that I must win back, though a hundred craving cousins die in my path to it. Know you what dowry my cousin Arnoult brings to her rebel lover?"

"Doubtless, her father, your uncle, left her well portioned, Master Robert."

"He left her wealth which should have fallen to me," answered Atnee; "wealth that my mother, his own sister, had yielded to him, when she espoused my father. It constituted
the foundation of a large fortune, which he afterward amassed by traffic. Yet his will allowed the chit, Louise, to inherit all, provided she married her cousin Ernest, the son of old John Riviere."

"Your cousin outgeneraled you and gained the heiress," said Matthew Blake, with a laugh.

"Hear me out, Blake," said the host, impatiently. "There was a contingency provided for, a contingency which may occur." He paused, fixing his pale blue eyes upon Blake's countenance. "In case the married cousins die without children, then the property reverts to our branch of the family, through Robert Atnee, its surviving representative."

"Ah," cried the other, quickly. "I perceive your meaning, Master Atnee. And this contingency—"

"I intend to insure, through your assistance, Matt," cried the young man, a fiery gleam lighting up his calm blue eyes.

There was silence for a few moments between the two men. Each watched the other's face with covert glances, though both were apparently absorbed in thought. The scarred man was the first to ask, in a muttered tone:

"What would you do, Master Atnee?"

"To-morrow will be a bloody day on yonder island," responded the other, significantly. "Many will fall behind those mud-ramps that they call a fort."

"'Tis very likely," said Blake.

"But 'tis possible Riviere may escape, while a hundred fall around him; is it not so, Matt?"

"That's the chance of war, Master Atnee."

"You must prevent such a chance."

"How am I to prevent it, Master Atnee?"

"Do you pretend not to understand me? Riviere must die upon Sullivan's Island. A quick eye and ready hand can find many opportunities in the heat of action."

"It might be done," said the scarred man, pouring out another glass of the potent Jamaica. "And, moreover, the man who did the deed might not live to tell the tale."

"You have risked life before now, for less than you will earn for this service in a friend's behalf. Matt Blake. Come to me to-morrow night with assurance that Riviere is out of
my way, and as an earnest of the future, you shall have a thousand pounds."

The mention of this large sum of money caused Blake's eyes to glisten, and he leaned his head upon his hands, in renewed reflection.

"'Tis a round sum, Master Atnea; and your cousin is a rebel, who fights with a halter about his neck. What if he should not die? When the king regains the province, your cousin's lands must all be forfeited, and your interest with the royal commissioners—"

"I have thought of that, Blake. It may be true, as you say, that lands of rebels will become forfeit; but how know I that some intriguier shall not bid higher than myself for them? Besides, the king is not yet in possession, and the rebels are. You forget, that now I pass for as staunch a patriot as any rebel of them all. No, no, Matt. I trust no hazard; I play with loaded dice."

The scarred man regarded his companion with a mixed expression of admiration and suspicion upon his dark countenance. "You are willing to pay a high price to insure the contingency of which you spoke, and— Have you considered that the lady, your fair cousin, may be inclined to accept you as a second lord, rather than lose her goodly fortune?"

There was a perceptible sneer in Blake's tone, which his employer did not relish. "What is that to you, Matt?" he demanded, quickly. "I asked not your counsel or aid regarding her."

"Oh, I forget myself," returned Matthew Blake, with a bitter laugh. "You are the gentleman, I am the scoundrel. 'Tis you who plan; I am but the tool to execute."

"Well, well; say no more, Matt," cried the young man. "We know one another, and have no need to quarrel. The fool Riviere stands between me and fortune. You have served me more than one good turn already, Matthew—"

"For which you have paid me," interrupted the scarred man.

"Certainly, Matt; and when this business is accomplished, your fortune, as well as mine, may be made. Come, Matthew Blake, you know the thing can be done securely."

Blake mused a moment.
"A man might be pistoled in the smoke of a cannon," he said, slowly.

"The very plan, Matt, the very plan," repeated his employer, with a quivering voice. "To-morrow, during the fight, in the dense smoke of a gun. The plan is a notable one."

Again Matthew Blake leaned his head upon his broad palm, and appeared to muse; then, looking up:

"'Tis a risk, 'tis a risk," he said. "I can not do it, Master Atnee."

"A risk; you have encountered risks ere this."

"Ay; but I care not to lie all day under broadsides of a British fleet. The cannon-balls will riddle yonder island; and as every bullet must have its billet, who knows but Matthew Blake's leaden pill might be rammed hard down in the throat of Sir Peter's bull-dogs?"

Robert Atnee darted a wrathful look at his companion, which that individual met with a stolid stare.

"Are you going to show the white feather, Matt?" asked the Tory, in a husky voice.

"Running my neck in a noose, as a matter of business, is one thing," said the bravo. "I know what I'm about, and take my chances. But if I go to that mud-fort, 'tis a dozen to one that I never come out of it."

"Tut, Matt—you are no coward, man."

"Coward or not, I've that at home, Master Atnee, which you can not give. So I'll wait for the next hang-dog job you have in store, and let some other good comrade earn the thousand pounds."

With these words, Matthew Blake rose from his seat, and stood with slouched hat in hand, returning the fixed gaze of his host, who had also risen.

"You'll not undertake this, Blake? You fear—"

"No matter what I fear; I'll not go behind the logs of Sullivan's Island."

"And yet you said, Matt, how easy to discharge a pistol, while smoke rolled around."

"What I said I said, Master Robert; but no log-ramparts and mud-bastions betwixt Matt Blake and British broadsides. Good night, Master Atnee."
"Stay! Villain that you are, Matt, there is some design in this refusal! You would betray me! You play a double game!"

"I risk not my life in that cursed fort, for any man's gold or promises," returned the bravo, evasively.

"Dog, you are treacherous! but you leave not this house till I have done with you!" cried the young Tory, rising angrily from the table; for the dogged refusal of the scarred man, who had long been an instrument in his hands, ready to perform the most desperate service, was quite unexpected. But Matthew Blake had already shot back the bolt that fastened the door by which he had entered.

"Good-night, Master Robert," he said. "You may finish the Jamaica at your leisure."

The scarred man then sprung forth into the darkness that encompassed the out-buildings.

CHAPTER IV.
ROBERT ATNEE'S SLAVES.

All that flesh doth cover
Are but slaves sold over
To the master, Time.—MILNES.

CONFLOUNDED by the obstinacy of his confederate, and the latter's abrupt retreat, the Tory did not regain his presence of mind till Blake was safely away. He then repented his folly in allowing vexation to hurry him into anger, and, rebolting the closed door, remained in an attitude of reflection.

"Some motive is at the bottom of Matt's refusal of a thousand pounds," he muttered. "'Tis not cowardice in him; and as for treachery, what can he gain by betrayal of the king's cause on the very eve of our triumph? Nevertheless, I must secure him—I must secure him. Ha! I have it!"

Atnee resumed his seat, and appeared to ponder deeply. His curled locks struggled between his white fingers, and were lifted from his forehead, fair as a woman's. But had
an eye been near to mark the various shades which darkened
his features, the transitions of expression, from that of sus-
picion or fear to hatred and malignant resolution, it would
have seen how strong passions can run riot beneath the heart-
less beauty of outer seeming. Rising abruptly at length, and
clenching his fist above his head, he exclaimed, in a husky
tone:

"Riviere must not escape! Matt Blake shall not desert
me at this pinch! My proud cousin Louise shall never
triumph in her minion's return!"

Uttering these words, the Tory began to divest himself
hastily of his fashionable attire, exchanging velvet garments
for a complete suit of the regimental uniform then used by
the provincial militia in the Carolinas, and fixing on his
lapels a knot of blue ribbons, worn by Whigs to distinguish
their sentiments on occasions of public demonstration.
Placing a three-cornered hat upon his head, and buckling a
sword-belt around him, he left the room by another door,
opposite the one through which his late visitor had been
admitted, and emerged into an obscure passage, which he fol-
lowed till obstructed by another door. This he opened, with
a key that he carried, and entered upon a wide hall, terminat-
ing in a spiral staircase. Ascending this to the floor above,
the Tory presently reached another passage which led to a
spacious gallery, furnished sumptuously in the style of that
period. Massive chairs of black walnut, mirrors heavy with
gilded carvings, and paintings in oval frames, were the objects
calculated to strike a stranger's attention on entering; and
the pictures—principally of cavaliers and ladies—bore a
general likeness to one another to confirm the observer that
they were ancestral representatives of some ancient colonial
family. The windows were open, but the cool night-air was
permitted to enter through net-work curtains wrought in
various shades and patterns. Waxen candles burned upon an
antique table near one of the windows; and seated near were
two females, who rose as Robert Atnee abruptly strode into
the apartment.

Robert Atnee was an orphan like his cousin, Louise
Arnoult, and in point of worldly possessions had, a few years
previous, equaled the heiress of his uncle's wealth. But ten years of dissipation, during long sojournings in European capitals, had been sufficient to squander the greater portion of his own inheritance; so that, at thirty, the spendthrift found himself narrowed in income to an annoying degree. The yearly rents accruing to entailed property in the province, though not of large amount, might still have been ample to meet the wants of a less extravagant liver. But from his early youth, and even before the demise of an indulgent mother, his last surviving parent, Robert Atnee had been his own master, and, as a consequence, badly served. At the present time, though not pecuniarily involved, he reflected ruefully upon that prospect in the future; and, being both artful and unprincipled, neglected no opportunities that offered reparation to his willfully shattered fortunes.

Such was Robert Atnee at the time he was introduced to the reader. Ambitious, but calculating, he had taken no prominent part among those who contended for king or colonies in the struggle now going on in his native province. He concealed his predilections, which were all on the mother country's side, and shrewdly temporized with the prevailing Whig spirit, by mingling with patriots, and contributing, in some measure, to the funds raised for provincial defense. At the same time, doubting not that British force must soon crush the rebellion, he maintained a secret correspondence with royal officials, both in Carolina and Virginia, and devoted himself covertly to the enemy's service, by keeping watch upon and disclosing the patriotic counsels of unsuspecting Whigs.

Such men as Robert Atnee were the most dangerous foes that lovers of liberty were called upon to contend against. They inspired confidence which they continually betrayed. Many, indeed, of these secret traitors pursued their machinations throughout the entire war, and, after its termination, contrived to conceal the fact of their ever having been other than true, self-sacrificing patriots.

Unscrupulous, however, as Atnee was in the means to which he resorted—as has been seen by his proposition to Matthew Blake—still his ulterior schemes were subordinate to powerful ambition. He looked forward to opportunities for rendering himself of no small importance as a royal agent
in repressing colonial sedition, and sought in his traitorous correspondence, not only to magnify his devotion to British interests, but to enlarge upon the risks which he incurred should his adherence to King George be discovered by the Whigs. In this way he doubted not that he could create powerful regard among those whom he appeared to serve disinterestedly; and such regard he resolved should be turned to his ultimate personal advancement. We will now pass from the Tory's character and revert to his presence, and to the females who rose to greet his entrance in the pictured gallery.

The elder of the two women was a negress; the younger of African extraction, but with few characteristics of the race, and both were slaves belonging to Robert Atnee's household. The negress had been a house-servant in days long anterior to her present master's birth, and had attended him during infancy and earliest childhood. The girl was her grandchild, now sixteen years of age, gracefully formed, and with scarcely a negro trait save her complexion, which was only a shade darker than that usually belonging to brunettes of a Southern clime. Large, slumberous eyes, fringed with heavy lashes, small, finely-shaped mouth, and teeth like pearls, were features of attraction, indeed, which many pure-blooded dames might envy; and the brown sun-tint that flushed through her transparent skin, illumined them all with a warm life that European veins could never quicken into such rich expression. The girl was clad in white, and wore no ornaments but a broad gold ring on her fore-finger.

When Atnee crossed the gallery threshold, his young slave sat with her grandam near the open casement, through which a balmy breeze arose from gardens beneath. She was busy embroidering a military sash; her head bent slightly, disclosing the turn of a polished neck. Rising to acknowledge the master's presence, her eyes remained downcast, but her shoulders, and all that was visible of her face, became suffused with crimson.

"Well, mother Gattan," said the young Tory, advancing to the table, and addressing the old woman, without notice of her grandchild, "I come to talk with you, good ma bonne, my good nurse."
The negress courtesied, wheeling forward a large arm-chair with officious attention, and remaining standing like her companion, till their master threw himself upon the cushions. This old woman was evidently of no inferior type of the African race. She did not possess the disagreeable lineaments, noticeable in Congolese or Guinea tribes. Her color, indeed, partook of that olive shade which marks the Mauritanian race; and doubtless she belonged to some branch of those numerous mixed families inhabiting the upper regions of Ethiopia, upon the borders of Fezzan. In fact, it was a customary boast of Marguerite, or Gattan, as she was familiarly called, that her fathers had been princes, and made war against white men. Whatever her origin, it was known that she had been brought to America, in youth, and that she retained memories of superstitious teachings, and still practiced ceremonials, that were obviously of Mohammedan association. She was accustomed to mutter her prayers at sunrise, looking eastward, and to cherish a belief in the efficiency of ablutions, which was certainly a virtue in her domestic position. But, there was likewise much in the old slave's character to back her claims to superior birthright; a haughtiness at times, and a spirit in her bright black eyes, which suited ill the station of a menial. Her figure, too, erect in age, as it had probably been stately in youth, would have furnished evidence of noble blood, if coupled with the Saxon rose or Celtic lily in cheek and brow.

"Shall Filippa remain?" asked the old nurse, glancing at her granddaughter, whose eyes were riveted upon her embroidery.

"No—let her go," said Atnee, in response; and with a wave of her hand the grandam dismissed the girl, who, with still downcast eyelashes, courtesied to her master, and glided noiselessly from the gallery.

"How old is Filippa?" asked the master, with a careless glance after her retreating figure. The negress pondered a moment, and then answered:

"Sixteen years, Master Robert."

No clipping of syllables, such as made up the usual patois of her class, was apparent in the old slave's speech, though her voice faltered somewhat in replying to her master.
“A tall child for her age,” remarked Atnee. “I was asked to sell her, yesterday, Gattan.” As he said this, the master noticed that the old woman’s countenance fell visibly. “But,” he continued, with emphasis, a smile wreathing his handsome mouth, “I refused a large sum—a very large sum for our Filippa.”

The negress clasped her hands together, and pressed them to her breast. There was more significance in this mute manifestation of feeling than could have been conveyed by a thousand words. “Master—master?” it seemed to say, “you will not ask Gattan to part with her grandchild?”

“I do not forget, nurse Gattan, that you saved my life,” resumed Atnee. “‘Twas you who cared for me when every one—even my own mother—fled from my bedside.” The Tory alluded to a contagious fever that had nearly terminated his existence in childhood, and from which he had recovered only through the untiring devotion of his slave attendant. “So, ma bonne, I must ask your advice in this matter; though, in sooth, our little Filippa would bring a round sum—a very round sum, Gattan.”

“Master Robert?” cried the negress, her eyes filling with tears, as she regarded the young man’s countenance, so fair and apparently truthful. A sob choked all further speech, whereupon Atnee lowered his voice to a whisper:

“Gattan,” he said, “the cousins are wedded! My mother’s wealth, that should be mine, goes henceforth to smooth-faced Ernest Riviere.”

“They are wedded, Master Robert?” repeated the slave-nurse. “Ah! had your mother lived, Master Arnoult would never have forgotten you.”

“‘Twas my mother’s fortune which enabled him to amass the wealth he left behind,” said Atnee, bitterly. “What right had he to leave his sister’s child a beggar?”

Gattan started. “Who is a beggar, Master Robert?” she asked, quickly.

“Who?” echoed the Tory, with a passionate start. “I, your master—the heir of rich old Marmaduke Atnee—I sit here this night, a beggar, almost, at my prime of life.” He paused and struck his forehead, while Gattan regarded him with a look of amazement. “Ay! look at me, ma bonne,”
he continued, vehemently, casting back the curls from his pale brow, with a hollow laugh. "You do not know how I have flung away hoards of gold, and scattered broad acres in dust. But I say to you now, that pleasure-seeking and dice-rattling have played ducks and drakes with your old master's wealth, and his son's inheritance."

Making this confession with reckless tone and manner, Robert Atnee threw himself back on the cushions, and watched the effect of his words on Gattan, who had listened with speechless anxiety, clasping her withered hands together. The negress remained with fixed attention for some moments ere she broke the silence:

"Master Robert—dear Master Robert," she exclaimed, "is all lost? Master Marmaduke's property gone—all gone?"

The accents of real affection in which these simple words were uttered, caused a smile to flit on the Tory's lips; and he replied, quickly:

"As for that, Gattan, I hardly think we're quite so destitute. We have Laurelwood and our town-house left, ma bonne. I am not exactly a beggar, but, money is confoundedly scarce these times, or I should never think of selling Filippa."

The old negress rose, with her hands still clasped, and stretched them toward her master:

"Oh master! dear master!" she cried, in a husky voice, "If Filippa must be sold, Gattan will die."

Atnee regarded his slave for a moment with a stealthy glance, and then muttered impatiently: "Well, well, Gattan, never mind, she's not sold yet." He turned, and abruptly left the gallery.

The negress remained as if in stupor, till the light pressure of her granddaughter's hand aroused her: "Quick, mother—I must follow Master Robert," whispered the quadroon, hurriedly. And drawing the old woman after her, the girl opened a narrow door, near the table, and disappeared into an inner apartment whence she presently emerged entirely metamorphosed.

Instead of the white dress she had worn, the quadroon had donned a masculine frock, and appeared to be a handsome lad of twelve years. The frock was blue, and beneath she wore trousers of cotton jean. Slippers and a skull-cap
completed the ensemble of a sprightly boy. Thrusting a pistol in her coat bosom, she kissed the old woman, and turned to depart.

"Take care, Filippa, of the ring."

"Never fear, mother," answered the quadroon, lifting her finger with the gold circlet to her lips. "A slave's last friend is in it, you know," she murmured, significantly, and then darted away.

When Gattan was alone again, she clasped her withered hands together, and wrung them up and down. "Poor Filippa—poor baby," she murmured. "She loves, and she is a slave! God help her! The ring may indeed be her last friend, poor child."

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**CHAPTER V.**

**A NIGHT OF ADVENTURE.**

Oh! how will sin engender sin.—Colman.

The disguised Filippa emerged from Atnee's house, traversed the star-lit avenue that skirted it, and hurried on, till at a turn of the highway, she caught a glimpse of her young master's figure at a distance. With a joyful exclamation, she quickened her steps.

The Tory pursued his way, unconscious that he was followed so closely, and in the space of half an hour reached the outposts of Lee's camp. Answering the challenge of a sentinel, he penetrated a piece of woods, where he was soon after joined by a man who wore a uniform of the patriot service. "Punctual!" was Atnee's brief salutation, to which the soldier replied, in an agitated voice:

"I'm running a heap o' danger, Captain."

"Hush! no more than your betters do," rejoined Atnee. "What have you learned new, sir?"

"That the General opposes Moultrie, and thinks he'll be defeated."

"I knew that, hours ago, Samuel Pappett. You are behind the age, my good fellow."
“All I know,” said the other, sullenly, “the General has just issued orders to our raw recruits to hold themselves ready to cover Moultrie’s retreat.”

“Pish!” cried Atnee, impatiently. “What papers have you?”

“Here is a letter from General Washington that our General mislaid, and a map of the Floridas, with some plans about an expedition that I found in his orderly’s pocket.”

Atnee snatched the documents from his emissary’s hand, and thrust them into his bosom.

“I hope you’ll not forget to mention me to Sir Henry when he lands. Indeed, sir, this business is dangerous, and—”

“Never fear, sir. You shall be mentioned.”

“Because you know, Captain, I’m risking my life.”

“I know your sacrifices, Samuel Pappett,” returned Atnee, “and your fidelity to the cause that pays best.”

“That’s hard, Captain—I’m a loyal king’s man, and if I am found in the rebel camp by Sir Henry, you know—”

“I’ll see to that, sir, and as I want your assistance outside, I’ll obtain you a furlough to-night.”

“Oh, thank you, Captain,” cried the spy.

“Now, go to your quarters, Pappett; I have a visit to make to some officers.”

Waving his hand abruptly, Robert Atnee passed on through the clump of woods, and the spy slunk off in another direction. Immediately afterward, another man, clad like Pappett in the patriot uniform, crept from under some brushwood that had afforded him concealment, and turned toward the sentinel’s post.

“What luck, Tom Irvins?” asked the sentry, recognizing his fellow-soldier. “Did you discover anything?”

“That sneaking Pappett has given the other man some papers, but they conversed too low to be overheard. I’m bound to have those docyments, howsoever, before I sleep to-night.”

“Will you give information to the Colonel?”

“And get snubbed for my pains?” quoth the soldier. “No sir! I’ll find the fox track before I am a dorg. If Pappett’s playin’ possum in the camp, them papers ’ll tell the story, and them papers I’m gwine to have afore bedtime. If the papers turn out all right and patriotic, Tom Irvins is a jackanapes—
Tom Irvins will be court-martialed as a meddler; but if they be all wrong, then Tom Irvins has started the right trail, precisely. Now I'm gwine down to the creek to play Injin."

"Lie in ambush, eh, Tom?"

"Precisely."

"Countersign, Tom."

"I've got it—all right, comrade," answered the continental, whispering the word; and then, passing the outpost, he sauntered leisurely down the road, which, skirting a wooded bank, lay half in moonlight and half in shadow.

But he had not proceeded far, ere he was himself followed by another figure. It was that of the disguised quadroon, Filippa, who, having concealed herself near the sentry, had heard a portion of his conversation with Tom Irvins, and, watchful for her master's safety, resolved to track the soldier on his path.

The creek, of which Irvins had spoken, spanned by a narrow bridge, crossed the wood about a quarter of a mile from the outposts; and selecting a spot for his hiding-place near the bridge-head, the patriot soldier awaited the return of Atnee, while, concealing herself at the edge of a palmetto thicket, the Tory's slave overlooked the ambuscade.

An hour passed, and Robert Atnee appeared, followed by the spy Pappett. The two passed closely by the thicket which sheltered Filippa, and the next moment reached the creek. Presently a short cry broke the stillness of the night, and the figure of a man darted swiftly across the bridge. Filippa saw that it was the spy, and, darting forward, beheld her master struggling with the soldier who had waylaid him. Both stood upon the frail bridge, striving for the mastery; but it was apparent that Atnee was no match for his antagonist. Filippa reaching them, heard her master's gasping voice:

"What do you want?" cried the Tory, whose neck was tightly compressed by the soldier's strong arms. "Would you murder me?"

"Submit quietly, or you may force me to do that," replied the man, sternly; and with a sudden effort he threw Atnee upon his back.

"Let me go—I have money! my purse—my watch."

"You infernal Tory! do you take me for a footpad? No
sir! you are my prisoner, and must go to the camp, with those papers that the rascal Pappet stole for you. I've a mind to cast you into the creek for that speech of yours, for I'm a Whig, and not to be bribed, my good sir."

While uttering these words, Tom Irvins had placed his knee upon the prostrate man's breast, and was drawing a stout cord from his pocket, wherewith to pinion his prisoner's arms. At this juncture a stealthy footsteps upon the bridge caused him to turn his head, but the alarm was too late. Filippa's pistol, pressed against his breast, was the next moment discharged, and the patriot soldier toppled heavily from the log-bridge into the dark water below. Robert Atnee was saved, and sprung to his feet, while yet the reverberations of the pistol-shot were ringing in the woods. He caught one glimpse of a boyish figure darting down the road, and disappearing in the shadows; then, dashing the hair from his eyes, he reeled to the bridge-edge, and peered down into the creek. A struggling sound and choked groan arose therefrom, and presently all was still.

"He will tell no tales," muttered the Tory. "By the fiend! 'twas a narrow chance. Curses light on that treacherous Pappet. 'Twas no shot of his that came so opportune."

Thus communing with himself, the Tory hastened on, apprehensive that the pistol-shot might have alarmed the neighboring outposts. Approaching the city streets, he overtook his late comrade Pappet, cowering by the roadside.

"Cowardly knave!" he exclaimed, "you deserted me."

"Forgive, Master Atnee," gasped the spy, who yet shook with fright. "I was not master of myself, for that devil of a ranger, Tom Irvins, has long watched me, so that when—"

"A truce with your explanations now, sir," said Atnee, contemptuously. "Your devil of a ranger will trouble us no more. But if you attempt another desertion like this, you lily-livered varlet, I promise that you'll lie cold as he does. Now, sir, to the business we have to do, but beware of showing the white feather again."

Atnee strode forward; and Pappet trod mechanically in his footsteps, till they gained a curve of the river-street where stood that collection of hovels before described as the quarter where resided Matthew Blake. The hours had now
advanced beyond midnight, and the city was wrapped in silence, though probably few eyes were closed this night in sleep. The Tory stopped before Blake's hut, and beckoned to his companion to approach, and peer through the chinks of a broken shutter, that permitted a glimpse of the interior, discovering the curtained caboose, lit by the swinging lamp.

"The child is in that cot," whispered Atnee. "You have but to effect an entrance and snatch her from under the curtain. Being deaf and dumb, she can neither hear nor give an alarm, as you carry her off."

"The shutter—is it fast?" responded the spy, applying his hand to the frail casement, which nearly yielded to his first pressure.

"But—if the ruffian, as you say he is—if he should return," faltered Pappett.

"Am I not here to apprise you?"

"But if he bring others—if he should come on us unawares," cried the spy, hesitatingly.

"Will you never have done with your cowardly ifs, sir? The man will not trouble us, for I know his habits and that he seldom returns before day-break. Are you resolved to thwart me, sir?"

"I will do your will, Master Atnee. I did not refuse," murmured the spy, as he noiselessly drew away the shutter-hasp from its rotten socket, and exposed the shuttered window, stuffed with rags.

"Stay. Have you an ague-fit, man, that your teeth chatter thus? Stand back here—I will enter myself. But if your cowardly heart leads to another desertion like the last, I swear, Samuel Pappett, that your reward from Sir Henry, when he lands, shall be a hempen-knot tied by the provostmarshal."

With this whispered threat, Atnee thrust a's timid accom-
plice aside, and tearing out the rubbish from a broken pane, quickly succeeded in raising the narrow window sufficiently to enable his hand to reach the key that secured the hovel-
door. Bidding Pappett to keep watch outside, he then boldly entered the single apartment.

It presented the features already familiar to the reader; and Atnee, who was no stranger there, glided at once to the caboose to pursue his design of abducting the bravo's child.
But ere he laid his hand upon the curtain, a hurried glance about him caused the intruder to pause suddenly in his design. He discovered the carpet-stands rolled together in a heap, and a dark aperture gaping like a grave in the flooring beyond. Startled at the sight, he paused a moment, irresolute, then recalling his self-possession, drew near, and discovered a narrow flight of steps descending apparently to some vault below the hovel. Peering into the opening, he caught a glimpse of light struggling through the darkness below, and suspected that Matt Blake was engaged in some nocturnal operation, which he determined should have, if possible, a witness. Acting on this thought, the Tory cautiously descended the mildewed steps, his feet slipping on a bed of clay beneath, and entered a narrow excavation that appeared to slope upward. Steadying his footing, by stretching out his hands to the clammy sides of this passage, he crawled forward through a wider gap, which opened upon a cavernous vault, damp and chilly. He divined at once that this subterranean chamber was under the wooded bank which, as before said, intervened between Blake’s hut and the river, that here curved abruptly.

But the Tory’s interest became riveted the next moment by another discovery. He saw Matt Blake kneeling on the ground, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of a small, iron-bound oaken chest, which was open before him. The chest was full of gold coins, trinkets, and jewels, which, in the rays of a candle glimmering beside it, flashed with dazzling splendor. Rich necklaces of diamonds and pearls, brooches, rings and pendants, watches, jewelers’ miniatures, and even wedges of solid gold, were mingled promiscuously in such profusion, that the spendthrift Atlee, in surveying them, felt his breath grow short with eager admiration. Matt Blake crouched over the whole like one of those fabled gnomes which are said to guard the buried treasures of earth; and as he handled the ornaments with gloating fondness, his hoarse voice syllabled monotonously his passing thoughts.

“Ha, ha!” muttered the man, “this is the stuff that rules both Whigs and king’s men. What would King George himself be without it, and where would be yon Congress troops, with no dollars to pay for their patriotism?” He smiled grimly as he held up a costly necklace in the candle’s rays. “Ay,
say,” he went on, “ye’re shining as if there was no blood on ye; and yet I saw ye once on a neck as white as Alice’s.”

Matt Blake’s features contracted as the memory of some past crime smote him for a moment. Dropping the necklace, he held up a diamond ring, that sparkled like an eye in the darkness. “A delicate finger wore ye once,” he said, “a proud lady kissed ye, and plead for her love-token, and vowed she’d never part with it. Sure enough she kept it till the breath left her fair body, and now it’s Alice’s—Alice’s.”

The bravo’s hard face softened, and his harsh voice trembled in pronouncing the name of that unconscious child whom he had left in innocent slumber. “’Twas for her,” he muttered, with an oath, “and she shall never know how she comes by them. ’Twas for her mother I trod the bloody deck, and nailed my black flag to the mast-head, till I lost her—lost the only one that ever cared for Matt Blake the buccaneer. And now, her child shall have all. Alice will remember Matt, when he’s past praying for. Poor dumb chick—poor dumb chick!”

The wretch hid his face with his hands, and a tear stole between his fingers, dimming the jewel that he held. His back was turned to the cave-entrance where cowered the concealed Tory, but the latter could perceive the man’s heavy frame shake with emotion. A sudden thought crossed the mind of Robert Attec; a thought of the ease with which a single blow or shot might secure the possession of that, the pirate’s ill-gotten hoard; but the next instant a movement of Blake to close his oaken casket, caused the Tory to shrink back into the narrow passage. He lingered, however, till he beheld the bravo lock and double-lock the box, and thrust it far into a crevice of the clay wall, then with noiseless speed he retraced his steps to the hovel.

Pappett, the spy, obedient to his patron, had taken his post as sentinel outside, and being, as we have said, a coward of the first water, but cunning withal to a remarkable degree, he ensconced himself in the bush-covered bank which joined the hut, in order at once to overlook the moonlit street and riverbank, and to screen himself from any casual observation.

But he had scarcely secured his position among the thick leaves, when he became aware of a phenomenon which caused
the perspiration to ooze in large drops from his trembling body. This was a faint, greenish light, apparently emanating from the bank itself, a few feet from the spot where he had fixed himself. It was dim and flickering, but distinct enough to infuse Pappett with vague apprehensions. By degrees, however, observing no augmentation of the light, the spy grew venturesome, and ascertained that it proceeded from a small fissure in the bank, overhanging the water's edge—a fissure scarcely broader than his hand's width, but evidently connecting either with a hollow in the hillock or the interior of the hut which he was guarding. This discovery caused Pappett new alarm, and some minutes elapsed before he could muster courage to remove a tangled mass of undergrowth sufficiently to admit of his head being depressed toward the opening. The clammy earth, in contact with his forehead, sent a chill through the man's blood, but at this moment a clinking sound, as of gold, awakened all his faculties. Curiosity and avarice were both stimulated, and Pappett began to scoop away the dirt, in order to widen the crevice. The light glimmered more steadily, and in a moment more, the eager spy was able to discern a cave below, in which the figure of a man appeared kneeling beside a box of glittering treasures. A dazzling array of jewels and money heaped together flashed on Pappett's sight with a splendor that almost deprived him of his senses. His brain swam, and for a moment he lost the power of vision. Recovering instantly, he saw the man below in the act of closing the box, and pushing it far into a recess of the clay wall. Next moment, all was dark in the cave, and he heard his own name called from the hovel-door:

"Pappett—villain! where are you?"

The spy recognized Atnees's voice, and emerged from his covert in time to see his employer dart from the hut, and dash along the street, bearing a burden enveloped in his mantle.
CHAPTER VI.

THE OUTLAW’S CHILD.

A rude, dark, stormy man was he,
His passions like his deeds were wild;
But yet he loved that stricken child.—B. Ashe.

Alice! Alice! my child! my child!"

The utterance of these words sounded like a shriek in Matt Blake’s mouth, as he discovered the loss of his child. Returning from the cave, unsuspicous of what had taken place during his absence, he had busied himself for some moments in replacing the plank and carpet of his flooring, and making ready for the night’s rest in his solitary hammock. It was not till a half-hour, at least, had gone by, that he lifted the curtain of the caboose, in order to kiss, as usual, his slumbering child. The derangement of the bed-clothes, the absence of his little one, struck the father, at first, with a blank amazement, which was speedily succeeded by horror and fury. He ran around the room like a wild man, paused at the spot where he had removed the plank, as if fearful the child might have fallen into the gap during his absence; then, suddenly dashing to the door, he discovered that, though once closed, as he had left it, the key-bolt had been shot back; and a single glance at the open window-shutter showed how the abductor had gained entrance.

Then it was that, with a cry more like the howl of a tigress robbed of her young, than of a human being, the bravo called on his child’s name, and throwing himself on his knees beside the caboose, bowed on its pillow, clasping that inanimate object, as he repeated: “Alice! my child! my child!”

It was indeed a powerful love that this bad man cherished for his helpless offspring; a love intertwined, as it were, with every fiber of his heart; the same species of affection that a wild animal entertains for its young, changing not the furious instincts of its kind, but only intensifying their natural purposes. Matt Blake arose from his knees with sullen scowl and gleaming eye, and opening an old chest, took from it a
brace of pistols, which he set himself down to load. This
done, he deposited them in a pocket of his rough coat, and
with them concealed a broad-bladed knife sheathed with
leather. Then, turning a last moody look at the deserted
caboose, he crossed his threshold, locked the door mechan-"cally,
and strode gloomily through the silent streets, directing
his course toward the house of Robert Atnee. Passing to the
rear of the Tory's mansion, he gained the private door and
knocked loudly. It was opened at once by Atnee, whose
smooth smile greeted him, as he entered in surly silence.

"Well, Matt, you look wild," said the Tory, closing and
bolting the door. "But you have come to renew good fel-
lowship, I doubt not; so sit, man, and fill up a goblet."
Matt Blake did indeed step to the table and clutch a glass,
which he filled with the crimson spirit. But, instead of
drinking, he dashed its contents to the floor.

"So may blood run between us," cried the bravo, "till you
give me back my child."

The Tory's handsome face blanched for a moment, as the
eyes of Blake, burning like coals of fire, were fixed upon his
own; but he had calculated his course, and knew the man
with whom he had to deal. Therefore, he answered with a
renewed smile, and cried;

"Tut, tut, Matt; you were not wont to spill good liquor
thus—"

"I want no rum, Atnee; I want blood—your blood, and
I'll have it."
Answering thus, the bravo sprung upon the Tory, and
grasped his neckcloth with a grip like iron, bearing him
backward, till he reeled to the floor.

"Matt! Matt!" gasped the Tory, "would you kill me?"
"My child! Alice! my child!" replied Blake, in a terrible
tone. "Robber and kidnapper, give me back my Alice."
He drew the broad-bladed knife from its scabbard, and
lifted it over Atnee's breast, which was pressed by his knee.

"Ay, Master Atnee; as there is a hell for both of us, I will
murder you if you give me not back my child."

"Matt Blake, you are mad. Release me," cried the Tory,
making ineffectual struggles to rise, his neck compressed by
the bravo's gripe almost to strangulation.
“You have stolen my child, to get me in your power; to force me to work your will on Riviere. But I'll slay you like a dog, if you give her not back.”

Blake hissed these words between his teeth, as he lifted the knife for a blow, and Robert Atnee, writhing under his burning eyes, almost gave himself up for lost. But the Tory’s presence of mind did not desert him. Suddenly relaxing his limbs, and letting his head sink heavily, he murmured:

“Kill me, Matt Blake, and never behold your child again.”

Thus speaking, he fell supinely on the floor, as if incapable of further resistance. The impending blow of his antagonist descended not, and Matt Blake appeared to hesitate. Atnee’s submission disconcerted him. Supposing her abductor slain, would that restore the child? He withdrew his hand from the young man’s throat.

“Get up, Master Atnee,” he muttered, savagely, “and answer me like a man.”

The Tory had calculated the effect of his stratagem, though it was indeed a forlorn hope. He arose with reeling brain, and seizing his own untasted spirits, swallowed a few mouthfuls to moisten his dry throat. Blake watched him gloomily.

“Well, Matt,” said the young man, as he adjusted his neckcloth and wiped his forehead, “now that you are no longer frantic, perhaps we can understand one another. What has happened to you?”

“Do you ask, Robert Atnee?” demanded the father, quite crazy with suppressed fury, in observing the other’s composure. And he muttered between his teeth: “Oh, you deep villain.”

“Matt Blake, I sympathize with you, and promise to aid you to the best of my ability in recovering your child, if you, in return, promise to keep your fingers off my throat, and—”

“Where is she? Atnee! devil—I know not what to call you—where is my Alice?”

“You have scratched my neck and torn my frill shockingly, Matt,” returned the Tory. “Nevertheless, I bear no malice, and if you take care of my cousin, in the fort to-morrow, there'll be no harm come to your Alice, I give you a gentleman’s word on it.”
"And if I refuse?"

"Then," answered the young man, with a look of cold determination. "I believe your child lost to you beyond recovery."

"Atnee, I'll—"

The bravo appeared about to spring again upon his prey but the other only rejoined.

"Matt, you know me. Had I died five minutes since, you would never have beheld your Alice in this breathing world again."

A shudder shook the outlaw, as he heard these words, and marked the expression of Atnee's features. Seating himself again, he poured out a glass of spirits, and said, as he drank it:

"I'll drink with you, Master Atnee; I'll do your devil's work once more; and if I wronged you, I'm sorry. But—" he paused, with the glass at his lips, and muttered in measured tones with a terrible oath: "if you deceive me, or harm that child, I'll have your heart's blood, Atnee, wherever you are."

The Tory's bold eye fell before the fiercer glow that shot from beneath Matt Blake's brows. But he mastered his uneasiness, and stretched out his hand to his confederate: "Let us be friends again, Matt," he said, coaxingly; "you and I ought never to part in anger. All shall be well between us, when you come back."

Blake took his employer's hand, and drank his liquor at a gulp. But the scowl left not his brow for a moment; nor did he return Atnee's smile. He went out into the night again, to seek the fort at Sullivan's Island, and to earn a thousand pounds for the deed he was to do; but he hated Robert Atnee more than him who was to be his victim.
CHAPTER VII.

SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, 1776.

The flash, the smoke, the artillery roar,
The answering volley, from front and rear;
The wounded, slain, the bloody gore,
Yet not a thought of fear.—S. W. Dswey.

Day-break glimmered in gray light over the harbor and city of Charleston. The river-mist rose slowly from the surface of the water, and under a glowing sunrise, the fleet of Admiral Sir Peter Parker displayed its bunting, as it advanced to battle. It was an imposing spectacle; for nearly fifty vessels, comprising nine ships of the line and forty transports, ranged up the channel, with their canvas set to the soft breeze; and the first sunbeams, slanting on them, made all these sails appear like wings of fire.

Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island, foresaw that if the engagement should be protracted, his small store of ammunition must be exhausted before its termination. Like Putnam at Bunker Hill, he resolved that every shot should tell; and his feeble armament was therefore mounted in such a position that it commanded diagonally the advancing vessels, while the powder (scarcey five thousand pounds altogether) was distributed in due proportions to the guns, under the care of his own regimental officers.

The fort-defenders of the city could cast their eyes to the left, and see the house tops covering their own firesides, crowded with those dearer to them than life. They needed no more inspiring spectacle to nerve them for conflict.

The river-fogs disappeared, and a hot June sun began to shed its scorching rays. Moultrie moved up and down along the defenses, smoking his short pipe, and encouraging the soldiers. Marion, silent and thoughtful, moved about, exchanging glances with his old comrades of the Indian war—glances which meant volumes to those brave men.

"We have hot work, and a long day before us, Captain," observed Moultrie, to young Riviere, who was pointing an English eighteen-pounder at the hull of the enemy's flag-ship;
but we must try to keep cool." Saying this, the Colonel emitted a great puff of smoke.

"The foe will find the work as hot, doubtless," answered Riviere, "and the day as long, if our powder holds out, sir."

"Our powder! it must be husbanded," said Moultrie. "I see, Captain, you understand the business, by the bearing of your gun. That's right, my young soldier! Look to the Commodore! look to the two-deckers! and we'll soon have them all between wind and water!"

"Look to the Commodore! look to the two-deckers!" ran in a murmur along the intrenchments, and the young officers of guns began to take ranges of the battle-ships. Moultrie smiled, and said: "No fear of men like these!" Then turning to meet Major Marion, who approached, followed by Jasper, and another athletic figure: "Who is this?" he asked, sharply, apparently recognizing the last of the three.

"A new volunteer, who finds small favor in the eyes of my brave Jasper, however." So saying, the Major pointed to Matthew Blake, whose face had already been recalled by the commander as that of the man who had ridiculed the project of defending Sullivan's Island.

"So it appears, sir, you have altered your mind as regards our log-ramparts," said Moultrie, scanning the volunteer's features.

"Whether I have or have not," answered the bravo, carelessly, "I am here to do my duty in defending them—that is, if you deem me good enough for a target, Colonel!"

"We want men who can make targets of Britishers!" cried Sergeant Jasper.

"I can point a piece as true as any man on the island," rejoined Blake, scowling at the sergeant; and as he spoke, a gun from the Admiral's ship boomed heavily, and two frigates let go their anchors, and ranged abreast of the fortifications.

"Answer that shot, if you can point a gun, sir," said Moultrie to the man; "'tis the signal for battle."

"I beg, sir, you will let me point the gun—" began Captain Riviere; but the bravo had already swung the heavy carriage about with one hand, while with the other he seized a match, and stooping at the breech, sighted the piece with a rapid
glance. Next moment smoke and flame belched from the cannon, and Matt Blake, with a dry laugh, cried:

"Follow that, if you like!"

The smoke clearing, discovered the shot ricocheting over the waves which an easterly wind was blowing high. It struck the flag-ship *Bristol* fair in the hull, and scattered splinters in all directions from her planks.

A loud, huzza rose from the American lines, and Moultrie puffed rapidly.

"Well done," he said, "'tis a good omen! Now, men, to your stations all; and for you, sir," he added, addressing Blake, "if Captain Riviere likes you to assist in working his gun, remain with him."

"With all my heart," said Riviere; "I shall be glad of so brave a fellow."

Blake’s lip curled; but the battle had now begun in earnest, and he speedily found work to do. From the ports of six frigates in the channel a tremendous burst of flame issued incessantly. The fort replied by volleys of small-arms and double-shotted cannon. Dense volumes of smoke wreathed over the water, and soared in white columns. The waves swelled, the beaches rocked under successive explosions. Heavy broadsides from the vessels occasionally lifted the clouds, permitting a momentary view of some swaying hull, which at once became a mark for Moultrie’s guns.

About a mile below the immediate theater of conflict, Sir Henry Clinton attempted a landing of regular troops to attack Sullivan’s Island by boats; but the scheme failed of completion; while, in taking their positions for a general attack, three frigates ran aground below the island, and lost all opportunity of testing their metal.

Meantime the sun rose toward noon; the heat of battle intensified by its scorching rays. The Americans, all grimed with powder, tore off their shirts, and fought wholly naked. The smoke-clouds rolled inland, and concealed the city; but the defenders knew that their friends were behind that dreadful curtain, listening to the din of the engagement.

Moultrie, calm amid the dizzy scene, smoked his pipe while inspecting his defenses, the bombs and balls falling unheeded about him. His courage became infectious; every man grew
to be a hero at his gun. Marion's post was at an extremity of the fort, weakly defended by the hastily-constructed works. Surrounded by his rangers of the old wars, he pointed the guns, served out ammunition, and cheered the men to their duty. Sergeant Jasper, fighting near him, was so blackened and burned with sweat and powder as to be hardly distinguishable from the negro Caesar, who was active under him, and who kept up a fire of dry remarks, and displayed his white teeth, as if there was not the remotest danger of their being knocked down his throat by a cannon-shot.

"Ky!" he yelled, as a rift in the smoke discovered the three British vessels fast among shoals, and with distress-signals flying. "Ky! Mauss' Jasper! we is pokin' fire into 'em!"

"Heah, you nigger! Look out for my jacket," cried a fine-limbed young soldier, who was holding a match, as Marion sighted his gun. He pointed, in speaking, to a blue coat, the uniform of his regiment, which was sliding from a merlon, where he had carelessly thrown it.

"Me hab him, Mauss' McDaniel!" cried Caesar, swinging himself about, and stretching out his hand to catch the garment; but ere he reached it, a cannon-ball came whizzing through the air with its strange, singing noise, and striking squarely under the collar of the coat, lifted it bodily from the merlon, and bore it over the heads of the soldiers. Caesar fell back, as if struck himself, his open mouth and dilated eyes expressing the most ludicrous alarm; but the coat sailed on, like a long swallow-tailed bird; while the soldiers along the whole western breastwork desisted with common consent from work, and broke out into one of the liveliest and merriest laughs that ever made the welkin ring. There, in the midst of deadly strife, with the roaring of three hundred cannon around them, those gallant fellows laughed as freely as if on a piazza at Charleston.

"Caesar! you black rascal! why didn't you stop that ball?" exclaimed the owner of the coat, shaking his fist in a humorous way at the negro.

"Ky!" cried the black, recovering by degrees from his consternation,—"hi-yi! what a shot dat was, for sartin! Might ha' kerried off dis yer chile, Mauss' McDaniel, jis' like
de jacket! Oh, golly! look dah! look dah, mauss’—look at de coat, will ye?"

The soldier followed the negro’s glance with his own, and beheld his coat lodged in the branches of a live-oak tree, in the rear of the fort.

"No harm’s done," remarked he to Jasper, as he handed him his watch, and stooped to drink from a bucket beneath him. "The jacket has only changed pegs, you see. Howsoever, Caesar, you look out for these thieving cannon-balls, or they may make love to it altogether!"

"Me look out for dat, Mauss’ McDaniel."

"And be off now, you rascal, and get another supply of Jamaica," cried Jasper, kicking over the pail, which McDaniel’s last draught had emptied.

"And say to the Colonel that we like it strong and sweet," quoth Marion, with a grim smile. "Poor fellows, they are in a furnace," he added, glancing at the gunners.

"And look you, Caesar," said McDaniel, as the black passed him, "see that you fetch my coat from you live-oak. It’s a new one, and belongs to the State."

"Yes," cried the negro. "Dem cannon-balls is most too bad, dey is, massa; dey don’t ’spect de State nor de sojers."

So saying, and burdened with his double commission, Caesar started off for head-quarters, where Colonel Moultrie, pipe in mouth, was superintending the mixing of a huge tub of “grog,” composed of Jamaica spirits and water, sweetened with sugar sap. The brave commander sat under the sweltering sun, endeavoring to “keep cool” under its heat, and patient under agonizing twinges of the gout, which had attacked him in the morning. Nobody could detect any expression save one of good-humor, save when some spasm of pain forced an involuntary exclamation.

"Well, Caesar, you’re after more grog, are you? What were you all shouting like mad for, a few moments since?"

"Golly, Mauss’ Kurnel, wish you’d a-seen it," chuckled the black, putting down the bucket. "Dat ar’ Sergeant McDaniel’s soger-coat, she got tuk up by de skarts, an’ off she fly, wid a cannon-ball in bofe pockets. Dah she is, Mauss’ Moultrie, in yonder oak."
The commander joined with those around him in a hearty laugh at Caesar's detail; and then, ordering his bucket to be replenished, proceeded in his pleasant way to overlook the manufacture of the fragrant beverage, at the same time giving kindly orders to the men at his black-muzzled twenty-fours, who had sustained the heat of the action. Caesar, burdened with his bucket of grog, set out on his return to Marion's post; but recollecting Sergeant McDaniel's orders to regain his coat, proceeded by a trifling detour to gain the oak-tree at the rear of the fort, which had arrested the marauding cannon-ball in the act of larceny. At this stage of the engagement, the firing on both sides was extremely severe—a cannonade being kept up by the two fifty-gun ships, which, with springs on their cables, rode opposite the fort, supported by four heavily mounted frigates and the bomb-ketch Thunderer, with her blazing shells. A continuous shower of missiles fell into the swampy soil, and upon the myrtle and palmetto trees which grew on Sullivan's Island. Across the rear of the fort a strip of solid land led to the live-oak trees, on one of which McDaniel's coat was hanging, and thither Caesar picked his way, carefully balancing his bucket of grog, and unnerved by the hail of balls on every side. As he went, he exchanged repartees with the soldiers who were breathing themselves at intervals away from the ramparts.

"Take care of the bomb-shells, smutty-face," cautioned a half-naked rifleman, who was cutting a palmetto-stick to replace a ramrod which had been carried from his hand by a chain-shot.

"And take care of that grog, even though you kick the bucket," remarked another wild fellow, as he munched a quartern loaf.

"Hi-yi," returned Caesar, "nebber you fear. Dis yer sojer-chile knows de bark of Johnny Bull-dog."

"Look out, Sambo; you'll get the headache," exclaimed another, as a heavy shell appeared in the air, curving through the smoke with a lurid light.

Caesar glanced upward and beheld the terrible missile hovering just above him, and apparently ready to surge upon his skull. "Ky," he yelled, springing to the right, and imme-
diately sunk to his waist in the black mud of the swamp. The bomb-shell at the instant crashed down, burying itself in the moist ooze, within half a dozen feet of him.

"Dat fire is put out, sartain," spluttered Cæsar, struggling to regain his footing on *terra firma*, and holding his bucket at arm's-length, so that he lost scarcely a gill of its contents.

"You've had a narrow escape, darkey," remarked the soldier, who had been munching his bread. "Now, give me a mug of grog, and I'll help you out again."

Cæsar returned to quarters without McDaniel's coat, but with a coat of black mud on his own sable body, which soon became baked like a crust under the sunbeams. Meantime the battle raged, and the exhausted cannoniers, after refreshing themselves with the spirits, ranged their guns upon the Admiral's ship, which had swung about, presenting her stern to the fort.

"Look to the Commodore," cried Marion.

The order was answered by flaming jets and an explosion that shook the island. Then rose a shout from the fort's defenders, and then followed an unbroken silence for five minutes. It was during this interval that the last round of powder was served out on the island, and a dispatch sent to Governor Rutledge for more. The British, listening for the fort's fire, and hearing it not, supposed they were about to surrender, and the fleet's crews began to cheer loudly, in anticipation of triumph. But they reckoned prematurely; for again came a rush of flame and crashing shot from the whole fortified line, dealing devastation through the ships. Their cheers were hushed, and they manned their guns again, answering with the united metal of five broadsides, earth and water rocking under the tremendous explosion. The battle-smokes were uplifted, and the sun's rays shone through them, as through a canopy of yellow gauze.

Marion pointed to the banner of the fort, which was waving in the breeze. Sergeant Jasper lifted his arms to it, and McDaniel, springing forward, raised his blue cap and cheered loudly; but at that moment another iron storm swept from the fleet. McDaniel's manly breast was before an embrasure, and as he waved his cap in honor of the flag of liberty, a cannon-shot stretched him dying before his comrades.
Jasper was kneeling by his side in a second, and Marion grasped his hand. The poor fellow's nostrils were gushing blood. He strove to rise, but his strength failed, and he fell in the arms of his comrades.

"I die," he murmured, as they were bearing him away, his eyes shining with the last fires of patriotism. "I die, comrades, but you will fight on, for liberty and our country."

At this moment a low murmur ran through the line, and all eyes were turned, as if instinctively, toward the flag. It hung apparently by a splinter, trembling and ready to fall. A cannon-ball had shattered the staff, and the next instant it swayed and fell over the rampart, upon the low beach beyond them. The hearts of the defenders sunk, while an exulting shout arose once more from the enemy.

But Jasper saw the flag fall, and had already leaped upon the breastwork. His right hand was lifted, as if in appeal to heaven, and then, waving it to his countrymen, he plunged over the wall to the sands below. A crashing broadside from the fleet daunted him not. A furious shower of shells and balls, plowing the beaches, stayed not his course. He passed along the entire front of the batteries, to reach the fallen banner. Then, while four hundred hearts above him stood still in breathless suspense, he knelt and disengaged the flag from the shattered staff.

This brave man seemed to bear a charmed life, for not a shot struck him of the hundreds raining around. He called for a sponge-staff to be thrown from the ramparts, and there, kneeling on the beach, fastened upon it the rescued banner. Then, waving it over his head, Jasper mounted the wall, and planted once more over his applauding comrades the flag of their free America.

Clouded were the eyes that saw the flag fall, and heavy the souls that sunk with it. But such a mighty shout arose from Sullivan's Island when the bright folds flashed again in the sunlight, as never could be overpowered by the roar of artillery. That shout was the American hurrah. Working at the battery under his charge, Captain Riviere gallantly sustained his part in the battle; bearing himself more like a trained warrior than as one who had doffed his bridal garments for those of a soldier. His voice echoed cheerily the
orders to “fire at the double-deckers,” and “rake the flag-ship,” and the brave men around him, who were nearly fainting under the sultry heat, caught his inspiring glance, and braced themselves anew for conflict.

Matt Blake, at one of the guns, watched his young officer with covert looks; until gradually, as the fight deepened, he seemed to become imbued with its spirit, and obeyed with alacrity the commands of his superior, even to a loud response, when the wild hurrah of cheers broke forth. The man lacked not bravery, and the bull-dog determination of the defense suited his stubborn nature; so that he whirled the gun-carriages about, as if they were no more than playthings, and exposed himself at the embrasures with a recklessness that appeared to mock at danger.

The thoughts of the two men—Riviere and Blake—were akin in sentiment at times; for the one recalled his gentle bride, while the memory of a cherished child tugged at the other’s fierce heart.

Meantime, the combat raged on; the cannon-peals shaking earth and wave, the smoke-clouds enveloping ships and fort in a sulphurous fire. At intervals, as Captain Riviere looked toward Blake’s gun, he met the bravo’s eye, which suddenly fell; and at times, also, Blake felt under his flannel sleeve a small French pistol, which he had loaded to the muzzle. On such occasions the man would mutter: “He’s a brave youth, but his life is not worth a thousand pounds to me! Not yet, though, not yet!” And then he would whirl his cannon, and send its contents tearing over the water.

Once, when a great broadside crashed from the British, Matt Blake felt himself suddenly grasped around the waist, and drawn violently from his gun. As he looked up savagely, to discover his assailant, he saw that it was Captain Riviere, and at the same instant he beheld a cannon-ball strike the piece, and shatter its trunnion. The quick eye of his young officer had marked the missile’s approach, and his ready hand interposed to save the gunner’s life. Blake’s frame quivered through every fiber, and in his agitation the concealed pistol dropped and exploded at his feet.

“Take care, my man!” cried Riviere. “We can not spare you yet.”
“He has saved my life,” muttered the bravo, “and I have lost my thousand pounds.”

Again the batteries roared, belching out their storms of iron. But Matt Blake shouted no more. He wheeled his gun, and applied the match mechanically, maintaining a sullen silence throughout the changing fortunes of the fray. Those near him noticed that he drank oftener from the rum-bucket, though the liquor appeared to have little effect upon him; but none could know what a fierce struggle was going on in the bravo’s mind; none could see how the blood shrunk within him when Ernest Riviere brushed him occasionally at the gun.

“Tush!” muttered the outlaw. “What recks this popinjay that he saved my miserable carcass, but that I am one more for the work he is at. ’Twas a whim that diverted him; he would have kicked some dog aside to save the cur’s skin, doubtless. But,” he added, with an oath, “I can’t take the boy’s life here—not here.”

Thus soliloquized the bravo, as he doggedly served his gun. Balefully flashed the lurid glare of that broadside which swept away Sergeant McDaniel; crashing came that cannon-ball which severed the flagstaff. But Blake went on with his work, unheedingly, till the powder gave out, and the fort fire slackened from lack of it. Then, while triumphant cheers arose from the British, the outlaw only drank again and again, and leaned moodyly against the parapet, till Marion and a dozen gallant men had run a gauntlet of broadsides, and brought back more ammunition from an armed sloop in the river.

Another even approached. The sun sunk behind the city. Twilight came and darkness, and then the stars climbed over the scene of strife. But the fire of the fort was kept up incessantly, till, as the hours passed, one after another of the British war-vessels drew off from her anchorage, and at length the signal-lanterns of retreat swung from the Admiral’s peak. Moultrie took a long whiff of his pipe, and said:

“I think we have driven them at last.”

“Yonder,” said Marion, “are some disabled craft that might be reached.” He pointed, in speaking, to the three vessels grounded on the shoals, one of which, the Acteon, lay high
upon the rocks. "With your leave, Colonel, I will take a few men, and reconnoiter them."

"God be with you, Major, go," returned Moultrie; and in a few moments the brave partisan had selected a small detachment, and was pulling, in a boat, for the stranded frigate, which had been already abandoned by her crew. Foremost among the volunteers was Captain Riviere, and, as he sprang, with Marion, on the Acteon's decks, he saw close behind him the countenance of the gunner whose life he had saved. At this moment, the British fleet was making all sail out of the channel.

"Let us give them a parting salute from their own guns," muttered the brave. "I doubt they are still loaded."

"Well thought of," cried Major Marion; and the word being given, a last broadside from the Acteon's pieces crashed after her consorts, scattering death and terror among their crews. The battle of Sullivan's Island was finished, and the British beaten. The cowed and crippled lion slunk away before a log-fort, manned by four hundred militiamen.

"Now to the boats!" commanded Major Marion. "This ship is afire and may blow up in a moment."

The Americans lost no time in obeying this order, but crowded over the bulwarks to their boats; for the water, no longer illumined by flashes of artillery, had become dark around the doomed frigate. It was at this moment, when Captain Riviere was awaiting till the last man had safely descended, that he felt himself struck suddenly from behind, and, toppling forward, felt some one rushing by. Instinctively he grasped the object, but too late to regain his footing. He fell heavily over the Acteon's quarter, dragging with him a heavy body, which he clutched with a desperate grasp. A dull plunge and smothered cry, and Riviere and the object he held sunk in the deep waters.

"Away! push off! The fire is near the magazine! We'll all be blown up!" were the confused shouts that rose from the boat. "Pull away," they cried, "or we are lost!"

The boat shot out into the stream, away from the Acteon's dark shadow. Suddenly, along her decks, and up her rigging, forked flames darted, while a fierce light flashed from stern to stern. Then she blew up, her scattered fragments falling in showers on land and river.
The boat containing Marion and his men was rowed slowly back to the fort; but a gloom hung over all its crew. Captain Riviere, the brave volunteer Captain, came not back from the doomed Acteon. Neither he nor the dark gunner returned to Charleston, when the joy-bells of triumph rung out, to welcome the defenders of Sullivan’s Island.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUMMY.

A weed flung by;
A withered floweret, plucked to die.—ANON.

On the bank of a small river, near the borders of South Carolina and Georgia, stood, in 1778, an old house, which, during the Indian wars preceding the Revolution, had been a sort of stronghold against marauding Cherokees. Its buttressed walls and loop-hole windows had defended the interior from more than one savage attack in the past, and gave promise of good service in the future. A growth of woods along the river, and behind the plantation appurtenant to this dwelling, formed a natural bulwark, inclosing out-houses occupied by the servants of the castle; and a wide avenue of oaks led from the front door to a highway about a quarter of a mile distant.

The river-banks were grown with thickets and dense underbrush on all sides, which afforded cover for game close to the house and its detached huts. It offered cover, too, on a sultry evening, in the autumn of 1778, for a troop of some two-score partisans, whose horses were picketed under the trees. They were a rough company, clad in buckskin and fustian, and armed with a variety of weapons; and the lack of discipline among them showed that they belonged to the irregular soldiery who, at this period, waged bitter strife on the marshes of Carolina.

The members of this motley band were scattered in all directions; some ranging among the negro-quarters, bantering
the wenches, others seated or lying on the sward, and others drinking and smoking in groups. In front of one of the huts sat a swart-browed man, whose slouched felt hat nearly hid his features, and whose heavy frame was encased in a garb half nautical and half military, consisting of a sailor’s pea-coat, with anchor buttons, and yellow soldier’s breeches, much the dirtier for long wear. A pair of dragoon’s pistols, and a formidable hunting-knife in his belt, gave a fierce look to this personage, which seemed to impress with great reverence a negro who stood near.

“Squire Atnee’s plantation! umph!” quoth the trooper, emitting a puff of tobacco-smoke from his bearded mouth. “You lazy dogs have a good master, I hear.”

“Dar’s no fa’ut to find wi’ mauss’,” answered the negro. “Mauss’ neber work nigga mon’trous hard.”

“Not a big family, to have much work to do up there, I fancy,” said the partisan, jerking his head in the direction of the dwelling-house, whose chimneys could be discerned over the thick grove surrounding it.

“Ky!” exclaimed the black. “Reckin’ Mauss’ Bob’s family is Mauss’ Bob hisself. Dar’ ain’t no heap o’ white folks ’round dis yer place.”

“Eh, Snowball? Does your master live alone?”

“Mauss’ Bob live anywhar’ he please, sah,” answered the negro. “Har’ t’day, yar to-morrow—dat’s Mauss’ Bob. Ole Gattan take keer ob de house, and dar’s a couple o’ ole darkies to cl’ar’ way de chores. We is field niggars, down yer, we is.”

“But where’s your master’s wife?”

“Ky! Mauss’ Bob he got no wife.”

“But he’s got a child, Snowball. I’ve heard tell he had a little daughter, deaf and dumb. Didn’t he bring her from Charleston, eh?”

The partisan, in asking this question, removed his pipe from his mouth, and regarded the negro with a sharp look. But the black suddenly broke into a loud laugh.

“Ky!” he exclaimed. “Is dat yar dummy Mauss’ Bob’s darter? ’Spec’s mauss’ keer a heap for his own fles, an’ blood, den.”

“Then the child is here!” cried the partisan, grasping the negro’s arms, and speaking in a husky voice.
"De dummy, sah?"
"Yes, Snowball, what about the dummy?"
"A'most done gone, mauss' ranger," replied the negro, shaking his head. "Dar's no chance for poor dummy, Aunty Phyllis says."

"Black scoundrel! what do you mean? Where's the child—the child, I say?" rejoined the trooper, in savage, though suppressed tones. "What do you mean by saying there's no chance for her?"

"'Kase Aunty Phyllis says dat dummy's sartain to die 'fore sundown. Lor' bress us, is mauss' ranger got de shakes?"

The negro stared at the partisan, who appeared to be shivering, as if suddenly seized by an ague-fit, and whose white lips mumbled some sounds which were slowly shaped into words.

"Want to see de dummy, sah? Bress de Lor', she's over yonder, at Aunty Phyllis' cabin, in de swamp," answered the black. "Foller along, mauss' ranger, I's jest gwine dar."

The white man motioned with his hand, and the negro preceded him, across a corner of the clearing, and down a narrow pathway through the thick woodland, till they reached some marshy ground bordering the river. Here stood a weather-beaten hovel, surrounded by the customary small garden-path. A negress, whose age might have been a century, so shriveled and decrepit she seemed, sat at the open hut door; and to this crone the field-negro addressed an inquiry concerning "the dummy." But before she could respond, the partisan had pushed roughly over her threshold, and at the same moment uttered a loud cry.

"What de debble dat?" cried the negro, running past Aunt Phyllis, to follow the white intruder, and to discover him kneeling on the clay floor of the hut, his hands clenched in his shaggy hair, his teeth set, and his eyes fixed in a glassy stare upon some object before him. The negro did not require to be told that this object was "the dummy."

A female child, about eight years old, lay on a mattress of coarse hemp, half covered with dirty cotton cloth. Her face, delicately fair, was pinched, as from long sickness, and her neck and arms were worn to mere bone and transparent skin. The impress of suffering appeared stamped on every lineament,
save only the eyes, which were large and brilliant, and full at this moment of joyful recognition. Her thin fingers were locked together, and lifted toward the white man kneeling beside her pallet. Her lips emitted a strange guttural sound.

"Bress de Lord," ejaculated the field negro, pausing in astonishment, as he encountered this scene, and immediately afterward beheld the partisan throw himself forward, to clasp the young girl in his arms, and lift her tenderly to his breast, kissing her repeatedly, while heavy tears dropped from his eyes upon her pale cheeks. Turning to the crone who had hobbled forward on her stick, the slave whispered in a low voice:

"Aunty Phyllis—maybe's de angel ob def come to car' poor dummy off!"

The old woman took no notice of her fellow-African's remark, but waited quietly a few moments while the white man continued to embrace the child, and the child uttered its low brooding, like the cooing of a dove. Presently, however, her eye caught the little one's, and, hobbling forward, she laid her hand upon the stranger's arm.

"Dat chile's out o' breff, massa sojer," said she, softly.

"Please let de darlin' talk to Aunty Phyllis. Dummy knows Aunty Phyllis."

The sick child lifted her weak clasp from the rough man's bearded throat, and began to make feeble motions with her small fingers. Aunt Phyllis dropped her cane, and raising both of her shriveled hands, replied by similar signs. Thus, during several moments, a pantomime went on between the two—the negress nodding and shaking her withered head, the child languidly shaping speech upon her fingers, in the rude language of the deaf and dumb.

Thus Aunt Phyllis learned that the mute waif of her cabin was the daughter of that fierce man who held her in his arms, and in return, she related to the partisan how the child had been brought to the plantation two years before, by her master's nurse, Gattan, and had been thrown into the charge of Aunt Phyllis, as a helpless "dummy," to perish or survive as nature might determine; how she had taught the little one rude signs, and learned to interpret its wants; but how month by month, it had pined and grieved as if for something lost, till it dwindled to a shadow, "refused its food, forgot its pray," and
sunk so low that death's door now seemed open for its passage to a world where suffering is no more.

The rough, dark man, the wondering field-negro, the withered old woman leaning on her stick, and the beautiful mute, pallid and ghost-like, were strange contrasts, in that hut, when the sunset beams slanted through surrounding tree-tops, robing them with warm light. Matthew Blake; bravo, pirate, murderer, kissed his dying child again, and laid her to sleep on the coarse pallet—kissed her tenderly, parting the damp curls on her forehead; then, charging the negress Phyllis and her fellow-black, that they should speak no word of his visit to any mortal, and giving to each a broad piece of silver, to insure their silence, he went out to the camp of his comrades again, with a new purpose in his stormy soul.

CHAPTER IX.

LAURELWOOD HOUSE.

Embowered in woods,
Deep in a sylvan vale.—The Friends.

In what manner Matthew Blake escaped from a watery grave when the frigate Acteon blew up in Charleston harbor, will be explained at the proper time. Let it now suffice, that he found himself a trooper in a Tory band, after having served nearly twenty months as a sailor, on board the British fleet in American waters.

Meanwhile his employer, Robert Atnee, had pursued his career in other quarters. The repulse of Admiral Parker, an event which filled every patriot heart with joy, was to the Tory a bitter mortification, and the more so, that it was speedily followed by an accusation against himself, founded on alleged complicity with the enemy. He did not wait to confront the charge, but departing from Charleston with all possible alacrity, retired to his plantation on the borders of Georgia, there to watch more safely the progress of events.

Meantime, when joy-bells pealed, and Moultrie's brava
soldiers marched proudly through Charleston's streets, the multitude greeting them with cheers and shouts, there was one household, at least, which could not mingle in the general jubilee. The little band of volunteers, on whose roll the name of Ernest Riviere was inscribed, bore a shrouded flag in their midst; and when it passed the house of old John Riviere, there was silence, and the slow step of a funeral march, to tell of one who came not with his comrades.

What would have been the horror of those brave men had they suspected the foul treachery which had deprived them of a friend and brother; or divined that one who had plotted the murder of Ernest Riviere was one of his own kin and country? Neither the arch-conspirator nor his instrument could be arraigned, and the name of the missing patriot, like that of the fugitive, soon ceased to be spoken in Charleston.

Robert Atnee, though forced to forego the advantage which British success might have insured to him, yet exulted in the certainty that both Riviere and Matt Blake had perished by the sudden explosion of the Acteon, on whose decks the two had been last seen together. Henceforth he deemed himself secure from the discovery of certain dark transactions, whereof Blake was the confidant, and feeling no further interest in the bravo's unfortunate child, which he had taken with him to Laurelwood, he soon abandoned its helplessness to the tender mercies of a negro household. The interposition of Aunt Phyllis alone secured her poor "dummy" from entire neglect, and so it happened, as we have seen, that the bravo's innocent offspring survived to receive once more the embraces of her outlawed father.

Matthew Blake needed not the recital of Aunt Phyllis to divine at once what might have been the fate of his child, abandoned by Atnee as a dumb plaything for his slaves. Since that fatal night before the battle, when Alice was torn from her couch, the bravo had lived only on the hope of regaining his lost darling. Through long watches at sea, her pale face was always before him, and after many fruitless attempts he had made his escape from the fleet, and joined a band of marauding Tories, for the single purpose of searching out the treacherous Atnee, in whose charge he believed his little one to be. After tracking the abductor during four months, he at
length discovered his treasure, and we shall now follow him to the house of Robert Atnee, who, at the same hour, was preparing plots with new confederates.

The sun had disappeared, and the woods were in twilight, when Matthew Blake left the nook of Aunty Phyllis, and proceeded to one of the huts before which he had picketed his horse. Entering this, he remained a few moments, and then emerged, having exchanged his pea-coat for a wagoner's frock, and left both pistols and saber with his horse's rude equipments in the hut.

The bravo's appearance was much changed by the alteration of his dress, and the evening shadows, now closing in, enabled him to glide, without being observed, from the boisterous neighborhood of the Tory camp, and reach a high hedge of shrubbery which surrounded the mansion-house. Here, skulking under the balcony foliage, and favored by the dusk, he could peer into the open casements, and observe all who entered the dwelling.

When lights began to appear, the bravo saw the old negress Gattan, and her grandchild, Filippa, passing and repassing within, arranging a table in one of the rooms overhanging the balcony. He resolved if possible to gain this room and hide himself in one of the recesses, of which there were many, on all sides. Climbing the trellis, and crouching under its vines, he soon projected a mode of concealment.

The windows of the supper-room were hung with velvet and thin muslin, depending in folds to the floor. The curtains, at first view, appeared to offer a safe cover, but Matt Blake reflected that the evening air might render it desirable that they should be drawn close, in which case, concealment would be impracticable. He decided, therefore, on another retreat. The wide fireplace was filled with summer plants, in square wooden boxes, covering its capacious hearth. The branches of these house-flowers spread upward, over the mantel, forming a parler-conservatory, admirably adapted for screening any one behind; and it was to Blake but a moment's work to ensconce himself in the chimney recess, without disturbing the appearance of a single leaf. Thus, curtained by flowers and foliage, he could observe whatever transpired in the supper-room.
For some moments after the bravo had taken his position, the apartment remained silent and tenantless, though brilliantly illuminated by the lights of a candelabra on the table. Then the clatter of horses' hoofs without, and presently the sound of voices, announced to Blake that some one was approaching. His heart beat quickly, in recognizing Robert Atnee as one of two persons, who, booted and spurred, now clattered into the apartment.

The Tory was clad in a brown riding-suit, and armed with sword and pistols, which he presently threw upon a sideboard. His companion was recognized by Blake as the Captain of the troop of Tory partisans, of which he himself was a member, and which was quartered at this hour on the plantation. Imitating his host, this man unbuckled a heavy sword, and laid it across one of the old-fashioned arm-chairs drawn up near the table.

"Captain Richard Yancey, sit and eat," cried Atnee, in a gay tone. "If our ride has sharpened your appetite as it has mine, we shall do old Gattan's frugal fare some honor."

"Gad, Atnee, I'm wolfish, I promise ye," responded the partisan Captain, whose square jaws, yellow eyes and sensual lips denoted a temperament not averse to animal comforts, and who, without ceremony, threw himself into an arm-chair and drew it up to the table. Gattan, the housekeeper, here made her appearance, followed by a brace of elderly negroes with smoking dishes, and the two companions were soon engaged in discussing what was liberally set before them.

"Gad, Atnee, you've a paradise of a place here. What a duced comfortable thing to be rich, eh? Here am I chasing round after rebels, from Dan to Beersheba, with no pay, and only a chance of plunder now and then."

"Pay and plunder will come in good time, Captain. Let the king get Charleston again, and you'll come in for your share, never fear. His majesty's forces will soon overrun Georgia."

"There's that ranger Marion and his ragged devils, stirring up trouble again. Zounds, Atnee, 'twill take a bigger army than Prevost's to keep the cursed bottoms from sprouting rebels as they do cotton-pods. There's only one way to get
on with 'em, Atnee. Hang all and quarter nobody. But at present that's inconvenient, you know."

"I trust our unhappy South Carolina will soon return to her allegiance to good King George, Captain Yancey," said Atnee. "Let us drink his majesty's health, and confusion to the Yankee Lincoln and his northern ragamuffins."

"'Tis true, then, that Lincoln is coming here. But he'll not catch Prevost asleep like Burgoyne, eh?"

"I fancy not," rejoined Atnee, with a laugh. "We'll hang him and his Yankees as long as the Carolinas grow trees for the purpose."

"That'll be comfortable—Gad, it will, Atnee," cried the Tory Captain, clinking his wine-glass. "But, dang it, man," he continued, lowering his voice, "send away those nigger hogs, and let's have the yaller lady up."

"First talk of my business, Captain," said the host, with a slight sneer, as he motioned Gattan and the other sable attendants to leave the room. Meantime, the concealed bravo held his breath to listen.

"All right, Atnee, business first, pleasure afterward," quoth the trooper, pouring out his wine. "We understand matters, you know. I'm yours, till death us do part, as the parson says, you know."

"You told me that old John Riviere and his daughter had already set out from Charleston, and are now on the road to Beaufort."

"That's it, Atnee—slow coaches, change of air for the young lady—doctor's prescription, sea-shore, you know."

"And you are sure they can be intercepted, Captain?"

"Before forty-eight hours pass, they'll strike the Hill Fork, and there I'll bag them, like partridges, sir—provided we agree on terms, you know," answered the trooper, replenishing his glass, and filling that of his host; after which he held the decanter up to the light, pretending to scrutinize it. "Gad, that's good stuff of yours, Atnee," he continued. "Let's drink to my brown beauty, Filippa."

Atnee drank carelessly, eyeing the trooper's inflamed countenance. "Yancey," he said, abruptly, and in a measured voice, "you shall have the girl, but by Jove, you must treat her well."
“Oh, never you mind, Bob Atnee, when there's a woman concerned,” returned the partisan, with a leer. “I'm tender as a lamb, Atnee. What's that the poet says? 'Lion in war, lamb in peace,' eh, you know?"

“This girl has been raised a lady, Yancey. She's proud and high-strung, and more than that, I promised never to sell her.”

“Promised who?”

“Old Gattan, her grandmother, who saved my life once.”

“That high-stepping old jade, eh? Oh, bother your promise. You want Riviere's widow, and I must have your brown chattel. Say the word, and the bargain's made—wench for wench.”

“Filippa shall be yours, Yancey; but Gattan must not know that I consent to it. To-morrow, when I accompany you, the girl shall go with us on horseback, under the pretext that her attendance is required for the lady. If you find means to carry her off while I secure my prize, of course I can not prevent it. Do you comprehend the romance, Yancey?”

“Perfectly,” rejoined the Captain. “Give me you, Atnee, for plotting, at any time. And now, have her up here, for a bit, eh, Atnee?”

The host pulled a bell-cord, and summoned the quadroon girl, who came, in company with Gattan. Filippa approached the table, but her eyes fell on encountering the trooper's bold gaze.

“The gentleman is a soldier of the king, and our good friend, Filippa,” said her master. “He desires you to take a glass of wine with him.”

“Filippa is not well, to-night,” interposed the old negress, observing that her granddaughter shrunk from the table.

“Nay, 'tis to my health, Gattan,” responded Atnee, with a covert glance at his young slave. The poor girl started, and held out her hand for the glass which Atnee filled for her. Captain Yancey filled his own, never ceasing to regard her with admiring stare.

“Now, my brown beauty, hip— to your master's health, and may you love him to distraction.”

Filippa had lifted the glass to her lips, but the trooper's
words caused her to tremble so violently, that the wine was spilled plentifully.

"Here, touch my glass with your cherry lips, my brown beauty," cried the Captain, rising unsteadily, for the fumes of intoxication were mounting to his thick brain. But Robert Atnee laid his hand upon him.

"I fear the girl is not well. Gattan, let Filippa retire with you—the Captain will excuse her to-night."

He squeezed the trooper's arm, pressing him back to his chair, while the negress hastened with her grandchild from the apartment.

"Deuced shame. Gad, Atnee, what right have you?—Brown beauty's my property, you know."

"Not yet," said the Tory, significantly. "Come, my brave Captain, we have work to-morrow. Let us drink our nightcaps."

Atnee filled again as he spoke, and drank with the Captain, who was fast becoming bewildered, and who ludicrously accepted the attentions of an attendant, summoned to conduct him to his chamber. The Tory bade good-night to his guest, and was once more, as he thought, alone.

"This besotted marauder," he muttered, "should never have the girl, if he were not, as he is, so necessary. But Louise Riviere must be mine, or her death secure me the reversion of my uncle's property. For such a stake, what is a slave-girl to me? I doubt she loves me, in her wild way, and I must stipulate that this brute Yancey shall treat her well. But Louise and old Riviere, they must not escape me." Robert Atnee filled another glass of wine. "To-morrow night," he resumed, "to-morrow night, I shall turn the tables on them." He began to drink slowly; and at this moment, the bravo, Matthew Blake, putting aside the flowers that concealed him, emerged from the fireplace, and stood at the back of his foe. Robert Atnee sipped his wine, but ere the glass was drained, an iron grasp was on his throat, and a dagger gleamed before his startled eyes.

"Ha! ha! Master Atnee," laughed Matthew Blake.

The tone of that remembered name caused Atnee's blood to congeal, as, struggling to escape, he gasped for breath, essaying to cry out, but in vain. His enemy's fingers were like a vice.
"I have come for my child, d'ye hear, Robert Atnee?—for my Alice, whom you stole from her bed. I swore, when we parted, that my revenge would follow you, if you paltered with me. Robber! I know that my child is here; and you—you shall die!"

Atnee struggled, but uselessly. The strong-armed man lifted him from the chair, bending back his head, and poised the weapon that he held for a fatal blow. But, ere it could fall, a white figure glided silently over the carpet, and interposed under the impending arm. Matthew Blake saw no face—it was hidden upon the Tory's bosom; but the white robe, the woman's form, unnerved him for an instant, and in the next, he felt the sharp chill of steel thrill through his side. The woman had stabbed him, uttering a loud shriek. Matt Blake heard the sound of coming feet, felt the blood trickling from his wound, and staggered back, his dagger falling to the floor. Then, turning with a superstitious dread, and rushing to the window, he flung himself over the balcony. His brain was dizzy, and as he fled through the dark avenue, he drew from his side, where it had been struck, a long, thin stiletto.

Meantime, the Tory lay insensible on his arm-chair, where he had sunk, half strangled, when Blake released his hold. Overcome with pain and terror, he knew not that he was saved.

But as he lay, with closed eyes and discolored features, under the glare of the candelabra, Filippa, the quadroon, bent over him, pressing her lips to his pallid forehead, while her brow, cheeks and neck, were crimson with burning blood.

Again had Filippa preserved her master's life. And now, as the negress Gattan entered, the quadroon pressed her finger on her lips and glided away as she came, like a spirit.
CHAPTER X.

THE CHILD'S GRAVE.

I will not pause—I will not tire,
Till vengeance slake my righteous ire.—TAYLOR.

Morning broke over Laurelwood House, and the smiling landscape that encompassed it. The air grew fragrant with the scents of flowers, the skies golden with sunshine, and every thing in nature seemed blessed and beautiful.

But to Robert Atlee, hastening to consummate his villanies, and to the wretched Matthew Blake, bALKed of his revenge, the morning might as well have been barren of both perfume and brightness. The Tory and his partisan confederate, Yancey, were early on the road, and had left the plantation far behind them, ere the sun was two hours high. But it was near the noontide before the negress, Aunt Phyllis, seated at her hut door, beheld a staggering form emerge from the swamp wood, into the clearing, and reel toward her, with extended hands, in one of which was clutched a bloody weapon. She tottered to her feet, and essayed to cry aloud for help, but fright paralyzed her tongue, and she could only sink back again, crouching beside her threshold.

Little had she to fear, however, from the wretched being, who, with unsteady motion and wandering eyes, approached and sunk on the sward before her hovel. It was Matthew Blake, but how changed from the fierce trooper who had found his child under her roof the evening previous. The man's large frame was now weak as a child from loss of blood, and his mind was equally enfeebled by the effects of delirium. During more than a dozen hours, since his abortive attack upon Atlee, the bravo had lain through darkness and light at the foot of a cypress-tree in the swamp, where he had fallen exhausted, after his flight from the mansion. The stiletto, with which Filippa stabbed him, had pierced deeply, though not vitally, and occasioned a slow bleeding, coupled with fever. No human eye had watched, no human hand soothed the paroxysm which had afflicted the wretched man
during all his hours of agony. Alone he had wrestled with pain, till the loss of blood reduced his fever, and left him barely strength to gain the hut of Aunty Phyllis, with one thought absorbing his miserable heart, and informing his misty intelligence—the thought of his dumb child, Alice.

Alice! Her name had ever softened Blake's indurated nature, and illumined his dark soul with glimmerings of humanity and love. It recalled his scattered senses, and drew his staggering steps to the crone's hovel, and he breathed it as he sunk before the door-sill. Aunt Phyllis quickly saw the man's condition, and conceiving that he must have been wounded in some recent mêlée, hastened to render her assistance. She staunched and bound his still bleeding wound, and hobbling into the hut, returned with a cup of rum and sugared water, which she forced between his compressed lips. In a few moments he revived, and with returning consciousness, asked concerning his child. Aunt Phyllis shook her head, and the wretched father struggled with difficulty to his feet, and entered the hut with her.

The dumb girl lay upon her pallet, near the single window, shaded with thick vines, through which the sunshine could not glare; but the day was a sultry one, and the child seemed to be laboring for air, her breath coming quick and short. Her eyes were closed, her face pallid as marble, and damp with heavy perspiration. Matthew Blake threw himself beside the bed, and, with a wild look, gazed upon his dying child, for she was indeed passing away. Another form at this moment darkened the narrow doorway; it was that of the field negro, who had, the night before, conducted the trooper to the hovel.

"Is ye heerd about Mauss'—" the black was beginning a sentence, when he caught sight of the bravo, cowering over his child, and at once became mute, and crept softly toward the crone, whose shriveled form was doubled upon her staff. Aunt Phyllis shook her head significantly, and the two remained silent, regarding the father and his child.

The Southern sun rode high, and its beams fell vertically upon the low swamp dwelling. Matthew Blake's fever was gone, but more than physical torture racked his wretched soul. He groveled on the clay floor of the hut, sobbing
aloud, and writhing till the blood streamed again from his wounded side. Then he would become less violent, and bow over his child, wringing his hands, and laying his bearded face beside her white cheek. But at last, as all mortal things end, so ended the dumb one’s suffering existence. Her eyes sought those of her father, with a parting look of love, her blue lips feebly moved for a last kiss, and Matt Blake’s darling was freed from pain forever.

Neither Aunty Phyllis nor her fellow-slave cared to disturb the deathlike swoon into which the trooper sunk after his last embrace of the child. He lay stretched upon the ground, cold and pale, with jaws rigidly set, and only a stertorous breathing, at intervals, denoting that he lived. The two blacks busied themselves in preparing the body for burial, a task that required indeed but little labor; and it was not till the frail remains of beauty had been swathed and laid out, on a new cotton cloth, that the rough father again awoke to a realization of his loss. When he did, it was to exhibit no more violence of grief; but he eagerly grasped the cup of rum which was proffered to him, and drained its contents at a gulp. Thus stimulated, he looked, with dry eyes and a scowling brow, on the shiny face of his dead, and moody replied to Aunt Phyllis’ questions concerning her burial. Meantime the field hands had carried the news of “dummy’s death” to the negro-quarters, and a crowd of blacks soon appeared at the hut-door, eager to look upon the white child’s face ere it should be covered away forever.

Matt Blake, sitting at the bedside in gloomy apathy, regarded not the intruders, nor listened to their low whispers. He only nodded when Aunty Phyllis spoke to him, and watched vacantly what she did. And when, at sunset, the negro brought in a rude pine coffin, and when, at a later hour, a somber procession went out, under the moonlight, and with torches, and traversed the dark swamp-forest, bearing the dead child, Matthew Blake walked, like one in his sleep, with head bowed, to the plantation burial-place, and saw, without a word, the clay cast upon all he had loved during years of his dark life.

But when, after the burial, the pitying blacks would have led him away, he shook them off, and threw himself prostrate
upon the new grave. "Leave me!" he cried, hoarsely, to Aunt Phyllis. "Go your ways, and let me be alone!"

The negress departed, and Matt Blake remained upon the fresh earth that covered the dust of Alice. The burial-place was at the end of the swamp, where the ground sloped from a ridge to the river near a fording-place. Tall trunks of palmettoes were scattered here and there, and there was a grave upon the highest part of the land, within which were several white tomb-stones, marking the resting-place of white masters, while the undistinguished graves of bondmen occupied the swamp-land below. The dumb child had been laid on the exposed hillock-side, and upon it, and on Blake's form, the bright moonlight fell gloriously. But he, wretched man, recked not of heaven or earth, as he tore his hair, and gnashed his teeth, calling upon the name of his lost one. Still prone on the clay he kept his vigils, and so was found by the field negro and another black, who returned, after some hours, with food and a flask of rum, sent by the compassionate Phyllis.

"Mauss' ranger mun' eat a bit," said the slave. "Dis yer bacon and sweet 'tater is mighty good, mauss', and dar's a drop o' suthin' that's raal. Drink it, mauss'—it'll do ye good."

Blake seized the flask, and applied it to his lips, and ravenously devoured the viands.

"I is takin' keer o' mauss's pony," continued the black. "Poor critter might ha' done starved to def—"

"My horse!" cried the trooper, "ah! where is he—and the band?"

"Done gone, mauss'—all rode clean away, 'long wi' Mauss' Robert and de Cap'n."

Blake pressed his hands to his forehead, and appeared to ponder a moment; then, with fierce abruptness, he cried:

"Bring me the mare—I must be off from this."

"Is you strong enough to ride, mauss' ranger?"

"Bring me the mare," repeated Blake, "and rum—do you hear?—another flask of the spirits. There's money for you."

He thrust his hand under his wagoner's frock, and, drawing out a pouch, took from it a couple of silver dollars, and
handed them to the black. Then, turning his head, he threw himself back upon the grave. The blacks withdrew, terrified at his strange demeanor.

A sudden image had entered into the man’s breast, with the mention by the negro of his horse. The form of Robert Atnee, riding, as he had overheard him plot, to waylay the merchant Riviere and his niece, presented itself vividly to his heated fancy, and he resolved, at the moment, to pursue and carry out his purpose of revenge upon his enemy. Once in possession of his brain, this desperate project overmastered all other impulses. No sooner had the negro disappeared than he rose to his feet, and began to examine the bandages which confined his wounded side. His repeated draughts of spirits had lent artificial vigor to his iron frame.

While thus occupied, the trooper heard a sound in the distance, which his quick ear recognized as the clatter of horses’ hoofs, and in a few moments he beheld a dozen riders approaching by the river-road, which diverged, near the swamp cemetery, at a fording-place. From his position, on the hill-side, Blake could see them descend to the shallow water, and cast their bridles loose, to permit the horses to drink. The moonlight irradiated all objects, and threw the figures of men and steeds into strong relief; and he saw that they were not his own comrades of Yancey’s troop, though clad much like them, in the rough garments of hunters and woodsmen. “They must be rebel scouts,” muttered the partisan. “I heard they were out on the borders. What care I for rebels or king’s men? My enemy is Atnee.”

As the man said this to himself, he heard the noise of hoofs on the woodland sward, and immediately afterward the negro appeared, riding from the swamp-wood, out into the moonlight among the graves. He recognized his own mare, and at the same instant became aware that the sound of her feet had reached the horsemen at the pond; for there was an instantaneous movement of the whole into line upon the river-bank. Matthew Blake at once decided on his course; and no sooner did the negro dismount at his side, than he leaned upon him and clambered to the saddle. Then, bidding the black an abrupt “good-night,” he galloped down the hillock toward the pond, and was soon in front of the strange horsemen.
"Who are you, and what do you want?" was the salutation which Blake received, as he pulled up his mare, and lifted his haggard eyes to him who appeared to be the leader of the troop. The bravo started, both at the voice and countenance which confronted him.

"Ha!" he muttered, involuntarily, "'tis the ranger, Jasper."

"And I know your face," quickly responded the other. "It is pale now, but I have seen it grimed with powder-smoke. You were at Sullivan's Island—a gunner."

"I was a volunteer gunner in that log-fort affair," rejoined Blake, "and paid dear enough for it afterward. But 'tis a long story, sir, and will do for the morrow. At present, if it be agreeable, I'm a volunteer at your service." Blake said this in an off-hand way, at the same time narrowly observing the ranger, whose reminiscences of Sullivan's Island he cared not to recall too vividly.

"If you be a true man," replied the bluff Sergeant, "'I will talk of that matter as we push on. If you be spy or traitor, God help you."

So saying, Jasper turned his horse's head to the ford, and the troop rode forward, under a full moon that silvered all things with its light. Matt Blake turned in his saddle on gaining the opposite bank, and cast a parting look on the hills side where he had hidden away the treasure of his dark life. Then, dashing his hand across his brow, he muttered a curse, coupled with the name of Robert Atnee, and spurred on at the side of his new leader.
CHAPTER XI.

THE FOREST AMBUSH

With foot to foot, and steel to steel,
They met and waged their frequent war,
Till all the green turf ran with gore.—MARMORAY.

Many hours after the meeting of Matt Blake with Jasper, the ranger, these two new allies might have been discovered, had they not studiously sought concealment, halting, rein to rein, in a thick, woody covert, curtained from the highway by a pendent growth of foliage. Their steeds were drawn up immovable in a wide fissure of the bank, above which hung the branches of a gnarled sycamore, overrun with parasitic vines that completely vailed the figures of horses and riders. Behind, in the forest-recesses, were the remainder of Jasper's small troop, alike motionless in the green shadows.

From the elevated position which they had secured, our hidden horsemen could command the highway, on either side, and trace its sinuous course in ascents and descents, at intervals for several miles, though it was lost, here and there, in long stretches of woodland.

"Our short course across the country, and the speed of our ride, ought to have gained us a good day's march, comrade," said Jasper to his dark-browed associate. "Yet, here are we, at the Hill Fork, with no signs of your marauders as yet. How is that, comrade?" And the Sergeant's sharp eye flashed on Matt Blake, as if it would penetrate his thoughts. But the outlaw scarcely lifted his own glance, as he replied, moodily:

"We are here, at the Hill Fork, sure enough; and we have gained, as you say, a day's march. Well, let us bide here."

"Very good; but I neither see nor hear aught, to right or left—"

"My eyes are older than yours, Sergeant; nevertheless, I can tell two clouds of dust from two clouds in the heavens." Saying this, Blake jerked his hand to the right and left, and Jasper exclaimed at once:
"You're right, comrade, and I ask your pardon for what I said just now. There are clouds of dust rising over yon valley, and to the left of the forest yonder."

"Ay, whoever they be that make them, we shall find all face to face not far from this ambush of ours," rejoined the bravo. "The valley just below us here will ring with hoofs ere an hour go by."

"You are right; they must meet in yon hollow," returned Jasper, "and a notable angle for sortie is this Hill Fork, comrade."

The two watchers became silent, each intent on following the movements of those wreaths of white dust which were at first hardly discernible in the distance, but presently grew more palpable, as they approached one another. Sergeant Jasper, to whom Matt Blake had communicated all that he had learned, regarding the contemplated foray of Captain Yancey, now perceived that the celerity with which his own men had traversed the defiles they had taken since day-break, must have placed them in advance of the Tory troopers, who had skirted the hills in a route of double the length. He was thus gratified in finding himself enabled to take post between the king's men and their anticipated victims; a situation which promised the bold partisan an opportunity of interposing at the right moment, and perhaps defeating the nefarious schemes in progress.

It was not long before the approaching cavalences could be distinguished fairly, as they crossed the more exposed portions of highway, between patches of woodland. Their course, being around the low hill-skirts, prevented either from discovering the other, while both continued under scrutiny of the concealed rangers above them. As they approached, Jasper saw that the force with which he must contend was at least double his own, while that of the party which Yancey waylaid consisted of only four mounted men, and a carriage drawn by two horses.

"In that coach, probably, is the poor lady whom they seek to kidnap, comrade," remarked the ranger; "and her father, it is likely, rides with her; for those in saddle are all black, if my eyes can be depended on."

"But see! the troopers have entered the wood to the right of us, in the hollow. Think you they'll halt where they are till yon slow-dragging coach creeps round to them?"

"Hist! lie close!" was the ranger's rejoinder; and at that moment the sound of a horse's hoofs galloping below them, struck upon the ears of both. Presently, the gallop subsided to a slower pace, and in a few moments they heard the snort of a steed on the road, from which they were hidden by the thick vines. Peering out, they beheld a rough-looking horseman, whom Matt Blake at once recognized as a late comrade of his own in Yancey's partisan band. This man drew rein at the brow of the hill, immediately in front of the cloven bluff which concealed the ranger, and appeared to discover the approaching traveling coach at once, for he uttered an exclamation, turned his horse's head, and clattered back as he had come.

"Thank you, master scout, for 'giving us just the bit of notice we wanted," said Jasper, with a smile, as he heard the hoof-beats die away. "And now, comrades, let us make ready for our work." So saying, the brave ranger touched his horse's rein softly, and the trained animal cautiously moved into the wood. Matt Blake followed, and as he rode up, Jasper stretched out his hand to him, saying:

"I ask your pardon, for mis doubting you somewhat this morning. There's my hand, as a true comrade in the fight, and when that's over, you shall tell me what you like about yourself."

The outlaw took the offered hand, but no smile lit up his dark face, as, in response to the honest ranger, he muttered:

"I care not how hard and desperate the fight may be," and then rode on in silence.

The dozen rangers under Jasper's command stood each at his horse's head, bridle in hand while their steeds cropped the sward. A few words from their leader sufficed to disclose his plan, and then the rangers moved slowly through the intricacies of the wood, passing its declivities by narrow paths, each horse led cautiously. An hour was consumed in this descent, before they reached the valley plateau, and became aware that they were in proximity to a larger wood, wherein Yancey's troopers had halted, to await the arrival of their prey.
It was in good time that Jasper and his men were come, for the lumbering carriage was already creaking down the narrow road that bordered the woodlands, and ere they were fairly in the saddle, shouts and cries reached their ears, announcing the attack. The Sergeant and Matt Blake spurred forward, and in a brief space came in sight of the highway, while a succession of sharp shots were startling the echoes of the forest.

The coach had been stopped and surrounded. A dozen of the marauders were engaged in mastering the black servants, others held the horses, while others were grappling with an aged man, who, with a pistol in either hand, stood by the coach-door, out of which he had apparently sprung to defend it. Robert Atnee was in the act of dismounting, while a negro servant held his bridle, and Yancey, reining his steed close by, had seized the bridle of another horse, wherein was the quadroon Filippa, apparently bewildered with the scene. At least a score of the Tory’s troops were drawn up in line, at the wood openings, and seemingly taking no part in the fray. One glance was enough for Sergeant Jasper, to reveal to him all. He whistled shrilly to his men, and with brandished saber, dashed at their head across the highway.

It was a gallant charge, and in a moment there was a mêlée. The onset was directed upon the troopers who were drawn up in saddle, and a half-dozen of these were cloven to the ground in an instant. Wheeling rapidly, the patriot rangers turned upon the broken line, and after unhorsing a few more, found themselves engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with the entire troop of Tories, rallying under their Captain.

Matthew Blake’s eye had singled out Atnee, and after the first sweep upon the marauders, he turned to confront the Tory, who remained on foot beside the carriage. Though still feeble from his wound, he aimed a deadly blow at his enemy, who parried it with his own blade, and then darted behind the massy coach.

“Coward! Atnee! you escape not thus,” yelled Matt Blake, wheeling his horse around, in pursuit. But at this juncture, the negro, who held the bridle of Atnee’s horse, fired a shot at the bravo’s steed, which brought him to his haunches, and
Blake rolled heavily from his seat. The next moment, he heard Atnee's voice from the coach-box.

"Quick, Juniper! the reins! the reins!"

Matt Blake, disengaging himself from the stirrups, struggled to his feet, in time to behold the carriage rolling away, his enemy Atnee lashing the frightened horses to the top of their speed, while curbing them with a firm grasp of the reins. Gnashing his teeth with rage, the outlaw turned on the black, Juniper, who had rendered Atnee such timely aid, and who was now in the act of mounting his master's horse to follow him. A fierce blow of his saber stretched the negro at his feet, and the next moment Blake was in saddle again.

But it was vain to think of pursuing the carriage. A fierce battle confronted him on all sides. More than half of Yancey's troop had fallen, but the remainder were fighting desperately, and five of Jasper's rangers lay dead on the highway. The dusky hollow in which they fought resounded with frightful cries, pistol-shots and saber-strokes. Blake found himself in a contest with three of his former comrades, and beheld his late Captain at a little distance, engaged with Filippa, the quadroon, who struggled in his grasp like a lioness, while he endeavored to manage both her and the restless animal on which she was mounted.

The rumbling of the coach-wheels echoed through the woods, and then suddenly ceased. Sergeant Jasper's voice was heard, encouraging the remnant of his little band, and immediately afterward, a half-dozen red-coated horsemen appeared, advancing from the direction in which the carriage had disappeared. The Tory partisans set up a loud shout, and Jasper whistled to his men. Matt Blake, hard pressed by the marauders, saw his only chance was in flight, for he recognized the uniform of the new-comers as that of British regulars, belonging probably to the troops of Provost, then on the borders. Spurring the horse which he bestrode, a few leaps placed him on the main road, and he galloped wildly away, his speed increased by the clatter of pursuing troops.

It was near sunset, and shadows crept up from the valleys and woodlands, announcing speedy twilight. The noise of battle grew fainter, but Matthew Blake could hear the hoofs
continually following him. Thus he galloped for several miles, still descending into shadows, when suddenly the report of a pistol, accompanied by the shrill cry of a woman, caused him to check his steed and look behind. Scarcely two hundred yards behind, he saw the quadroon Filippa, with Yancey, the Tory, riding closely after her. The smoke of a pistol which she had just fired circled over the girl, and Yancey's arm was just descending upon her head. The next moment, she fell from the saddle, and her horse galloped wildly past.

"A dastard blow," muttered Blake, with an oath, as he drove his spurred heel into the flanks of his steed, which, with one bound, brought him in front of the Tory leader. But before he could lift his sword to strike, as he intended, Yancey swayed in his saddle and toppled off, his feet entangled in his stirrups. Thus dragged upon the dusty road, he swept by in a moment, and Matt Blake found himself alone, on the darkening road, with the prostrate form of Filippa lying under his horse's feet.

"Is she dead or alive?" muttered the outlaw, as he threw himself from his horse, and bent over the white-robed girl. She had fallen on her back, and her face, half turned, was covered with blood, which flowed from a wound inflicted by the heavy sword-hilt of Captain Yancey. Blake placed his hand on her pulse, and found that it yet fluttered; then, exerting himself for the effort, he lifted her across the saddle of his horse, and thus sustaining her, directed his course from the road, into the deepening gloom of the forest. His quick ear caught the sound of a not distant waterfall, and with cautious march he proceeded toward it.

It was a mountain torrent, precipitated with incessant roar from the heights of the Hill Fork, over almost perpendicular shelves. Behind it the mountain was cloven, and on either side, the rocky walls were overgrown with mosses and evergreens. Blake speedily found a soft moss-grown bank, whereon he deposited his insensible charge, and with water from the cataract, and a few drops from his canteen, soon brought her to consciousness again. But he almost cursed himself for his officiousness, when he heard the first words shaped by her lips.
"Master Robert—thank God—I have saved you! dear Master Robert!"

"Ay!" muttered Blake, between his teeth. "She is thinking of the stab she gave me, for her dear Robert—ha! ha!"

The short laugh sounded strange enough, in that dim place, with scarce light enough to disclose the face of either man or woman.

"Hist!" whispered the outlaw to Filippa; "be quiet, till you are stronger. Take another sup of the spirits, child."

"Where am I?" murmured the girl, feebly. "Master Robert! Master Robert!"

"'Tis no use calling him, he's far away," cried Blake. "But you are safe, wench, for all that; safer than with the master who sold you."

"Sold! sold!" repeated Filippa, with a shuddering moan. "Who is sold?" She attempted to lift her head, but sank back feebly.

"No matter now, wench; take another sup, and lie still, till I wash and bandage that head of yours. 'Twas a savage blow, and might have killed you. Lie still, now."

Thus, roughly performing the part of a nurse, (how different had been his wont with another helpless one), Matthew Blake brought water from the fall, and cleansed the blood from Filippa's glossy hair—contriving to stop the effusion with healing leaves and a portion of his frock, which had served for his own bandages the night previous. Then, after picketing his horse, and making up a rude bed for the quadroon under the shelving rocks, he went out and sat under the roar of the cataract, with his head buried in his hands, to think upon his dead Alice.
CHAPTER XII.

ROBERT ATNEE'S SCHEMES.

Full well he knew each mode of guile,
Each subtle snare, each specious wile.—Spence.

Gattan, the negress left in charge of Laurelwood mansion, gazed anxiously after the cavalcade which had passed out of the shaded park to the highway. Many forebodings had the crone that her master was intent on matters which might bring no good to herself and Filippa; for the scene in Robert Atnee's saloon, the night previous, when the quadroon was summoned to drink wine with a brutal guest, had not failed to impress her grandmother with a suspicion that some understanding concerning the young slave existed between the Tory and Yancey, the trooper. But she had breathed no word of doubt to Filippa; for she knew that the quadroon's soul was devoted to her master, and that the poor girl would resent a syllable spoken in doubt of him as a crime worse than treason to the king.

To Gattan, indeed, the strange passion of her grandchild had been long known, as well as the incessant watchfulness of Filippa over Atnee, which had twice interposed to rescue him from deadly jeopardy. She knew, too, that Atnee was aware of his slave's devotion, and that he could not but suspect, though he had never avowed it, the instrumentality of Filippa in saving his life; but the old woman was quite unequal to a comprehension of her owner's cold selfishness of nature, which made him the unscrupulous villain that he was. To her he had always been the "Master Robert" who had nestled in her bosom in infancy, and whose boyhood and youth she had gloried in. The hard, calculating, plotting Tory had ever vailed his real character in her presence; and it was not marvelous, then, if she reposed implicit confidence in the promise he had long since made to her, that Filippa should never be parted from her, to go among strangers.

Gattan, nevertheless, was not blind. She remembered how Atnee had spoken, on more than one occasion of late years,
concerning his declining fortunes, and of the expense of maintaining his mansion at Laurelwood. She trembled to think that Filippa might yet be sold, though never venturing to hint a possibility of it to the quadroon herself. But when Robert Atnee set out that morning, with the troop of Captain Yancey, and when Filippa, who was to accompany him, "to meet a lady," as the master assured them, mounted a horse, and followed with the Tory's body-servant, Juniper, old Gattan's brain was filled with vague and troubled surmisings.

Poor Gattan! she had reason to recall her doubts and forebodings when, on the third morning, the wheels of a carriage rolled into Laurelwood gates, and her master presented himself in the drawing-room, bearing in his arms the form of a lady, pale and insensible, whom he placed in her charge with a few hurried commands. Filippa came not back with him, nor the valet Juniper, and to her inquiries concerning the quadroon, she obtained only evasive replies, which were worse than certainties of the young slave's loss.

But Robert Atnee, moody and fitful, took little heed of Gattan's anxiety. He gave directions at once to an old negro, his farm-overseer, to take charge of the plantation, during a long journey which he was about to make, ordered trunks and portmanteaus of his own to be packed, and announced his intention to set off immediately for the seaboard. But, dissimulating to the last, he assured Gattan that Filippa would shortly return, and in the mean time, and until she should hear from him, the household affairs were to be conducted as had been usual during his absences from the estate. At daybreak, the morning succeeding his return, Robert Atnee again set out, with the same carriage which he had brought, but with attendants selected from his most valued slaves.

Meanwhile, Gattan had learned but little from the lady confided to her care, and whom she knew as her master's cousin Louise. Enfeebled by previous illness, the bereaved wife of Ernest Riviere had lost all consciousness, at the moment when the marauders stopped the carriage, and her uncle sprung out to defend her; and when her senses returned, it was to find herself in company with Robert Atnee, whom she had not encountered since the night of her bridal, two years before. The crafty Tory played his part well. He
represented himself as her rescuer from the Tories, and avowed his resolution to protect her, till the whereabouts of her uncle could be ascertained. A plausible story of arresting her carriage, as it was dragged furiously by runaway horses, sufficed to account for his presence, and he offered the shelter of Laurelwood, and an escort to Beaufort as speedily as possible. Louise was completely deluded, and though filled with misgivings regarding her uncle, confided in the promises of her cousin Robert, that every exertion should be at once made to discover him.

The insidious Tory already began to exult in his influence over the widowed mourner, whose beauty, though softened by sorrow, recalled his passion of former years. But Atnee's ulterior object was a more powerful one. He had matured in his mind a scheme which was yet, as he trusted, to place him in possession not only of Louise, but of her fortune. He well knew that the king's forces were concentrating for the capture of Savannah and Charleston, as they had already overrun Georgia and the seaboard; and when the sway of Britain should be established, he doubted not that his claims to the forfeited estates of his cousin could easily be made good, and a union with Louise insure for him the undisturbed possession of them. Louise was now in his power, and unsuspicious of his motives; and he hoped with specious reasonings to reconcile her ere long to all his purposes.

"Riviere is out of the way," muttered the plotting Tory, as he mentally revolved his projects; "her uncle will be powerless to protect her, and she is but a woman, after all. A few months in the West Indies, till affairs are settled here once more; and then, Robert Atnee, your star will rise."

So mused the master of Laurelwood, as he placed Louise Riviere again in her carriage, and with courtly gallantry placed himself opposite to her, for their journey, as the deceived lady believed, to her friends in Beaufort. The coach passed from the park, and out to the highway, and Gattan, the housekeeper, was once more left in charge of the mansion.

Not long, however, was the negress to remain alone, for Filippa returned that evening, worn out, as if with suffering. She was escorted by a dark and travel-stained man, who had,
as she averred, preserved her life. But how changed had the
quadroon become during her brief absence. She only smiled
faintly, when Gattan threw herself upon her breast in half-
frantic welcome—smiled, and then kissed the plain gold ring
which always gleamed on her left hand. The man who
came with her was moody and silent, and stayed but to par-
take of some refreshments, then abruptly took his leave.

The next day Laurelwood resumed its routine, as far as the
field servants, under the overseer, were concerned. But
Gattan, the housekeeper, remained for hours shut up with
Filippa; and the two, when they went about again, appeared
no longer the same as before. The old woman grew feeblter,
and the quadroon seldom spoke and never smiled. Juniper,
the black body-servant of Robert Atnee, returned shortly after-
ward, disabled by a sword-cut, and his story went over the
plantation, that Captain Yancey and his troopers had been
engaged in a great fight. This was all that transpired at
Laurelwood concerning the ambuscade of the Hill Fork.

Weeks passed on. Filippa's changed demeanor continued,
hers health manifestly declining. The strange man who had
brought her back, was seen, from time to time, by negroes
of the estate, and it was thought that Aunty Phyllis and some
of the field blacks knew more about him than they chose to
disclose. He was sometimes seen in Aunty Phyllis' cabin,
but oftener might be encountered in the swamp-woods near
the plantation burial-ground. Stories were told of his having
been seen lying on the new grave, under which "dummy"
had been buried, and it was said he had made a dwelling for
himself in a cave hard by, where the river skirted a high
bank. Meanwhile, Robert Atnee remained absent, and no
one heard from him.
CHAPTER XIII.

ST. AUGUSTINE CASTLE.

The prisoner, clanking his iron chain.—MANNERS.

With reeling senses, and a numbing pain in his side, Ernest Riviere rose to the water's surface, after falling from the Acteon's gangway. He had lost his grip of the man who had struck him, and whom he had dragged overboard in his descent; but as he drew breath, on emerging from beneath the waves, the heavens became suddenly illuminated, the waters boiled as a caldron, and a column of flame shot up, like a volcanic eruption. In the momentary glare he beheld a human face rise near him, and recognized the dark liniments of that gunner at Sullivan's Island, whose life he had saved during the battle. But the next instant a chasm opened in the waters, and he felt himself drawn under, as in a whirlpool. When he again rose, it was to find himself in the midst of a mass of spars and timbers, the floating debris of the Acteon. He clutched instinctively at a large fragment of wood, and at the same instant beheld it grasped by another hand, and was once more face to face with the cannonier.

The two men were almost in contact, as they clung to the timber, though the darkness which had succeeded the glare of the burning vessel prevented them from distinguishing one another's features. But Ernest Riviere, as he felt the man's gasping breath so near, could not help exclaiming:

"Comrade, why have you sought my life? I never saw you before yesterday."

"You saved my life, curse you!" muttered the other, savagely. "Why did you not let the ball do its errand?"

"Unhappy man, I have never injured you," said Riviere. "May God forgive you, and save us both!"

"Offer that prayer for your cousin, Robert Atnee," rejoined the gunner, savagely. "He pays—l stab!"

Riviere, appalled at the bitter cynicism of the gunner, would have responded, but he felt the plank to which he was clinging
suddenly pushed violently, and the man who had spoken was no longer with him. Immediately afterward, his narrow support encountered resistance, and, running against the sides of a line-of-battle-ship, which was slowly swinging from her moorings into the rapid stream, he heard the cheery cries of men working the capstan far above, and, lifting himself out of the water, he raised his voice in a shrill cry for help.

Meantime, though Riviere saw him not, the gunner, who had left his hold of the plank, was swimming vigorously toward the lanterns of a tender which lay at a short distance, and reaching its bow-quarter, soon contrived to make himself heard by the look-out.

Not so easily did Ernest Riviere cause his voice to be heard over the din above him, and he felt the strong current bearing the plank which he grappled away from all hope of assistance. Once more, however, he desperately shouted, and was this time answered by a gruff "ay! ay!" from the vessel. Then all consciousness deserted him, till he awoke to sensibility in the cockpit of Admiral Parker's flag-ship, in the midst of wounded and dying sailors, the victims of that day's dreadful business.

Bruised and sore, from contact with the Acteon's floating remains, Riviere was compelled, during some days, to witness the sufferings of poor wretches, writhing under the surgeon's hands around him. When removed, at last, and questioned by his captors, the young patriot made no secret of his share in the conflict of Sullivan's Island; and the result was that he was required to take the oath of allegiance to England, or take the consequences of his contumacy.

"I submit, as a prisoner of war," was his reply.

"Rebels must be regarded as traitors, and can not hope to be recognized as prisoners of war," returned the Lieutenant.

And he was at once confined on the prisoner's deck, whence, in a few days, he was transferred to a tender, and conveyed, with other captives, to the castle of St. Augustine, in Florida.

Severe and abrupt was the change of life to which the young Carolinian soon found himself subjected. Immured in close, hot dungeons by night, and forced to labor on the
fortifications by day, in lifting huge stones, and wheeling hand-barrows of sand, he realized those long and dreadful hardships which British tyranny made familiar to its victims.

The laborers were chained in couples to drag-logs, and Riviere found himself fettered with a fine, soldierly man, whose gaunt limbs and broad shoulders denoted great bodily strength, though his features were worn thin, like one over-worked and scantily fed. The two toiled and slept together, their skins blistering under the fierce suns, their blood chilled by the night damps. They had but one consolation in their misery, the knowledge that they were both countrymen and Caroliniens.

So passed the weary months, for more than two years; Riviere's skin became bronzed, like that of his older comrade, and a heavy beard covered his youthful face. They had long since rehearsed their mutual story; but the Captain never wearied of listening to his honest yoke-fellow, Tom Irvins, the ranger.

"By the Continental Congress!" the latter would say, his favorite form of adjuration, "this wheeling stones, Cap'n, is wearing to soul and body. Faith, sir, if it wasn't for you, I'd escape or be shot by the sentinel."

"Most likely the latter would be your fate, my brave Tom," the young man would quietly reply. "'Tis not so easy to escape, I fancy, with a sentry's bayonet at every angle."

"I wish I had the butt of a bayonet in my grip, and this chain off, for a few moments, I'd do the business for three Britishers, or my name's not Tom Irvins."

"And be stretched on yonder sands with a dozen bullet-holes through you, poor fellow," rejoined Riviere. "No, my friend, let us wait a while longer yet. Our deliverance will come, in good season."

"By the Continental Congress, Captain, you give me some hope; but here we've been nearly seven hundred days, as I've notched on the rampart, yonder."

The conversation was interrupted by the sound of a cannon at the harbor's mouth; and soon after, the sails of a vessel appeared in the offing.

"More prisoners," cried Irvins, dashing his brown hand
over his eyes. "God help our poor countrymen. Are they still fighting, I wonder?"

"Ay," answered Riviere, "and they will fight while a British hireling insults their free soil. We shall yet, Tom, behold our flag triumphant."

"God grant your words be true, Captain," rejoined the ranger; and they went on with their toil, in silence, till the hour for partaking of their meager noon-meal arrived, and they were marched to the barracks. After dinner, it became evident that the ranger's surmise concerning the arrival of prisoners was correct; for a new gang of unfortunates appeared in charge of soldiers. Captain Riviere, with his comrade, drew near to the foremost, and the brave young man almost swooned in encountering him. He leaped forward, dragging Evans by his chain, and fell prostrate before the prisoner he had recognized. "Father!" he gasped, stretching out his hands—"Father!—father!" and the captive, in return, uttered a low cry, and sunk beside him, murmuring: "Ernest, my son! my son!"

It was John Riviere, the merchant, who, captured by the British regulars after the attack of Yancey's marauders on his carriage, had been carried to the coast and thence conveyed to a transport bound for St. Augustine, with prisoners. Here, after two years, the father and son found themselves united in chains, and to John Riviere his lost boy was as one risen from the dead. The meeting nearly overcame the old merchant, whose health had been already enfeebled by his confinement, and a sympathizing surgeon procured an order for him to rest a day, with his recovered son to attend upon him.

But the joy of their reunion was saddened by that which old Riviere was obliged to relate concerning Louise, the wife of Ernest. Since the moment when he sprung from the carriage, to defend her, the merchant had seen no more of his daughter-in-law. Struck down in the road, he awoke to find himself in the hands of enemies, and to bewail the loss of all he loved.

And when Ernest Riviere resumed once more his daily labor on the works with his father, whose tasks he joyfully lightened, and with Irwins, his long-familiar comrade, the toil he endured was as nothing to the anxiety of his brain, contin-
ually dwelling on the dangers to which Louise must be exposed, alone and in the power of enemies, or wandering he knew not where. Thus wore on the doubly-tedious days and weeks of imprisonment, vainly whiled by mutual interchange of thoughts.

"Tom, my brave fellow," said the Captain one evening, as the captives, with pick and sledges, were engaged in fitting large stones in battered portions of the ancient wall, "let my father hear how you were captured. 'Twill take us back to home a while."

As Riviere said this, he heard a sob near him, from an old man, one of the new prisoners, who had been fastened to his fellow by a cross-fetter. The two aged prisoners were shoveling sand from a barrow. A frail-looking boy, the son of this other captive, was assisting them.

"Well, Captain," replied Irwins, "perhaps your father mought like to hear about it; but hang me if I can think on home and old matters without getting all a-fire agin the Britishers and Tories. Howsoever, it's a short story." So prefacing, the ranger began his relation:

"You see, Captain, I'd all along suspicioned that cousin o' yours, Robert Atnee, was a smooth-tongued Tory, under cover. So I set myself to watch when he came to camp, (like an old ranger knows how, Captain). Well, about that time a fellow jined us named Pappett—as outrageous a scamp as a chap of his size ever was. He used to keep a grogery on the river, and he was a precious coward, too; so I knew he never 'listed to fight, and as for pay, you know, Cap'n, there was precious small chance of that under Congress officers. In consequence, Captain, I knew that Pappett must ha' jined us for some bad purpose; and mighty soon, I found out he was colloquying with your cousin Atnee, and that the two Tories were scheming to tote off all our General's plans to the Britishers. I suspicioned all that, and determined to make sure. But I kept dark, Captain, till the night Sullivan's Island was reinforced, and I expected to go there; but I heerd Pappett was going to get leave, and I dogged him to an old oak-tree, where he met Atnee, and handed him some docyments. Off they went together, then, and as luck would have it, I followed, intending by hook or crook, to overhaul the Tory, and make
him deliver the papers. But that was the time the Tory got off, and poor Tom Irvins suffered. I gripped the fellow hard enough, but the devil took keer of him, and I found myself pitched into the mouth of Smith's creek, with a bullet in my shoulder."

The ranger rubbed his arm, as if the shot were there still, and Riviere remarked:

“So you were between drowning and dying by a shot, that time.”

“Precisely, Captain; and it was a predicament, I assure you; for the water was deep, the banks were slippery, and my left arm was good for nothing. Howsoever, I struck out with my right, and kept myself floating on the current, and drifting down the channel, past town and fort, and getting to sea rapidly, when, all at once, I heerd oars. ‘Boat,’ says I, and boat it was, and a British boat at that, cruising up to reconnoiter our works; but it saved my breath, and so I’ve got nothing to say agin it.”

“And they took you aboard the fleet, to make you fight your own neighbors—eh, Tom?”

“You better believe, Captain, they tried to make me list for King George; but they found I wasn’t the stuff they make Tories out of, so they pitched me into a tender, and here I am, yoked like a pet-lamb, to you, Captain Riviere.”

By the time Tom Irvins had concluded his recital, the sunset gun boomed, and the guard approached to release the captives from their log-chains, and march them to their supper and cells. Riviere and the ranger walked erect, though the day’s toils had been severe. Old Riviere appeared weary and dispirited; but the aged man, his yoke-fellow, was pitifully weak, tottering along with one hand on the shoulder of his scarcely less feeble boy. His thin gray hairs were wet with huge drops of sweat.

At the doors of their cells the captives received their black bread and some beer, diluted with brackish water. They were then locked in to eat their bitter meals in darkness, after which they could lie down when they liked on the damp straw which was there laid.

Ernest Riviere had petitioned to be allowed to share a cell with his father, but no response had been vouchsafed to his
PLAN OF ESCAPE.

request as yet, and he found himself again, with Tom Evans, in the narrow dungeon, under the fortress, which they had occupied together during nearly the whole period of their imprisonment. The only light that penetrated it was admitted through a slit in walls of immense thickness—a few feeble rays, never sufficient to disperse the gloom.

Riviere and Evans divided their loaf, and were eating in silence, when the ranger uttered an exclamation:

"By the Continental Congress," he cried, "they’re making their bread out of goose-feathers, I reckon!" And he held up the tube of a quill, which the ranger had drawn from his portion of the loaf.

"Let me look, Tom," cried his comrade, and taking the quill he scrutinized it carefully. "Tom," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "this quill is intended for us—that’s a paper inside of it."

"What, Captain?"

"Courage, Tom! I think we have friends in the garrison; for I have already exchanged glances with one of our guards. Now, if I could only manage to read this scrap."

"Put it close to the light," said Evans; "your eyes are sharp, Captain."

Riviere drew out a twisted slip of paper from the hollow of the quill, and opening it close to the aperture that admitted them light, contrived to read what was in substance the following:

"Sir—Your father was a merchant of Charleston, and I owe him a good turn. Four pledged comrades relieve guard with the writer of this same, to-morrow evening. We shall have a boat under the wall, and when we strike off your log, jist you make for the boat, and we'll dhrive ye intil it. To-morrow night or never—courage, and all's well. A FRIEND."

"What think you, Captain—is it a decoy?" asked the ranger.

"Why should they wish to decoy us? No, Tom, I think we have friends; but 'tis a desperate undertaking, to escape under the guns of the fort."

"But there's not a vessel in the harbor, you know, Captain."

"That is true, Tom. Doubtless this emboldens them. Shall we attempt it?"
"Liberty or death, Captain," rejoined the ranger.
"'Tis desperate—but, Tom, I will ask my father."
The two comrades threw themselves on the straw; but there was little slumber for either that night. The thought of liberty kept them wakeful.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ESCAPE.

Oh, Liberty! can man resign thee;
Once having felt thy glorious flame?—MARSEILLAISE.

The morrow dawned, and St. Augustine's castle prisoners were marched out as usual, in couples, to their toil—again to stoop over huge stones, wield picks and crows, and trundle heavy barrows. The sun rose over the fort, and so passed the morning.

Meantime, Captain Riviere communicated with his father, and the old merchant, already drooping under captivity, declared that to him death, in the attempt to escape, was preferable to existence as a prisoner. The young man felt his breast alternately swayed by hopes and apprehensions, for he could not but foresee the fearful risks which must attend the undertaking he contemplated; nevertheless, the fear of his father dying in a dungeon, and the thought that his wife was now left without a protector, combined to inspire him with resolution to attempt escaping. Tom Evans heard his determination with satisfaction. The ranger was devoid of fear, and responded at once.

"Sink or swim, Captain, I'm with you." But, presently his honest countenance fell. "Look here," said he, with a glance toward the old prisoner who was chained with his feeble boy to the same log that confined the merchant Riviere. "What are we to do with them poor chaps? Not give them the slip, I reckon?"

"I fear there is no provision for their escape with us," answered Riviere.
"By the Continental Congress, we can't leave 'em here, Captain. Better let the old boy and his son go with you and your father, Captain, and Tom Evans can rough it out here a while, I'll be bound. But that old chap, and his son both, will die, if they stay here, that's a fact, sir."

"Tom, you must go with me, and the boat may not be large enough for more than—"

"No, Captain; I'll take my chance with the Britishers a spell longer, if so be we can't all get off. You must go, because your father would die without you, and you've got a sweet wife at home to look after, and I'm nothing but an old Indian scout, with an old mother at home. I'll stay, and keep up courage, thinking you'll come back, with Marion or Moultrie, and blow the infernal castle sky high, before long. That's it, Captain, precisely."

"No, Tom, we'll all go. Let us speak to the old man and his son at once."

The two captives heard the proposition with different emotions. The boy almost wept with new hope, and his slight frame straightened, as if capable of renewed hardship. His father's cheek flushed slightly, but speedily became pale again. Tom Evans was puzzled at his apparent apathy.

"What's up, old gentleman?" cried he; "don't you want to get out of this blessed old rat-trap?"

"Useless!" murmured the captive, shaking his head, despondingly. "The place is guarded day and night at every point. No, we can never escape."

"But you can try," demanded Tom, dogmatically.

"Father," said the captive son, "we can die but once. Better to die in escaping, than be murdered here."

"The lad's right, precisely," said the ranger. "Where's the good in living like niggers? I say go, if we're shot for it."

"And we may escape, father," pleaded the boy.

"Precisely," continued Tom. "Nothing ventur'd, nothing gained."

"Father, let us venture—let us attempt an escape," murmured the youth. "Here we will de—we will both die."

The aged man trembled violently, as he cast a look of unspeakable affection on his child.
"I will do whatever you wish, my boy," he whispered. "You are all to me in this world."

Tom Irvins turned his head, for his eyes had grown misty. He had heard already that this father had beheld his roof-tree fired by British soldiers, and the mother of his boy murdered before him by Indian savages. The wrong had broken his spirit, and left his life hanging only on his love for this youth.

The sunset gun was now heard, and the corporal's guard approached with measured steps. Once more the prisoners felt their manacles drop on the heavy logs to which they were fastened; and then Captain Riviere and the corporal, an Irishman, exchanged glances of intelligence.

"Now," whispered the soldier.

"Now," echoed Tom, the ranger. And away, along the rampart-line, toward a point indicated by the corporal's hand, the fugitive prisoners ran swiftly, with the guard in apparent pursuit. As yet they made no noise, and their flight was unnoticed. Riviere, grasping his father's hand, felt his heart swell, as he crossed the sandy interval. Behind him pressed the youth, with his feeble parent, both inspired with new strength, in the hope of obtaining liberty. Soon they gained the sea-wall, and then threw themselves on their faces. The boat rocked beneath on the water, and in a moment Tom Irvins leaped into it and seized an oar. Riviere followed, with the merchant, and the other persons came next, with the British corporal close behind them.

"Come on," cried Riviere. "Freedom or death, now, brave comrade."

"I'm with you, my boys," responded the Irishman, springing over the gunwale. Two soldiers followed him; two paused on the wall.

"In," exclaimed the corporal. But the two hesitated and drew back.

"Then, if you're faint-hearted, hand over yer guns," cried the determined leader; and in an instant he leaped back, and seized a musket from one of them. The other fired his piece in the air and fled; and immediately afterward a musket report was heard on the rampart above, where walked a sentinel. The flight was discovered, and there was nothing left but to row for their lives.
“Away, men,” shouted the corporal, regaining the boat. “Pull, pull, ye devils, or we’re all dead men.”

The fugitives needed no second order. They bent upon their oars, and drove the light bark quivering into the channel, while behind them rattled a discharge of bullets, and the roll of a drum in the castle. Away flew the boat, springing through rapids, toward the harbor’s mouth; and as the men strained to their work, each wide sweep of the oars caused her to leap as it were from the water, while a current setting swiftly seaward, accelerated its speed.

“Pull now, my boys, for your life and liberty. Look at the blackguards chasing us. But never mind the bullets; now pull.”

As the brave corporal spoke, a shower of lead fell around, and a body of soldiers were seen embarking to pursue them. As yet, they were inside of the battery’s range, but would soon reach a point commanded by all the seaward armament of the fort. At this juncture, a moaning swell was heard on the surface of the water, becoming louder near the harbor’s entrance. At the same time, a great cloud rose from the horizon, spreading over the rising waves with pall-like blackness. Mounting higher, it seemed to swallow the twilight; and the men knew that it foreboded one of the sudden storms which rage so terribly on the coast of the Floridas.

“We are in range of the guns—the grape battery,” cried one of the British deserters, in a frightened tone.

“Never you fear,” replied the bold corporal. “If they scatter grape or canister, they’ll be after hitting their friends, I’m thinking.” He pointed to the pursuing boats, which, though somewhat scattered, were all exposed like their own frail craft to the castle guns.

“Pull away,” again shouted the corporal. “Never mind the grape-shot, till it hits ye, my lads.”

The twilight was disappearing—the bleak cloud extended its shadow; but the pursuing boats were gaining rapidly, and the runaways could hear behind them a summons to surrender. But no thought had they now but to escape or perish.

“Pull,” cried the corporal, in deeper tones, and his comrades swept their oars unalteringly. The foremost of the
British boats was now within musket-shot, and her officer was heard again commanding a surrender.

"Bring to, or I'll shoot you," he shouted. They returned no answer, but pulled harder. Then came a volley of musketry, followed by a cry of anguish. Ernest Riviere, supporting his father, and grasping the boat's tiller, felt that cry penetrating his soul; for it was the voice of the feeble old captive who had accompanied them; and who now strained to his bosom the bloody form of his young son.

The last gleam of light rested on the waters, and upon the desolate, gray-headed old man, who had sunk to the bottom of the boat, holding the boy in his arms. The youth's eyes were upturned to his sire's face, and he pressed his delicate hand against his side, where a dark stream was pouring fast.

"Father—we are—free!" murmured the boy, with a last effort, and then sunk back gently and was dead; with a smile of peace upon his lips, as if indeed he were free forever.

The corporal glanced in the boat's wake toward their exulting pursuers, and dropping his oar, seized a musket.

"I've no heart to kill me old comrades," he muttered, as he raised the piece to his shoulder; "but I'll shoot that officer, as I'm a living man." He fired as he spoke, and the British Lieutenant fell back at the tiller, which he was holding.

That shot was the salvation of the fugitives; for the pursuing boat, losing the guidance of her rudder, spun around in the rapids, and became presently unmanageable.

"Pull, my lads, pull!" cried the corporal.

And as he grasped his oar again, a heavy roll was heard on the waters, mocking the feeble artillery of man. It was the thunder, crashing from the overhanging cloud, like ten thousand cannons, and shacking the ocean under its reverberations. The frail boat rose and quivered like spray upon the billows, then plunged forward like a grayhound, out of the black mouth of the harbor, to the wide Atlantic ocean.
CHAPTER XV.
THE OCEAN TORTURE.

Water, water, everywhere,
Yet never a drop to drink.—Coleridge.

A storm upon the Florida coast is a battle of all the elements. Fire, air, earth and water, meet and dispute for the mastery of man. Terrible reefs and headlands hurl back the wind-ridden waves, and the black sky swoops down to belch out flame and thunder. Such a tempest encompassed that frail boat, freighted with death and life, which was swept out into the open sea, with its puny human pursuers left far behind in contest with the billows. The escaped prisoners were safe from the rage of man, but furious nature was still in their pathway.

The corporal and Tom Irwins, with the two other rowers, drew in their useless oars, and clinging to the gunwales, suffered the boat to drift before the gale. Riviere grasped the tiller, endeavoring to keep the prow seaward; at the same time that he sought to shelter his feeble father from the gusty spray that rose in drenching clouds on either hand. The darkness became so dense that no one could see another face, and there was no word spoken by any one.

In the bottom of the boat, the old prisoner, whose son had been shot, lay like one dead, embracing his murdered boy—his arm wound about the cold neck, his lips pressing the pallid forehead. Neither wind nor wave, nor the roar of thunders seemed to disturb him; his numbed senses could realize but one sound, the death-shot that had made him childless.

Thus, during the long hours, the fugitives clung to their frail bark, praying, yet scarcely daring to hope, till the morning dawned, and by degrees the storm abated. Land was no longer to be seen, and how far they had drifted was impossible to surmise. All around was a wide stretch of ocean, glistening under the first glimmerings of day. Not a speck of land nor ship in the distance was to be descried, in all the watery desert.
As the sun rose above the horizon, the men began to look one another vacantly in the face, and their glances fell upon the desolate old man at their feet, clinging to his bloody burden.

"Murther! but this is dreadful," muttered the Irish corporal.

"But we are, at, least, free—all of us," responded Riviere, in as steady a voice as he could assume.

"Ay, and we must be men, and not give up," cried the corporal, suddenly rousing himself. "What d'ye say, b'ys? 'Tis thre, we've nayther chart nor compass, but we've the sun to steer by, and the coast can niver be far distant, I'm hould to hope. So let's pull stoutly, sou'-easterly, and we'll make land before we think of it, b'ys."

The man who had pulled with the speaker laid hold of his oar, but his strength was unequal to the effort of wielding it.

"I'm beat out, Corporal Nevens," he said.

"Let's have a bit and a sup," rejoined the corporal.

"Come, men, our biscuits will need no salt this bout."

The three deserters then produced from under their wet jackets a scanty store of provisions, three hard biscuits apiece; to which the corporal added a canteen of rum.

"We've got seven mouths, so we must make seven morsels," said Nevens; "and a sip of the liquor for each. What say you, sir?" he asked, addressing Captain Riviere, who was supporting the head of his father.

The corporal's cheering voice and manner inspired his comrades with hope. Riviere nodded in assent to his proposition, and a single biscuit was divided into seven equal shares.

Meantime, the boat tossed upon the rough waves, and the chill spray beat over its low gunwales. The sun was an hour high, and its wandering beams were welcomed by the shivering fugitives, as they partook of the ship-bread. As yet, the old man at their feet had not lifted his head from the corpse, nor glanced once at the others. He cowered, as he had fallen forward, with his boy, to the boat's bottom, his arms locked about the body, and, save for a shivering gasp, at intervals, might have seemed to be dead himself.

Riviere bent over and whispered to the corporal.
"The poor youth must be buried."
"There's a bit of sacking in the bows," responded the Irishman. "We might wrap the poor lad in it, and say the funeral service over him, sir; if so be you recollect it, sir. I'm afraid I don't, more shame for me."
"We can at least say a prayer," said Riviere, solemnly. "Will you speak to the old man?"
Corporal Nevens touched the father lightly, and gently signified his desire; but the bereaved man looked up fiercely, and drew the body closer to his breast.
"The sun is getting high," here interposed Riviere; "by noon the heat will be intense, and the body cannot remain near us."
"The Captain speaks truth," now spoke Tom Irvins, who was at one of the oars. "We must let the lad into the deep. And 'tis better, old comrade," he continued, laying a hand upon the unhappy parent's shoulder, "better for the child to be there than in a dungeon; he said, with his last whisper, you know, he was free."

The word "free," which had been the last on his boy's lips, caused the desolate man to break forth in more natural grief. "He's free!" he cried. "Yes, my boy is free! Oh, God!" And a torrent of tears gushed from his eyes over the dead one's face. The sympathizing men around participated in his sorrow, as they looked upon the youth's white forehead, his soft brown hair, hanging damp and heavy, and his eyes vailed by their long lashes.

"His soul is free, indeed," murmured Riviere. "Would that we were all secure and happy as this child!"

The old man's tears were a relief to his half-crazed brain. Presently, he raised himself on his knees, and covering his features with his attenuated fingers, appeared to pray with inward fervor, for a few moments; then, turning to Riviere, said, in a measured voice:

"Bury your dead!"

The young patriot felt his heart smitten by the words, for he reflected that but for him the boy and his sire would not have shared their flight. Tom Irvins marked the shadow on his Captain's forehead, and quickly whispered:

"Not your fault, sir; 'twas I that tempted the poor lad.
And I don't regret it. No, thank God! He's free, and better off than we are."

"Ay," added Corporal Nevens. "Who can say what will become of each and all of us? or, more be token, what that lad have escaped? Who knows?"

No more was said, save a prayer, which Riviere offered, as the body, wound in a strip of canvas, and made fast to a heavy musket, was committed to the sea. The father wept no more, but sat silently in the bows, his arms folded, his eyes closed. The sunbeams fell upon his gray hairs, but he took no heed; all that had warmed his withered heart was now cold.

At noon, another biscuit was divided, and a share proffered to the old man, but he quietly put it away. The flask of spirits was placed to his lips, only to moisten the parched skin. He would not drink. But his solitary fragment was laid by, while the men consumed their own scanty portions, and wet their mouths with a sup of liquor. This was the last of the second biscuit.

They now began to sink under the extreme heat; for the sun hung over them like a ball of fire. They had labored at the oars since day-break, but could yet distinguish no land, and as their energies became exhausted, the hope of gaining the coast grew feeble. It was evident that the gale had blown them into the channel of the Gulf Stream, and, after taking counsel with each other, they decided that it was better to remain in the current, which ran at the rate of four miles an hour, taking a northerly course, in which it was likely they might encounter some vessel.

But the night approached, and long hours of cloudy darkness transpired, bringing heavy chills, to succeed the torrid heats by day. Next morning they divided another biscuit, and contrived to rig up, with the muskets and their jackets, a sort of screen to shelter them from the direct rays of the sun; but this could not prevent the excessive heat from parching their tongues and throats. At first they had talked to cheer one another; and Corporal Nevens had told his story, and recalled to the elder Riviere, how, years before, a poor private soldier, in the garrison at Charleston, had been sentenced to the lash for some trivial breach of discipline, and
had been pardoned through the interposition of the good merchant, who, being on a visit to the commandant, com-
miserated the poor soldier, and begged his release. "'Twas
yourself saved me from the lash, sir," cried the corporal, "and
I have never forgot it. So here we are together, sir."

But as the hours dragged on, the conversation of the fugi-
tives dropped altogether, and they only looked in each other's
faces, endeavoring to exchange sickly smiles—all except the
childless old man. He never moved from the bows of the
boat, nor seemed to heed the sun or chill. And so another
day wore away, and no land nor a sail could be discerned.
At evening a breeze arose, as they divided their fourth biscuit;
and after a while the moon arose, shedding her silver beams,
which had been vailed during the preceding nights.

They even slept at intervals, but with uneasy dreams, from
which they started sometimes, with stifled cries. Fatigue and
thirst were breaking them down, and it was noticeable that
the men of powerful frames, Irvins, Corporal Nevens, and one
of the privates, suffered more than Riviere and his father, and
the other private, a delicate man. The corporal's weak fingers
trembled as he parted the fifth biscuit, at daylight. Blithe-
hearted Tom Irvins smiled faintly, and tottered as he received
his share. The old man still refused his fragment of the
bread, nor would even taste the small remnant of spirits,
though Riviere held it repeatedly to his lips.

The third day was one of horror. The red sun seemed to
rain fire upon them, scorching marrow and blood. They
looked fiercely at each other, and read in their dry eyes what
no tongue could speak—the thirst for water! Thirst! ter-
rible thirst! the torture of the doomed in another world; the
fire unquenched; the undying worm, gnawing and never
appeared.

And still neither land loomed, nor a sail appeared.

When night came, the remaining bread was divided, and
they ate the last morsel, and drained the last drops from the
canteen, hardly expecting or caring for the next day. But
hunger and thirst remained with them, and when another day
dawned, and the sun rose high, and the heats beat on them,
they were all starving men. Happily, one was delirious.
The childless old man, who had refused to eat, and yet
survived, was lying in the bottom of the boat, talking about his boy, and calling him pet names. "We'll be happy, my Neddy," he murmured. "We'll escape and go back to your mother." And he kissed the phantom of his crazed fancy, and patted the cheek, and parted the brown hair of his shadowy beloved one.

When the fifth day came, there was a strange glare in the eyes of all, and the two privates mumbled together, and whispered to the corporal, and Nevens spoke to Riviere, and afterward bent over the old man at his feet, to see if he was dead yet, for his comrades had spoken about that to him. For the first time, since his son was buried, the bereaved father raised himself and spoke; and his voice, though he had not eaten during four days, was stronger than that of Corporal Nevens. He looked at the two soldiers, and at Nevens, and at Ernest Riviere, who supported his father in his arms, and muttered:

"Do you want one to die for the rest? Let us cast lots, then."

The five men shuddered, but in more than one pair of eyes the cannibal already glittered. Life was sweet, and hunger and thirst were more potent than humanity.

"Let us begin."

Seven threads of different lengths were separated from a soldier's jacket, and were then knotted together in a ball, with seven ends protruding. Each man clutched one of the fatal threads.

He who drew the shortest must die for the others.

Slowly the knotted ball was unwound by Corporal Nevens. One by one the threads separated. Then the cannibals measured the threads. That which Ernest Riviere held was the shortest. He had drawn the lot to die!

"I am ready," said the young Captain. "Father, may God preserve you!"

"No, no, Ernest!" the old merchant feebly articulated. "let us all die together! Let us—" He sunk back, speechless and apparently dying.

And then it was seen that the eyes of the other father in that doomed boat were glittering as with triumph; as if he thought his boy's death was to be avenged.
“I am ready, comrades, God forgive us!” murmured Ernest Riviere.

But Tom Irvins, the ranger, feebly lifted his hand, and gasped for utterance. “Me, Captain!” he articulated. “Me! I—I’ll die!” and then fell back exhausted.

Riviere bared his breast, saying: “I have drawn the death-lot—I am ready to die!”

As yet no one stirred, but every eye glanced again over the waste of waters, in the desperate hope that a sail might appear. But naught was to be seen, on any side; and presently the old man spoke up:

“I have the knife!” he ejaculated, sharply; and raised in his hand the knife which had divided the biscuit. “I am the priest!” he added, with a hollow laugh, while Riviere bent forward, presenting his bosom to the stroke. “Away!” cried the maniac old man. “I am the priest and the victim!” And in a moment the knife which he brandished was sheathed in his own withered breast. He fell to the bottom of the boat, and his last words gushed with a stream of blood from his lips: “Neddy, we are free!”

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOAT ON THE OCEAN.

O'er the blue waters of the boundless sea.—Byron.

The little brig Ranger, as staunch a privateer as ever displayed the Stars and Stripes at her mast-head, commanded by a gallant Captain, and manned by a brave crew, was cruising on the coast of North America, and picking up stray merchantmen bound for H. B. M. West India possessions, when her look-out suddenly gave the announcement:

“Sail, ho!”

“Ay, ay!” responded the First Lieutenant, from the quarter-deck. “Where away?”

“A boat, sir, on the larboard quarter—an open boat, sir.”

“I see—and full of men,” cried the officer, as he looked
through his spy-glass. "Alter her course a point," he continued, addressing the man at the wheel. And in a few moments the Ranger was bearing down upon a dark object tossed upon the waters, which, on nearer view, appeared, as supposed, to be a boat filled with men. But to the loud hail of the foretopman no answer was returned.

"Can they be all dead, Mr. Forester?" said Captain Wallings, the Ranger's skipper, approaching his First Lieutenant.

"I think I can see a movement, sir," answered the officer. "Ay, they are making faint signals. Man the pinnace, there, and pull off to them—lively there!"

The ready arms of a half-dozen stalwart seamen sent the pinnace skimming over the waves, till it ranged alongside of the drifting boat, and a dismal spectacle was presented to their gaze.

Before them lay three lifeless bodies festering under the sun's rays. Two of them were clothed in British regiments, and the other, which had been mutilated, was that of a gray-haired man. Four persons survived, lying together, under a ragged canopy of garments, in the boat's quarter; and one was able to move his hand to them, ere he sunk back exhausted.

The privateersmen made fast to the boat, and towed it to the Ranger. Then, carefully and tenderly, the four fugitives from St. Augustine were lifted to the vessel's deck, and conveyed to her cabin. It appeared as if the last sparks of life were trembling in their emaciated frames, till a sponge moistened with spirits, and placed to their mouths, recalled more animation, and gave the ship's doctor some hopes of their recovery. But his utmost skill was taxed, and many hours passed before he ventured to pronounce them beyond the danger of immediate dissolution.

Riviere and his father, strange as it seemed, grew better before either Irvins or the British corporal. The two privates had died raving, after satisfying their cannibal cravings, and the survivors had resigned themselves to starvation, when Providence interposed for their relief. In a few days, however, under the humane care of their preservers, all were able to thank heaven for renewed strength, and Riviere recounted to Captain Wallings and his Lieutenant their story of captivity
and suffering. The brave seamen shuddered at the details, while they congratulated their countrymen on their double escape.

"And this British corporal—he is a determined fellow," said Captain Wallings.

"Brave and resolute, sir; and I shall never forget his devotion, nor that of my friend Irwins."

Weeks passed, however, before the rescued captives were restored to full strength. Meanwhile, the privateer cruised up and down, before light gales, till one morning the cry of "A sail!" was heard, and a vessel was sighted upon the weather-beam, which was soon made out to be a large brig, with all sails set.

"We are off the capes now," said Captain Wallings, "and I think you craft must be a merchantman bound for the Bahamas."

"If she be a merchantman, sir," replied the First Lieutenant, whose glass was at his eye, "she has, nevertheless, a half-dozen mouths to speak us with."

"Armed, Mr. Forester?"

"Yes, sir; with at least our own metal," answered the second officer. "Doubtless a letter-of-marque, as she is merchant-rigged."

The war-drum beat to quarters, and the men piped aloft by the boatswain, when a few words from Captain Wallings sent them with alacrity to the guns. In a brief space the decks were cleared for action, and, a smart breeze springing, the privateer was soon able to overhaul the strange sail.

"There goes a gun," cried Mr. Forester; "and there's the bloody flag of King George running up."

"Lay alongside, at once!" cried the Captain's cheery voice. "Board, and carry her, Mr. Forester!"

It had been late in the day when the chase began, and the sun was descending to the ocean's rim when the two vessels ranged yard-arm to yard-arm, flaunting the respective flags of England and America defiantly at their mast-heads. Immediately the conflict began, with an exchange of broadsides, mingled with the wild cheer of Britons and the wilder Yankee hurrah. The grappling-irons was then thrown, and Captain Walling's bold crew swarmed over the enemy's bulwarks.
At once took place a hand-to-hand conflict, such as was frequent in the fierce encounters of privateers in those days. The combatants grappled, discharging their pistols, and engaging with cutlasses and boarding-pikes, in deadly strife for the mastery. The letter-of-marque's crew, though unprepared for the sudden boarding attack of the privateersmen, nevertheless defended their vessel gallantly, and almost repulsed the first onset. Again the Americans advanced, once more to be hurled back on their own decks, and yet a third time, to return raging to the battle.

"Away, boarders, away! Men of the States, give not an inch this time!" cried Captain Wallings.

"Forward, to repel boarders!" shouted the British skipper, in reply. "Sweep the Yankees from your deck, hearts of oak."

But the Yankees had made up their minds, this time, to remain, though they had underrated the force of their enemy greatly, and after a few minutes of fierce rivalry, the Britons retreated, step by step, on the slippery decks.

"Now, boys, one rush for the Continental Congress!" cried Tom Irvins, the ranger, who fought at the right hand of Captain Wallings. At the same instant, Ernest Rivière dashed forward at the head of a reserve gang, and crossed his cutlass with that of a foeman. But the young American started, in surprise, to behold in his antagonist the form and face of Robert Atnee, his cousin.

Instantly the recollection of that felon-blow he had received on board the Acteon, and the dark words of the assassin, ere he sunk, were recalled to the memory of Rivière, and he well-nigh dropped his arm in horror. But the recognition was as sudden on the part of his felon cousin. Robert Atnee started back, as if struck by a bullet. His eyes glared from their sockets. There, before him, with sword uplifted, stood him whom he had believed buried fathoms deep beneath the sea. He gasped, and felt his hanger sinking from his relaxed grasp; then, overcome with terror, he turned and fled, at the instant that another rush of the privateersmen drove the letter-of-marque men across the decks.

Ernest Rivière, appalled for an instant, speedily regained his faculties, and started in pursuit of Atnee's flying form.
He saw him disappear at the companion-way, and without hesitation, plunged after him into the cabin beneath. But it was silent and deserted, and rushing forward, he encountered a heavy curtain. Grasping his sword more firmly, Riviere tore the drapery open, and beheld, not Robert Atnee, but a female, kneeling upon the floor, in prayer. She turned her head as he entered, and uttering a loud shriek, stretched out her arms, and fell at his feet.

It was Louise—it was his wife!

CHAPTER XVII.

ROBERT ATNEE'S PERIL.

From strand and soil, that lurid light
Gleamed baleful through the night.

The Phantom Ship.

The privateersmen, following their bold commander, soon forced the letter-of-marque to surrender; and her colors were hauled to the deck by no other hand but that of honest Tom Irvin. The vessel's Captain had fallen mortally wounded, and half her crew were dead or disabled. But at the very instant when the sullen survivors flung down their weapons, in token of surrender, a wild cry rose from stem to stern that the vessel was on fire, and a moment after, flames and smoke were seen issuing from the hatchways. Captain Wallings gave instant orders for returning to his own vessel; and now Tom Irvin, for the first time, bethought him of Captain Riviere, whom he had last beheld in the heat of conflict. Rushing back and forth, wildly inquiring for his comrade, the brave fellow was astounded to behold the young man suddenly burst from the companion-way, bearing in his arms the form of an insensible female.

"Captain, thank the Lord, you're safe!" ejaculated the ranger. "The brig's afire! Make haste, for God's sake!"

"The magazine—the magazine!" here rose from a dozen throats, as friends and foes crowded to the gangway, and
peered over the vessel's side to the *Ranger's* decks. In a brief space, all not actually dying with their wounds were transferred to the privateer, and her lashings being cast off, the American vessel swung loose, and dropped to leeward. Ernest Riviere, with his precious burden, sought the cabin which Captain Walling resigned to him, and the victorious officers after securing their prisoners, prepared to restore the trim craft to her usual order and discipline.

The sun had now sunk below the horizon, leaving only a violet dusk upon the waters. As twilight crept up, and crimson clouds changed to sable, the letter-of-marque fell off on the *Ranger's* quarter, and began to burn vividly. The flames broke from her ports, and ran up her masts and spars, until she soon presented a sheet of flame, which illumined the ocean for miles around.

Once or twice the privateersmen, as they listened, fancied they heard a shriek arise from the doomed vessel; and some averred that they saw figures running over the burning decks. And so she drifted over the waters, while the *Ranger*, with all sails set, rapidly left her behind.

But there was, indeed, one survivor of that day's fight, whose despairing voice rung over the deep from the decks of the blazing brig. Robert Atnee was there, alive, yet blasphemously cursing his existence. Overcome with sudden and superstitious fear, he had fled from the face of Ernest Riviere, and sought retreat below; but unheeding his course, he had missed a step in descending the companion-way, and pitched headlong from the ladder, falling stunned upon the floor. Rapidly following, Ernest Riviere, in descending to the obscurity of the cabin, had not perceived the prostrate body, which had fallen to one side, and the discovery which he subsequently made, after drawing the curtain before him, banished all thought of Atnee, or of aught else than his recovered bride. Consequently, the wretched Tory remained insensible and bleeding where he had fallen, till, aroused by smoke and flame, he gained his feet to find the brig deserted and on fire from stem to rudder.

It was a desperate situation, and the heart of Robert Atnee sunk within him, as he ran from point to point, to escape the blinding smoke and dreadful heat, which still seemed shifting.
to pursue him, as the vessel swung around. A breeze was rising with the night-clouds, and it roared through the flaming shrouds like the blast of a furnace. Atnee’s clothing and skin soon became scorched, and his throat grew foul with particles of fiery soot. Death stared him for the first time directly in the face, and all the evil deeds of his life rose accusingly before him. Nevertheless, the Tory was not one to yield without a struggle, and though the fire raged everywhere about him, and his hands were crisped and burned in the effort, he contrived to drag one of the vessel’s hatchways to her taffrail, and securing some lines wherewith to lash himself to it, launched himself with this frail raft, upon the broad bosom of the ocean.

The blaze of the devoted letter-of-marque cast its glare on all sides, as the night wore on. Atnee, as he guided his raft away with a fragment of plank which he had secured for the purpose, could survey the expanse of waters for miles around; and he fancied he beheld the white canvas of the Ranger afar on the edge of vision. He gnashed his teeth as he recalled his late encounter with Ernest Riviere, and the abject fear which had constrained him to fly before the man he had wronged. Then, reflecting upon Louise, he wondered, in his bitter thoughts, whether she had been discovered by her husband, or whether, as his perverse nature prompted him to hope, she had been smothered in her cabin on board the letter-of-marque.

The burning vessel, meanwhile, was smouldering far in the distance, on the water’s edge, and darkness presently settled around the narrow raft to which Atnee had fastened himself. He crouched partially upon his knees, in a painful position, fearing momently lest the swash of a wave, as the sea rolled, might sweep him from his frail support. Thus, through the long hours of night, tossed hither and thither, the wretched man swayed on a shoreward current, till the gray light of morning enabled him to discern, apparently very near, the sharp points of a line of reefs, and beyond a stretch of sandy shore.

The prospect of speedy deliverance banished at once from Atnee’s mind a thousand reflections which had racked it during the darkness. Conscience ceased to worry him with her reminiscences, and despair gave way to resolution. He grasped
the strip of plank which he had secured to the hatch, and employing this as both rudder and oar, began to urge his way toward the reefs.

But the shore which loomed so near, through the early mist, seemed to recede before advancing morning. Hours of hard toil, under the torrid blaze of the sun, were required to bring the raft within the outer reefs, and there the swell of breakers threatened to submerge its miserable freight at every turn. All the hours of light were consumed, and when night came again, the Tory sunk exhausted on the hatch, his hands and limbs bleeding from contact with jagged reefs, and his body nearly paralyzed from his exertions, without food or drink, through the long day. But during the darkness he was cast upon the sands, and when another dawn appeared, found himself saved at least from the peril of drowning.

Weak and famished, Atnee eagerly devoured the contents of a few muscles which he dug from the beach, and set out to explore his whereabouts. He saw woodlands in the distance, and after some hours of toilsome travel over the arid sands, reached a forest of stunted pines, and shortly afterward the rude habitation of a turpentine-maker, where he found shelter and rest for the day, and to his satisfaction ascertained that he was on the mainland of Georgia.

Here, though foiled in his aims, and flung, after losing all, like a weed back on his native shores, the Tory congratulated himself that life and strength remained within his plotting brain. Here he had leisure to reflect upon the certainty that Ernest Riviere was living as well as the bravo Matt Blake; and he doubted not that the young Whig would soon reach his friends in Charleston, perhaps with his recovered wife. Jealousy and hatred tormented his evil thoughts, and he imagined a hundred ways of circumventing or destroying his cousin, each in turn to be discarded as futile. Thus passed his waking hours, while sojourning in the humble dwelling where he had sought shelter; and no sooner was he able to proceed than he set out for the interior. He had a few doubloons in his belt, which he had saved with his watch and some jewelry; and with the money he purchased a horse whereon to set out for Laurelwood, which he ascertained to be but a couple of days’ ride from the headland where he had been cast ashore.
Robert Atnee had never before experienced the chagrin and bitterness which now assailed him; for he had been accustomed to make everything bend to his crafty schemes. Heretofore he had reckoned confidently on the ultimate possession of his cousin’s property, but he now saw almost insurmountable obstacles interposing. His mind became a chaos, as he journeyed toward Laurelwood, but above all its tumult the one thought ever came uppermost—that Ernest Riviere must be got rid of—and that without delay, and surely. How or by what agency he could not resolve upon; but the circle of his reflections always returned to that point, and as the pivot of his wicked hopes in the future.

Sunset, on the second day of his journey, brought the master of Laurelwood to the banks of the river which ran through his own lands. He had but five miles to ride, and his way led by a pleasant road, skirting the stream, and bordered on the other side by woods which fringed the marshes. The afternoon had been hot, but a cool breeze arose as the sun was descending, and freshened the sultry atmosphere. The river surface reflected the purple clouds, and a golden haze filled the forest, through which the last sunbeams were slanting. Robert Atnee took no note, however, of the scene, but rode onward, absorbed in thought, till suddenly, as he reached the borders of his own estate, where could be seen some low hillocks of the swamp burial-ground, a hand was laid rudely upon the bridle of his horse so that the animal reared abruptly. Keeping his seat with difficulty, Atnee raised his loaded whip to strike at the wild figure which had sprung into the highway; but in another moment he was seized and jerked fiercely from his saddle.

“Murder! help! help!” cried the Tory, with a stifled shriek, as his throat was compressed beneath an iron gripe; but he was answered by a peal of laughter, which rung horrible through the woods, and as he lifted his eyes, he saw the face of Matthew Blake close to his own, and the outlaw’s eyes glaring upon him in mad ferocity.
CHAPTER XVIII.
FILIPPA IN THE CAVE MILL.

A dram of poison—such soon,
As will disperse itself throughout the veins.—SHAKESPEARE.

Night had closed over the plantation of Laurelwood, the field slaves were in their quarters, and the mansion was dark, except a single apartment, on the ground-floor, where Gattan and Filippa sat together, at a table—the old negress ply ing her needle, while her grandchild, resting her forehead on one transparent hand, appeared lost in silent reflection.

"Mother," said the girl, looking suddenly up, "do you think Master Robert will ever come back?"

"Please the Lord, yes, child," answered the crone, raising her wrinkled face with a faint smile. "He'll come back, and—"

"Say it mother—he will bring his bride with him. Let us hope so, mother."

"To be sure, dear—if you wish—and we must hope for all happiness to our good master, Filippa."

The quadroon leaned back in her chair, and began to toy with the plain gold ring which gleamed on her forefinger. Gattan watched her attentively, and presently spoke again:

"You had the ring, Filippa, even if the vile trooper had carried you away, child. Would you have feared to use it, Filippa?"

"Feared, mother?" cried the quadroon, lifting the ring to her lips, and kissing it, "what has a slave to fear in death? When you gave me this ring, mother, I promised you it should be my protection against dishonor, come in what shape it might. I never forget that promise, mother."

"Filippa, said Gattan, with a curious expression in her glance, "what if our master—if Robert were to offer to harm his slave?"

"Alas! he can never harm me more than he has," replied the girl, sadly. "Yet—against him even—I would not fear to kiss the ring, mother—for the last time."
Uttering these words, in a low, melancholy tone, the girl slipped the ring from her finger, and pressing her nail upon its spring, caused the double circle to open, disclosing a hollow filled with some white substance, which she regarded closely. “Twas a good gift, mother, and sometimes I am happy in thinking it will give me a great sleep, when my heart can no longer bear its load. When you go, mother, Filippa will not be long in following you.”

“No, child; you are young, too young to leave the world. Life is for the youthful.”

“But a slave has no life, mother.”

“I have been a slave for seventy years,” answered Gattan. “I have suffered as a slave, and yet I am old and cling to life.”

“And you loved once, mother.”

“Did I love?” muttered the crone, absently. “Ah, you say well. I did love, and your mother, my child, loved also, Filippa.”

“And I love—alas!” murmured the slave girl.

She bowed her head, in speaking, pressed her small hands to her heart, and closed her lips, as with a spasm. But at this instant a tap sounded on the casement outside, and the crone started.

“Filippa, ’tis the wild trooper, the crazed man again.”

“He will not harm us, mother; he wants food, perhaps. Poor, miserable man, he were better off to be with his child in the grave he watches all night.”

The girl, as she spoke, had risen from her seat and approached the casement.

“Have care, Filippa,” cried Gattan, following her. “He may do us mischief.”

“There is no fear, mother. Did he not save me once?”

Thus speaking, Filippa threw open the blinds and discovered the crouching figure of Matthew Blake, close under the sill; his long, shaggy hair hanging in elf-locks about his face, and his eyes gleaming like coals of fire.

“Hist,” muttered the maniac, as Filippa drew near the window. “I want you; I have found him.”

“What is it, Matt? Who have you found?”

“Come,” responded the man, jerking his head, and pointing out through the darkness. “He is there, you know;” and
then, in a shrill whisper, he added: "He sold you, you know—sold you for the other one."

"Oh, heaven!" murmured Filippa, pressing her heart with her hands. "Master Robert is come—do you hear, mother? Our master."

"Hist," muttered Matt Blake, "we are to have a feast—the red wine; we will drink the health of the dead. Come. I must away. I can not wait."

"I will go with him, mother, there is meaning in his words. Our master—Robert is in danger."

"No, Filippa, do not go. I fear this wild man; he is more dangerous than you think."

"Then I must go with him. I have power over him. Let me go, mother. Master Robert may be nigh—perhaps here."

Thus speaking, the quadroon flung a shawl over her head, and called out, "Matt, Matt, I will go with you."

The old negress vainly interposed her arm. Her impulsive grandchild had darted to the corridor, and was hurriedly following the madman, Matthew Blake.

The moon was struggling through gray clouds, now obscured, and anon emerging, but with uncertain light. Matt Blake, grasping the quadroon's slender fingers, drew her on along the dusky avenue of trees, and over to the edge of the wood, which skirted the negro-quarter. He strode under the shadowy boughs, and through the shrouded paths in silence, traversing the sloping ground which stretched to the river and morass. Filippa spoke to him twice, but the bravo returned no answer, except to tighten his grasp of her wrist. Thus they kept on for half a mile, till they reached a patch of thicket near the burial-ground, when Blake forced his way between dense masses of trailing plants, which grew rankly on both sides, and stood with his companion before a vacant building.

It was, as Filippa remembered, the locality of an old mill-house, near the river, which had long been deserted. The structure was of stone, and had been strongly built; but the stream had fallen and deprived it of water-power years before, so that it became useless. The walls were overrun with creeping vines, and the great wheel looked down like a skeleton, as the fitful moonbeams glimmered through it. But
the low windows of the building were red with light, and as
the outlaw thrust open the heavy door, and drew her over
the threshold, she saw that the room into which they entered
was illumined by several pine-torches, which cast their resin-
ous glare around, and filled the beams above with dense
smoke.

But there were other objects in the room, and one in par-
ticular, which riveted Filippa's gaze. In the center of the
room, she saw a table of rough pine, with a torch flaming at
one end. A bottle and delf drinking-cup stood on the board,
and a rude bench was beside it. On the floor, at a little
distance, lay a human figure, bent double, and apparently
bound hand and foot to a post which supported the roof. As
the quadroon paused, bewildered and foreboding, this figure
writhe and seemed gasping for breath.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Matt Blake, and halting in the glare
of the flambeau, holding Filippa's hand in his iron grasp, he
pointed to the struggling object. "Look you there, mistress;
look you yonder, brave wench. 'Tis he—did I not promise
you?—'tis the master that sold you for the other one."

"Oh, my God!" murmured the slave-girl. "'Tis Robert."

"Ha! said I not?" cried the bravo. "He will never sell
you again; he will never sell Alice again for gold. Come,
let us drink to the dead—to Alice." He drew the quadroon
to the table, and forced her to sit beside him.

"Drink, wench; here is wine to make the heart merry.
You are free, now; he will never sell you again."

"Matt, oh, Matt, you will not harm him; he has never
injured you, Matt."

The quadroon murmured these words, scarcely knowing
what she said, all her thoughts centered on her master's
situation, her eyes fixed upon the living heap in the corner,
which appeared convulsed with contortion. But, in spite of
her abstraction, she shrunk from the look which Matt Blake
gave her, as he muttered, savagely:

"Wench, if he had a hundred lives to lose, they'd never
be enough for Matthew Blake's revenge."

While the outlaw spoke these words, the wild glare in his
eyes gave way to an expression of demoniac hate; and
Filippa became aware that a settled purpose was conceived
in his crazed brain. But in another moment, his laugh broke out, and, seizing the bottle of wine, he filled the solitary cup, and shouted:

"Pledge, wench, pledge! You'll never be sold again, I'll promise you. Drink, drink, I say." And he placed the cup to her lips.

The quadroon felt her heart sinking, and her brain becoming giddy; but the sight of her master, writhing in his fetters, and in the power of a frantic enemy, called to her mind all the craft and resolution of her race. She suddenly seized the wine-cup, and echoed the outlaw's mad laugh.

"Ha! ha!" she cried, "let us drink, Matt. He will never sell me again." And she turned her large eyes upon him, brilliant as with joy; and kissed the rim of the cup.

"Good," cried Matt Blake; "you are a brave wench, Filippa—eh, Filippa they call you, my girl? Come, fill up; there's more where this came from."

Again he filled the vessel, and then hurled the drained bottle at Atnee's pinioned body. It struck the post and shivered into fragments. At this moment the quadroon slipped from her finger that heavy gold ring which she wore, and lifted her cup again.

"Matt, the wine is good," she murmured, softly; "'twill make us happy."

Blake took the drinking-bowl, but he saw not the poisoned ring which lay at its bottom. He drank, and returned it to her lips, with a tender grimace.

"Good wine glads the heart, wench," said the outlaw. "Filippa, you shall see how Matt Blake can hate, and how he can love, lass, if it like you. I've store of wealth, wench, fit for the best lady in the land. Ha! wench; do we not suit one another? Kiss the cup again, lass." Filippa raised the vessel and drank slowly.

"We must have more—another bottle, wench," he exclaimed. "But by-and-by—now for business."

He drew, as he spoke, a long, thin-bladed knife from his bosom, and held it aloft in the torch-light. Filippa uttered a stifled shriek, for she recognized her own stiletto, with which she had stabbed the man who sought to slay her master in the supper-room. The truth, which she had never
suspected, flashed instantly over her mind, that Blake and the assassin were identical. But she mastered her agitation with a great effort.

"Let us drink again, Matt, my veins are on fire," she exclaimed, clasping the brave's hand, and leaning her head forward, till it touched his broad breast.

"Plenty, wench, plenty," responded Blake; "but we'll first—ah! what is that? My veins are burning too, I swear! What's that roar in my ears, wench? May the devil—"

"Matt, the wine is good; let us have more."

As Filippa murmured this, she wound her arms about the man's neck, and gazed up in his wild face with a look of well-simulated passion. The half-insane, half-brutified wretch could not resist the expression of those dark, lustrous orbs, that seemed swimming with strange affection. He threw his arm about her slender waist, and pressed her to him, and bent to kiss her red lips. But at this instant Filippa snatched the stiletto and sprung to her feet.

"Not my master!" she screamed; "not Robert, but yourself!"

"Wench! What's this—what's this flame in my eyes?" Blake rose to his feet, unsteadily. "Where are you, girl? 'Tis dark, the torches are going out."

"No, Matt; 'tis the darkness of death; you are poisoned," replied the quadroon.

"Poisoned!" echoed Blake, with a yell, as he dashed his palm across his eyes, which were dim as with blood. Filippa sprung from the table, uplifting her stiletto, but too late to elude the brave's grasp. He rushed upon her, and with his huge frame staggering, fell with her to the ground. Twice her stiletto rose, and twice it was sheathed in his breast, but he wrested it from her hand, as it was aimed for a third blow, and clasping her polished throat with his fingers, forced her white teeth apart with the point of the weapon.

Filippa was like an infant in the powerful man's grasp. She offered no resistance, as he dragged her to the table, and seizing the cup from which he had drank, forced the few drops which remained in it, together with the poisoned ring, into her gasping throat.

It was Matthew Blake's last deed; for even in the act, his
massy chest collapsed, he drew a spasmodic breath, and fell heavily upon the floor.

Slowly and painfully Filippa raised herself, and beheld the bravo’s blackened countenance close beside her.

“I killed him,” she murmured, “to— to save Robert.”

She rose, then, while the swift fever began already to consume her. She seized the bloody stiletto, and hastening to the post, severed the thongs which confined her dear master. His mouth was distorted by a gag, and as she relieved him from it, the blood followed in a discolored stream.

“Awake, Master Robert—’tis I; you are saved.”

The Tory’s breast heaved convulsively, and his frame still writhed in agony. Filippa tenderly lifted his head, and wiped the blood from his lips. At last he opened his eyes.

“You are saved, Master Robert.” She pointed to the dead bravo, lying under the glare of the torches.

“Ha!—Matt—dead!” gasped the Tory, as he began to recall his situation.

“And—I—I am dying, Master Robert.”

“Dying!”

“Thus only could I save my master. Twice have I saved thee, dear Robert.”

She sighed and sunk back. She had indeed given her life, poor girl.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAST STRUGGLE.

Though all the fiends to whom thou art sold
Rise in thine aid, I’ll keep my hold.—W. Scott.

On the 12th of May, 1780, the British captured Charleston, from which their armies had twice been repulsed. The American garrison marched out with the honors of war, and many Whig families retired with them, leaving the exultant king’s men to possess their homes.

And when the last detachment of Americans had departed, and foreign sentinels tramped their rounds from Cooper to
Ashley river, there might have been noticed the figure of a man skulking in the dusk of twilight, near a bluff that overlooked the water.

This skulking man was Samuel Pappett, the former spy, who had since become a camp-follower of the British army under Prevost.

Never, since the brief glimpse he had caught of that glittering casket which Matthew Blake, the bravo, gloated over in his secret cavern, had the recollection of the treasure been absent from Pappett's thoughts. Sleeping or waking, his memory reverted to the ravishing spectacle of untold wealth his eyes had beheld for a moment; and many a project had he formed to return to Charleston, even while the city remained in possession of the patriots. But chronic cowardice is stronger than even cupidity, and the spy had never mustered sufficient courage to induce the risk of being recognized and punished as a traitor by the zealous Whigs who knew him.

But at last, Samuel Pappett followed the flag of his British protectors to Charleston, and on the night which followed the capture of the city, a night favorable for his purpose, being gloomy with threatening clouds, he cautiously made his way to the bank which had sheltered Matt Blake's cabin, now deserted and in ruins. The spy's heart sunk as he groped his way to the spot where he had concealed himself, three years before, while Robert Atnee entered the bravo's dwelling, but the locality was so pictured in his mind, that he found no difficulty in discovering, under thick masses of tangled vines, that narrow crevice through which he had peered into the hollow bank. He had provided himself with a pick, and lost no time in widening the aperture, so that in a few moments it was large enough to admit his body.

But here, an accident, which was nearly fatal, thrilled the man with new terrors. The displacement of earth with his pick had jarred the entire bank, and as he was about climbing to the opening he had effected, a great mass of clay parted, and fell with a heavy smash into the river, leaving him scarcely a foothold where he stood. Pappett shrunk back aghast, but avarice soon asserted her dominion, and he prepared to follow up his work, which had now indeed become easier, since the avalanche had partially exposed the
whole cavern. He cautiously planted his feet on the crumbling dust, and dragging himself to the interior, hastily struck a light with tinder and matches wherewith he had not forgotten to provide himself.

Where, now, was Matthew Blake, the bravo and pirate, to guard that treasure, gained by many a crime? Where were the potent evil spirits said to brood over ill-gotten gold? Pappett, the coward, crept on, pausing every second and holding his breath to listen. But he heard nothing but the wind and river moaning. All within the cavern was as the grave.

At length, the spy, dragging himself on his knees around the cave, felt his hand slide into the aperture where he had seen the bravo thrust his casket; and presently his pulse leaped as his fingers came in contact with its rusty iron lid. The coward grew brave in lifting the chest from its hiding-place, and he could have faced a regiment, as he hugged it to his bosom.

But suddenly a grating noise, as of a door turning on rusty hinges, and a tread as of feet advancing, caused a chill of terror to curdle the robber's blood. In another instant he saw the glimmer of a light strike across the cavern, and then, with a muttered cry, he dropped his own dim taper, and, clutching the casket tightly, crawled toward the outlet.

The damp, slippery clay seemed to ooze from under him as he proceeded, and presently he heard the voice of a man venting a loud curse behind him. He redoubled his exertions, and succeeded in reaching the brink of the passage, still grasping the chest, as with a vice. Here he paused, for immediately below ran the dark river, and above were black, hurrying clouds, driven across the sky. He gulped at the cool air, and drew himself cautiously up, but as he did so, a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

At another time, Pappett would have abandoned every thing for flight; but the possession of the treasure made him desperate, and while he hugged it with one hand, he drew a knife from his belt, and struck furiously a backward blow at his pursuer. A groan answered him, and the grasping hand slackened, but only for a moment. Another grasp was laid on his arm, and he found himself grappled by the man he had wounded.
CONCLUSION.

At this juncture, while the two closed in a deadly embrace, a rift in the heavy cloud permitted the May moon to look out for an instant, and illuminate the river, the dark bank, and the struggling men. Samuel Pappett beheld a hand, armed with a dagger, suspended above his heart. He saw, too, and recognized his antagonist, though his features were grimgy as those of a corpse. It was his ancient employer and confidant — Robert Atnee, the Tory.

The uplifted arm descended, and Pappett felt the cold steel penetrating his bosom. He shrieked in horrible accents, and sunk back, but relinquished neither his hold of the casket, nor his clutch of Atnee's garments. Atnee in vain essayed to shake him off, and again and again he buried the dagger in his breast; but the wretch still clung to his treasure, answering only with shrieks, till at last they staggered and slipped forward, the earth trembled beneath the feet of both, and they toppled into the black river.

Leaves and brush and loose dirt covered the water, and for a few moments Pappett and his enemy struggled amid the debris, and then sunk together. The spy never slackened his dying gripe; and thus ended the life of Robert Atnee, the Tory.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

The pleasant mansion of John Riviere, the merchant of Charleston, had been illumined with old faces returned again, and echoed to well-remembered footsteps and the music of happy voices. Old friends, gathering around Ernest Riviere and his fair wife, had listened to the story of captivity and perils which the elder Riviere was privileged to relate, when he sat with his children in their vine-covered porch. Moultrie and Marion, and other gallant ones, loved to mingle with the fond groups, and ever found gracious welcome there.

And when, after a happy year, the reunited family retired from before the invading British, and sought shelter in Phila-
delphia; and when, after fighting four years under the eye of General Washington, Ernest Riviere saw the last army of King George surrender to the patriot chief; and when, at last returned to his ancestral domain, a blooming family clung about the young colonel's knees, the story of Moultrie's defense of St. Augustine prison, of the hatred and plottings of Robert Atnee, lost none of its interest, but was told and retold till it became a household legend of the Carolinas.

And when the war was over, Tom Irvins, the ranger, who had fought under the Swamp-Fox Marion, and the British corporal, Nevens, who had tales to tell concerning Paul Jones and many other brave comrades, came and rested under the vines and orange-trees of the old mansion; to join in the thanksgiving of the young Republic, and bless the proud banner of freedom—the Stars and Stripes.

THE END.
THE FRENCH CAPTIVES.

CHAPTER I.

WRECK OF AN EMIGRANT SHIP.

There is a dangerous stretch of rocky land inclosing the waters which wash the shores of Plymouth, where, even now, the mariner fearfully guides his bark through dangerous shoals—a narrow promontory, whose extremity pierces Massachusetts Bay, and whose entire length is exposed to all the violence of Atlantic tempests. Even at the present day, the shores of Cape Cod—as the first discoverers designated it—and the storm-beaten beaches which buffet the tide as far as Gloucester Point, are often strewn with the wrecks of shattered vessels, and the bodies of their hapless crews. Scarcely a storm rises, at certain seasons, from the inclement east, that does not leave its dreadful traces on these dangerous headlands; and many a brave ship, returning from some tedious voyage, has here found her grave, even when the roofs of her sailors’ homes were visible to their despairing eyes, and the ears of expectant friends were open to their drowning cries.

Hither, in her pride, came a ship of France, with freight of hopeful men and trusting women, while in her wake rose the storm-cloud, and before her crouched the hidden forms of unknown reefs. This was in the summer of 1615, while the Pilgrims were still in Holland, though the French had long since peopled portions of Canada and the Islands.

Up into the blue twilight rose that ominous cloud, while along the ocean’s surface swelled a moan as of perturbed
spirits of the deep. One of those sudden tempests, that leap at once, like an aroused giant, from the bosom of our northern seas, and scatter destruction around their path, as with mighty strides they traverse the vexed waters—one of those awful throes of nature now shook the mounting billows, as a steed’s mane is shaken in the battle. The ship bowed before the gale, her tall masts bent like reeds, her high-built prow and majestic quarter dashing away the huge billows which strove to overwhelm her. Onward, with headlong speed, she rushed toward her fate, like a wild horse goaded by the hunter’s shaft. Vainly were the flapping sails bent to the straining masts, and heavy anchors launched into the frothy waters. On dashed the ship—on to the rocks with a crash; then there was a shivering heave, and then a dull thump; the crack of parting timbers, followed by a shriek of fear and agony—voices of the terror-stricken, calling upon heaven.

Far above the roar of the storm and the cries of perishing wretches, was heard the war-whoop of the savage as he marked the peril of his stranger foes, and saw that they must perish, or become his captives.

The Indian is a poetic subject for the romancer to endow with the attributes of an unsullied nature—to portray as clothed with chivalric character, and invested with all the rude virtues supposed to belong peculiarly to a state of nomad innocence. But, an Indian painted and decorated for war, in all the glories of shells, feathers, wampum, with a sheaf of arrows, a stone-hatchet, an oaken-bow, oyster-shell scalping-knife, and having a disposition to cut, hack, maim and torture his enemies to the utmost extent of their endurance, is a positive and real object not at all agreeable to encounter; and if our ancestors, of worthy Pilgrim memory, were sometimes inclined to exhibit their horror of such things by making short work of armed savages, we may, perhaps, imagine an occasional excuse for their so doing, by considering the circumstances in which they were placed, as continually threatened by a remorseless race, jealous of their presence, and anxious for their destruction.

It may be fancied that the poor French emigrants, who beheld, from the decks of the stranded ship, the fierce band anticipating their doom, and exulting in its imminence,
CLINGING TO THE WRECK.

abandoned all hope of escape, and gave way to despair. Children clung about the necks of their mothers, wives were folded wildly in their husbands' arms, friends embraced one another in affectionate farewells—all gave themselves to the terror of the moment, mingling their cries and prayers in sad confusion. The poor wanderers crouched upon the narrow deck, while the daylight faded, the storm howled, and around them dashed the angry waters, sweeping over the reefs, and threatening each moment to engulf the wrecked vessel. Meanwhile, the savages had kindled large fires at many points upon the beach, the light of which streamed across the gloomy water, and reached the dismantled ship; and, on the sand, amid the flaming piles, while the rain poured, and the wind shrieked around them, could be seen their dusky forms, as, with pine-knot torches brandished above their heads, they leaped and danced, singing and yelling so loud that every note rung in the ear of the shuddering occupants of the wreck.

The hours passed slowly on, though, alas! too quickly for the unhappy emigrants, who, striving to sustain one another upon the slippery planks, or clinging singly to the bulwarks, looked out through the mist toward the savages circling round their war-fires. It was evident to the despairing emigrants that no alternative but death or captivity among the redskins could be presented to them, even should they succeed in reaching the shore after the final breaking up of the vessel, of which event they were in momentary anticipation. The captain, however, a dark-visaged and determined man, had not yet resigned himself to the apathy which prevents thought of exertion. He had weighed in his own mind the chances of escape, and saw that there remained one, at least, in case the tempest should subside during the night. This was to leave the stranded vessel by means of the boats, and, instead of landing, to push boldly for the sea, and then, by skirting the headlands and capes, to gain at least some southern point, whence the English settlement of Raleigh, or the new colony of Maryland, might be speedily reached. Unfortunately, however, such escape could be available only to a few, inasmuch as the main boat of the ship had been swamped during the stress of the gale, and there remained only the pinnace, and a small cockle-shell affair which could hold but a half-dozen
of the passengers. However, Captain Pierre did not hesitate, but decided upon securing his own safety, whatsoever might be the consequences. He had been used to many adventures, perilous, and, rumor said, illegal; for it was more than suspected by the emigrants who had engaged him to man and master the ship, that the worthy Pierre had, in former years, known a career less peaceful—indeed, that his rightful companions were rather buccaneers of the Indies than good citizens emigrating for the sake of enjoying quiet lives. The master was not, indeed, a Frenchman, but a Creole of the Spanish main, who had been employed by the emigrants as navigator of the vessel which they owned in shares; moreover, the crew which Captain Pierre had brought with him were of different countries, and though notable good seamen, were yet on quite familiar footing with their master, so as, indeed, to cause a strong suspicion among the emigrants of a former intimacy existing between the parties, which might suggest many memories of adventure connected with Spanish galleons. Nevertheless, Captain Pierre had contracted for the expedition, and had thus far performed his stipulations, which, of course, could not take into account the disasters and mischances of the ocean.

The Creole captain, at this moment, whatever bad or good actions had been his antecedents, was intent on escaping the fate which at present seemed to menace the whole company. He quietly called to him a dozen of the crew, who were evidently old associates of their commander, and, retiring with them to a space between bulkheads not yet battered by the waves, and near which the pinnace was secured, unfolded the plan he had devised. The rough followers readily acquiesced in their leader’s design, though one of them, a blunt fellow, whose round head and bull-dog face proclaimed an English origin, ventured to remark, with an oath:

“Then these poor Frenchmen, with their wenches, will assuredly be eaten by the cannibals on shore yonder. Mass! but it goes hard with my conscience to leave them, Captain Pierre!"

“You are a fool, Robin,” answered the Creole, “for the sensible man lives as long as he can, and lets others do the same.”
“And, in good sooth,” returned the Englishman, with a laugh, in which he seemed to swallow his scruples, “in good sooth, the French people are fitter to die than any of us rovers, Captain Pierre; so I e’en think we may give them the slip with quiet conscience.”

“Well, knave, out with the pinnace, and make no noise about it,” said Captain Pierre; “there’s a patch of still water under the bows, and the boat may swing till the backbone of the storm is broken, which can not be long, if the wind blows like this.”

At last, a lull in the fierceness of the wind, and thunder-rolls dying away in the deep, announced that the gale had spent its violence. Presently the heavy mist that had clothed the waters like a pall, and through which the lightning at times hardly penetrated, began to break in many places, and permit the expiring embers of the Indian war-fires to be seen, marking the line of sandy beach. The savages themselves were no longer visible; but anon, their yells were heard higher up among the woods, and the white men knew that their foes waited but for the morning’s light to attack the ship. Thus wore away the dismal hours, the waters still violent and beating upon the wreck, and the shifting clouds now breaking away slightly, and now closing in dense masses. Thus, at length, the midnight hour came and passed, and then, just as a heavy wave was retreating, there sounded a dull blow that seemed to shiver through the vessel, and immediately afterward the great galley, which was built at the ship’s stern, broke completely off, carrying with it a portion of the quarter, and a score of men and women who clung along the nettings. A shriek rose from the waters as the dark mass of wood, with its freight of living beings, swept seaward with the ebbing wave, and then a silence as of death settled over all.

But the pause lasted not long, for it was the effect of an agonizing dread, which soon found utterance in words, and sobs, and cries to heaven. In the midst of this sorrowful tumult, a deep voice penetrated the ears of all who had survived the parting of the galley from the quarter:

“Friends, the ship breaks up! An hour hence, and naught but fragments will remain! Let us prepare to meet death like Frenchmen and Christians, and that we may have strength so to do, let us now unite in prayer to our Lord.”
It was the voice of Abbe Claude—a priest who had accompanied the expedition, and whose kindly ministries had endeared him to all the emigrants. His solemn accents now fell upon the despairing hearts of his friends with an influence that calmed their terrors, albeit they felt that the prayer which they should offer would be likewise their requiem. At this moment, another voice was heard:

"Comrades, it is good to pray, but it is better to work. The storm is now over; let us make a bridge over the rocks with spars, and thus reach the shore."

It was a man of Brittany who spoke—one high in esteem among his companions, and a murmur of approval greeted his words. He continued:

"It will presently be impossible to escape, for, as the good Abbe says, the ship is breaking fast. Therefore, before we pray, let us work, I say, that we may get to the shore. Ho, captain! Captain Pierre!"

But Captain Pierre’s voice sounded not in answer to the Briton’s call.

"Ho, Captain Pierre! the storm has ceased! let us make a raft to the shore!"

Then a loud hail came from the gloom which hung around the vessel’s side, shrouding the waters, and a quick dash, as of oars, was audible.

"Make ye a raft, an’ ye will, friends! It is a good thought. But Captain Pierre can not come to ye. Adieu!"

As that farewell sounded, a last flash of lightning lit the surrounding waters, and the dazzled eyes of the wretched emigrants faintly perceived the pinace, filled with men, rowing with all speed over the black surface, propelled by double oars. A gloom settled over their spirits, and a low cry escaped many lips. Even the Briton’s voice faltered as he cried:

"Captain Pierre has deserted us!"

"Let us now pray!" said Abbe Claude.

The Briton answered not, and presently the clear, powerful tones of the priest’s voice rose sweetly above the turmoil of winds and waves. He prayed upon that parting wreck, amid the shivering forms of his companions, and his words were echoed by moaning cries, and by deep amens from the inmost
hearts of his hearers. Sublime was the great tumult of waters beneath his voice—solemn, indeed, the church in which he knelt—the dying audience whom he addressed.

Then—the ship broke in twain, the whirling billows dashed her shattered timbers upon the rocks, and caught up the shrieking wretches who clung to spars and cordage, hurling them remorselessly among the breakers, or bearing them ashore, where murdering enemies awaited, with tomahawks upraised, to wreak their savage cruelties upon such as might escape the ocean's fangs.

As the beautiful sun, which, at its setting, had kissed the gay streamers of the ship of France, arose to fill another daily course, the wrecked emigrants were slain, or captured, or fleeing, they knew not whither, through the dense forest of that unknown land where after-wanderers were to find a less inhospitable greeting, and where was to be born that mighty child of a mighty mother, which the world was to know as New England.
CHAPTER II.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

Upon the greensward knelt three figures—an old man, a youth, and a fair young girl. The first, by his garb, and the crucifix which he held aloft, seemed a priest: a man with placid face and thoughtful eyes—one of those self-denying, earnest souls, who first dared the perils of our untrodden wilds, to plant amid deserts the seeds of eternal life.

Near him was a young man, whose attire, though torn and travel-stained, was yet of costly texture and delicate workmanship. His embroidered doublet and rich vest, his jeweled belt, and the plumed hat which lay near him on the sward, as well as the diamond-hilted sword that glittered by his side, marked him as a cavalier of rank. Small hope of golden stores had been the inducement to the young Louis de Luzerne to embark on the outward voyage of Captain Pierre, and mingle with the hundred emigrants who sought the shores of Canada, then first explored, and called Acadia by the French. But a higher motive actuated him. He sought a father, long since banished from his native land for some act which had incurred the arbitrary displeasure of his king. Moreover, the young man cherished another sacred duty—the protection of an only sister, whose tenderest years he had overwatched, and whose beautiful youth he was now guiding with all the enthusiasm of a brother's noble love. With this sister, Louis had embarked in the ship of Captain Pierre; with her he contemplated to share a sylvan home in the new Arcadia of his hopes; and with her he prayed that he might greet a long-lost sire, who, perchance, in his wilderness-exile, despaired of ever again beholding his children.

Beautiful, exceedingly, is prayer—if it be but the true prayer of the heart.
Such was that of the young girl, breathed in the solitude of an American forest, ere the foot of an Englishman had pressed the strand of Plymouth. The prayer was in the sweet French tongue. Its burden was:

"Marie, reine du ciel, priez pour nous!"

And the priest and the young man echoed the musical orison, saying:

"Mary, Queen of Heaven, pray for us!"

She prayed with soft devotion—

"O ma mere, bien aimee!"

The old man, with white locks, and the youth, in low response, upraised their eyes, and murmured—

"Oh my mother, well-beloved!"

"Marie! priez pour nous! Mary! pray for us!"

A solemn and beautiful litany was this, in the deep stillness of a summer's eve, upon a wild, New-England mountain. The shadows lengthened as the prayer proceeded, and gloom deepened around the worshipers. The holy eyes of the maiden Marie shone through the dimness, and her white hands, clasped in earnestness, gleamed from the shadows like the pinions of a snowy dove.

The three who knelt upon the sward were all who had escaped the final catastrophe of the wreck. Louis de Luzerne, in the last moments of terror succeeding the knowledge of Captain Pierre's desertion of the ship, had succeeded, by great exertions, in casting loose a small skiff, or rather canoe, which was fast to the dismantled quarter, and in this frail bark had placed his sister, the priest Claude, and a youth of his own country, named Gabriel St. Elmo. At the dread moment when the sea broke over and engulfed the passengers, this little skiff, to which the four emigrants clung, was lifted from the quarter by a heavy swell, and flung high up among the breakers, whence a returning billow dragged it back to the wild turmoil of waters. Abbe Claude held the maiden in his arms, and Louis, with nervous hand, strove to guide the little boat with the broken blade of an oar which he had secured. But the youth St. Elmo, who had been with them when the wreck broke up, was now no longer visible. He had lost his hold upon the skiff, and been overwhelmed at once by the
breakers. The boat itself, after tossing to and fro, whirled in many directions, at last passed beyond a sheltering headland, where the embayed waters were calm, and there the wanderers remained till the gray dawn discovered to them their situation.

For many days and nights they pursued their route over hills and meadows, and through verdant vales, that were clothed with all the garniture of summer-time, and redolent with sweetest incenses of virgin nature. They journeyed very slowly, but still in the direction, as they believed, of their countrymen's settlement, called Acadié. With no chart or compass, save the rising and setting sun, to tell them of the east and west, and having many times to diverge from a straight course, in following the curves of rivers which they could not cross, they nevertheless pressed forward hopefully, with an unaltering trust in Him who had thus far protected them. Abbe Claude strengthened the courage of Louis by his pious faith and converse, and the youth, on his part, devoted every care to the tender one who clung to him by day and night. Many a mile did he walk, carrying Marie in his arms like an infant, and hushing her fears with brave assurances that all must yet be well; that at the French settlement they must speedily arrive, and there be folded to the heart of a long-lost parent.

So, day by day, they walked the wilderness, until, at length, one sultry eve, they gained the high slopes of Mount Wachusett, then towering, as it towers this day, over a wide horizon of green fields and waving woods and silvery streamlets, twining its base like ribbons. With but vague notions concerning the extent of that strange coast whereon they had been thrown so suddenly, the Abbe Claude believed that a few days' journey must conduct them to the settlements of the French.

The mountain they had now reached was the highest encountered in their journey thus far; and they had ascended nearly to its highest ledges, in the hope that from such an altitude the traces of civilized existence might welcome their vision. Of the Indian race they had seen no signs since leaving the sea-shore; and this fact had given them more assurance that their course was a proper one. Great, therefore, was the disappointment of all when, on climbing to a 'ty point of
the wooded elevation, they could discern nothing in the extreme distance but interminable hills and hollows, covered with dense forest-growths like those which they had been traversing for so many weary days.

Marie, who had refused to complain of pain or weariness during the difficult ascent, here sunk entirely exhausted. She seemed about to yield under the hardships that had so severely taxed her gentle frame.

Louis bent down and pressed his lips to his sister's cheek. "Marie!" he said, "the good God watches over us! Let us put our trust in Him!"

"Yes!" answered Abbe Claude. "Let us have faith in Him who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb!"

"My brother!" murmured the young girl, "should I die, you will go to our father! Perhaps he—"

A tall, black shadow fell athwart the dusky twilight. Marie uttered a shrill of terror—shrinking back and then falling upon the greensward. A painted savage had stolen noiselessly from the thicket, and laid his tawny hand upon her arm. Louis sprang to his feet, drawing, as he did so, the sword which rested beside him. But, as if by consent, a fierce yell resounded through the forest-deeps, and a line of yelling savages emerged from the gloom, brandishing pine-knot torches and weapons of murderous shape, while, with horrible cries, they danced in long circles, closing about their prey.

Louis saw, for the moment, only one object—his poor sister, prostrate upon the sward, motionless as in death. In another instant the brother's glance met the fierce regards of an Indian warrior, and simultaneously the two sprung to a rencontre, in which the red-man's stone tomahawk was shivered by the young Frenchman's sword-blade, and his breast pierced by its point. But of what avail could be a single arm against such fearful odds? A dozen savages precipitated themselves upon the brave youth. A hundred threatening arms were uplifted to dispatch him.

Abbe Claude, raising his crucifix above his bare brow, knelt beside the swooning maiden, sustaining her slight form. It was a blessed unconsciousness that steoped the poor child's senses, shielding her from the sights and sounds around her;
for the wilderness appeared alive with foemen, and an unearthly chorus of whoops and cries bespoke the jubilee of savage triumph.

Luzerne, struggling vainly against overpowering numbers, beheld his sword wrested from his grasp after a tomahawk blow had disabled his wrist. Defenseless and smitten to the ground, he submitted to be bound, as was the Abbe Claude, with tough withes of bark, while the still fainting Marie was lifted, a death-like burden, on the arm of a tall Indian who appeared to be the chief of the band.

Abbe Claude and Louis Luzerne were driven before their red captors down the dim forest-aisles, and, with bleeding feet and pinioned arms, urged onward swiftly by their Narragansett captors. Ah! what a dismal spectacle appalled them as they raised their burning eyes!—a ghastly line of trophies borne on bloody spear-points—dark, reeking scalps, with the short hair of men, and long tresses, and blonde ringlets—the last vestiges of matrons and maids, whose corpses lay unburied upon the sands of the shore. These sad relics were all that remained of their late companions in exile—the hapless crew and passengers of the wrecked ship!
CHAPTER III.
THE WHITE MAN’S CRIME.

On the same evening that Luzerne, his sister, and the Abbe Claude ascended the mountain of Wachusett, and beheld the sun set from its summit, another scene of glory was visible some score of miles to the south. The declining sun was spreading a gauze of fire over the broad waters of Massachusetts Bay, and along the margin of her golden sands a myriad of rippling waves were breaking brightly and quietly, glittering in the western light like dissolving shells of pearl.

Beneath the spreading boughs of a stalwart oak, that stretched its ponderous arms toward the shore, sat a young Indian mother, while her child rocked in a birchen cradle that depended from a branch of the oak. She was weaving a chain of wampum, and crooning to herself, in a low-toned, musical voice, some plaintive ditty of her native tribe. At times her dark eyes fell, with a glance of love, upon her slumbering infant, and then, with a smile, were directed afar to the distant hill-tops, their glance following the course of a narrow hunting-path, which led from the sea-shore through the dense forest. By that path Outesie knew that her husband, a brave Pequod hunter, would seek his cabin at the sunset hour, and her heart beat in glad anticipation; for the young mother was proud and fond of the father of her babe.

A boat appeared upon the waters of the bay, gradually approaching the land. Stealing onward, in the shadow of the high beach-rocks, it drew noiselessly nearer and nearer to the bank upon which the Indian mother sat. She saw it not, for the eyes and heart of Outesie were fixed upon the tall form of a man parting the leafy solitude. She knew it was her husband—a stately chieftain with plumed head and wampum-decked breast, returning from the chase. He held his bow in his hand, and rapidly descended the wooded hill, while the loving eyes of his wife eagerly watched his coming.
The boat had now rounded the nearest point, and her keel struck the sands of the shore. The Indian mother stood near the oak tree, her gaze fixed upon the advancing chieftain, and she heard not the approach of the strangers till a rough hand was laid upon her. Turning quickly, she beheld two beings with white faces, and in singular garb, standing close beside her. At once all that she had heard concerning spirits of evil flashed over her mind. But she thought not of self—her first emotion was apprehension for her sleeping child. With a shriek she darted to the oak tree, and snatched from its waving bough the birchen cradle in which her babe reposed.

The Pequod chieftain heard the shriek. His eyes fell upon the strangers who were pursuing her. No fear of evil spirits palsied the Indian’s limbs, for he knew that the intruders were men of that pale race which, in other portions of the land, had already marked its advent with violence and blood. He fitted an arrow to his bow, and, bounding down the mountain-path, gained the oak tree, where his terrified wife had sunk insensible. The white men beheld the stalwart form of the Indian dashing toward them, and, turning quickly, they regained their boat, and pushed away from the beach.

The chieftain did not pursue them. His first care was to raise the fainting Outesie, and hush the terror of the babe, now awake, and uttering loud cries. Meanwhile the boat, which contained perhaps a dozen men, had reached the clear water at some distance from the shore, and there its crew, resting upon their oars, surveyed the movements of the redman.

Outesie’s eyes soon opened beneath her husband’s caresses, and she clung tremblingly to his bosom, as her gaze wandered shoreward and beheld the white spirits of her fear.

“Outesie—my wild bird—they are gone! It is I—it is Mattakan who embraces thee.”

Outesie stretched forth her arms for her child, and, pressing it to her heart, soothed its plaintive cries. The twilight was now falling, and Mattakan and his wife had several miles to walk to their own lodge, for the oak tree was but a trysting-place where Outesie was wont to meet her chieftain, as he returned, laden with small game, from the forest-hunt. At the present time, Mattakan’s belt of wampum held several birds and rabbits, pierced by his unerring shaft
Suddenly, however, as the chieftain turned to enter, with Outesie, the forest-depths, and give the alarm to the village that strangers were upon their waters, a loud report, that sounded in the Indian's ears like thunder, caused him to turn his head. At the same moment a bullet whistled past, and, striking the oak tree, splintered the bark in fragments at his feet. Mattakan, appalled at the strange power which had performed this feat, stood for a moment silently clasping the hand of Outesie, then hurriedly led her toward the forest-path. Another moment, and his form would be lost in the shadows of the great trees. Outesie, with beating heart, folded her babe in her arms and followed her husband.

Again that loud report startled the echoes. It was mingled with the dying shriek of Outesie! A bullet from the white man's musket had pierced her loving heart. She staggered forward and fell at the roots of the reverent oak which had been her place of tryst, the babe still clasped to her heart.

Mattakan knelt beside his wife; he saw the life-stream welling from the cruel wound in her bosom; he met her soft eyes, upturned to his own, in a long, last look of affection; and then, as she sunk upon the sward, Mattakan knew that Outesie was no more. The leaden death of the pale strangers had robbed him of his beloved.

Fury filled the soul of the Pequod chief. Raising a wild peal of the war-whoop, he rushed to the water's edge, and, fitting an arrow to his bow, launched it at the retreating boat. The shaft fell short of its mark, and a shrill laugh of triumphal scorn came from the white men. A discharge of muskets hurled a dozen bullets around the chieftain's form; but he heeded them not, though the plume was struck from his scalp-lock, and his wampum-necklace was cut in twain by the missiles. Why should Mattakan now fear death? His heart was with the dead Outesie.

Slowly he retraced his steps to the oak tree, while the white man's boat glided away on the misty waters of the bay. And when the last rays of day had fled from the scene, and the night shades drew heavily around, Mattakan stood beside a grave that he had scooped out in the sand beneath the oak tree.

In that grave the Pequod chieftain buried the body of his
beloved Outesie. But first he knelt upon the sand beside his lost one, and, severing a tress of her long, black hair, placed it in his bosom, murmuring a few low words. The tress was wet with the blood of his murdered wife, and the words which Mattakan breathed were a vow of vengeance upon the pale-faces.

Wrapping the young child in a garment of its slain mother, he pressed it to his heaving heart, and then departed into the wilderness.

Many moons passed away, but Mattakan was seen no more upon the shores of the Massachusetts, and his voice resounded not in the wigwams of his tribe. Mattakan hunted no more upon the three hills of Shawmut.

The small mound, beneath the ancient oak that marked the grave of Outesie, began to crumble before the encroaching waves, and soon the waters encircled the oak itself.

But Mattakan came not, and none among his nation knew whither he had wandered.
of the tribe was neared, and the Narragansett hunting-grounds stretched before the gaze of their returning owners. Whooping and yelling, the savage warriors quickened their pace, and tossed in the air the bloody poles on which were stretched a hundred gory scalps. And forth from the lodges and wigwams, to greet them, came the old men, and squaws, and children, leaping wildly about, and screeching, like demons, a welcome to their victorious friends. O, it was a horrible and unearthly scene to look upon—that demoniac welcome home! For distorted figures, naked and frightfully painted, danced beneath the old forest-trees, in the light of blazing pine-knots, which they whirled above their heads, and a chorus of terrific cries mingled with the beat of wooden drums and blast of conch-shells, frightening the wild beasts to their lairs by the more intense wildness of savage men. It was a joyous welcome, indeed, to the returning warriors, but a fearful greeting to their wretched captives, who, tattered, scoured, and fettered, marched in the midst of the whooping band. There were two prisoners—one youthful and fair, with delicate limbs, now, alas, all bleeding and bruised from blows and the hardships of travel; the other, with white locks and reverend brow, alike bruised and wearied, but pressing bravely onward, his shackled hands folded meekly on his breast.

Vainly had Louis de Luzerne struggled for freedom—vainly prayed for death; the goading spears of his cruel captors urged him forward on the toilsome march, though his pinioned limbs had grown stiff with pain and fatigue. The aged priest, like himself, was half bowed to the ground under a load of trophies, which the Indians had compelled them to bear; still, the good Abbe, forgetful of self, whispered words of consolation in the young man's ear.

"Courage, my son!" whispered the old priest. "Marie, thy sweet sister, may still be saved, like ourselves."

"Alas! her scalp may even now dangle amid those which yon savages toss about, like demons that they are. Better for Marie, truly if she indeed perished on the mountain!"

"She would then rest where the wicked might not trouble," responded the priest. "Nevertheles, the Almighty may have preserved her, my son, and as Christian men, it is meet that we give not way to despair!"
"Would that I were lying beside my sister!" cried Louis, refusing to be consoled by the good Abbe's words. "Would," he continued, more bitterly, "that these heathen savages were done with their mummery, that they might be speedy in their sacrifice of which we are to be the victims!"

"Nay, tempt not Heaven with impious wishes! We indeed suffer, but One has suffered before us. Trust in that One, my son—even Him in whom the young Marie trusted."

The youth did not reply, for a whisper, low and sweet as the summer wind, seemed to echo the priest's words. The memory of his sister's voice descended like dew upon his bruised heart, and he felt that, if the maiden was indeed no more of earth, her spirit would be near him in the hour of trial. He bent his head and went silently on.

The unearthly scene—the horrible faces of the Indians, and their terrific gestures, seeming to menace death to the captives at every contortion of the dance—began to swim indistinctly before the eyes of Abbe Claude and his young countryman. Soon it seemed that only a confused whirl of dusky figures, gleaming torches, and upheld spears and hatchets, danced before them, and then they heard but a din of yells and horrid laughter, mingled with dull tomahawk-strokes upon the post to which they were fastened. Then, as the savage triumph grew wilder and wilder, Heaven vouchsafed relief to the wretched prisoners. Fear, exhaustion and suffering paralyzed their senses. Their eyes closed, and they became unconscious of torture.
CHAPTER V.

ROBIN BALL.

"I doubt, Captain Pierre, you and I and all of us will rue that luckless shot ere we be clear of these heathen savages," said the voice of a man who held the rudder of a large boat which, filled with his companions, was skirting the jutting points of a long reach of rocks forming the entrance of what is now the Mystic river.

"And I doubt, Robin Ball, you will one day provoke me to send as luckless a shot into that English pate of yours," replied Captain Pierre.

"A luckless shot, and a luckless hand, and a luckless soul, will be that which shall seek harm to Robin Ball, and he live to know the same!" retorted the Englishman. "Nathless, I will say, what I said before, that it was a coward act to shoot that young squaw out of rank wantonness! What need was there to waste powder at all, Captain Pierre."

"Have care, Robin Ball, of your speech, else there will be more than words between us. What think ye if I leave ye ashore among your good friends, the red-men? By my faith, it were fair wages for mutinous grumbling wherewith ye would breed evil blood among comrades."

"Call my speech what ye may, Captain Pierre, there shall not be wanting a hand to back what the mouth utters."

"Dog! do you threaten me?" cried the Creole, starting from his seat in the middle of the vessel, and half raising his sword, as he leaned toward the boat-steerer. "Another word from that mutinous throat, and there'll be one less of this good company."

"Say you so, Captain Pierre?" retorted the Englishman, letting go his hold of the rudder, and grasping instead the barrel of an arquebus, which lay beside him at the stern of the boat. "If Rob Ball be a dog, he is no dog of a Creole
buccaneer. What, ho, my masters!” continued the seaman, glancing from one to another of his comrades in the pinnace: “Will ye see your messmate tossed overboard to the sharks, because he doubts the good policy of murdering squaws, when we have thousands of bloody savages tracking us night and day since the shipwreck?”

The seaman's appeal was not without its effect, for a murmur ran from one to another of the crew, and Captain Pierre's uplifted arm dropped irresolute by his side. The Creole, however, was not a man to be easily alarmed. He knew well the natures of those who composed the greater portion of the company, since it was true that several of them had sailed with him in former years in quest of adventures quite as perilous as the present one. On the other hand, he was aware that the English sailor, Rob Ball, was a fellow of address and boldness, and possessed not a little influence over many of the crew. Beside this, the unfortunate termination of the voyage had disheartened most of the men, who had heretofore not been backward in expressing themselves in terms of insubordination quite as positive as those of the Englishman. Captain Pierre, therefore, saw that his better policy was to temporize.

“Come, come, Robin Ball,” he said, releasing his clasp of the sword-hilt, and stretching out his hand to the boat-steerer: “Let the past be forgotten between worthy comrades! If the squaw had held her peace, no harm had been done. As it was, comrade, I sought not to slay the woman—it was the red dog I aimed at.”

Robin Ball doggedly took the hand which was extended to him, but he gave it no grasp of reconciliation.

“It was a coward shot, I'll maintain!” he muttered.

Captain Pierre overheard the remark, and bit his lip, while the dark blood mounted to his face. Nevertheless, he only laughed, displaying his white teeth, and said:

“Well, worthy Rob, the next shot shall be yours! But, look ye, comrades—the smooth beach and quiet cove of your little isle will give us a snug harbor for the night. I like not skirting these thickets in the full glare of the moon. And, see! the wench is just peeping from behind those tall trees! Presently her beams will light up the waters, so that
we shall be quite too fair a target for the arrows of red marks-
men! Prythee, good Robin, point the boat shoreward, an' it
please you!"

But Robin Ball's temper seemed to be far from placable on
this occasion. He gloomily held his peace, and though, as
directed, he steered the pinnace into shoal-water, and gained
the narrow cove, beyond which a patch of hard beach, glitter-
ing in the rays of moonlight which now began to glimmer
through the forest-leaves, offered a secure landing-place, it was
evident that no gentle feeling warmed his heart with reference
to his commander. Of this, however, the Creole apparently
took no note, waiting quietly in his place till the boat's keel
struck the sands, and then springing ashore with the rest of
the crew, seemingly losing all recollection of the late war of
words. Robin Ball muttered a few grumbling words, as he
 aided in dragging the boat upon the beach, and securing it for
the night, and then joined his companions in disposing of his
allotted share of the scanty remnant of provisions which they
had saved from the wreck, but to which had been added an
abundant store of succulent Indian corn, gleaned from an
Indian plantation encountered on their devious voyage in the
pinnace.

Captain Pierre was well versed in savage craft, for he
had dwelt in the Havana, and among the islands of the
Spanish main, and, withal, was a politic and fearless adventurer,
who made light of dangers and adversities which might have
gone far to dishearten one of weaker mould. Under his skill-
ful pilotage, by rowing in the shadow of the banks, and keep-
ing watchful eye both for canoes upon the bay and savage
lodge-smokes on the land, the band which he led had for a
week navigated the mouths of various harbors, and even
ventured far along the banks of rivers that manifestly pene-
trated the far interior of the land. It was not, indeed, till the
mentioned evening that the Creole, on discovering, as he
thought, a solitary squaw reclining near the beach, conceived
the wicked project of obtaining possession of the defenseless
creature, and thus gaining information concerning the red
tribes who dwelt on the shores of the Massachusetts. Other
and cruel purpose had Captain Pierre, which he as yet
imparted to but two or three of his followers, and this was
oblige his prisoner to conduct the band to some village of the red people, which he proposed surprising in the night, and making captures of a goodly number of children. These prizes secured, and the pinnace safely steered from the bay, the Creole thought that little difficulty would be experienced in coasting the land southward to Havana, where his captives could be profitably disposed of as slaves to the planters in that island. It was a nefarious design, but one quite in keeping with the character of the buccaneer, and not, indeed, at variance with the customs of the time, inasmuch as other adventurers, English as well as Spanish and French, had amassed large fortunes by the same traffic.

Pierre Dacot, therefore, or Captain Pierre, as he was called, found no difficulty in reconciling his conscience to the deed thus contemplated; and, though foiled in his attempt to abduct the Pequod woman, by the sudden appearance of her husband, whom the rover feared might be accompanied by other savages, he determined, at the earliest opportunity, to carry into execution his project of kidnapping. The pinnace was large enough to accommodate, beside his crew, some dozen or more close-pinioned children, and, by these latter, Captain Pierre hoped to realize a few hard pieces of gold as soon as he should reach the Havana.

It was necessary that all his companions should be made acquainted with the enterprise proposed. He knew the obstinate disposition of Robin Ball, and likewise that this stolid fellow had been much disaffected since their abandonment of the emigrants; and yet it was of the first importance that Rob, who was much regarded among the men, should give his earnest co-operation to the business of kidnapping, in order to insure its success. The Creole regretted bitterly the dispute which had occurred between himself and the Englishman, and resolved to heal the breach as speedily as possible. No sooner, then, was the pinnace secured for the night, and the men dispersed under the leafy covert of the small island where they had sought a sheltered repose, than the captain drew near to Robin Ball, and said, in a coaxing voice:

"Comrade! if I spake word of offense, or if the rash deed of the enemy has stirred up bitterness between us, it is not meet that comrades in danger should harbor malice. Here,
then, Robin, is my hand, and let us be friends once more, for I love you too well to sleep in anger with you."

The English seaman held the rover's hand a moment, without speaking, though he returned the pressure which it gave his own. Then he said slowly—"Captain Pierre, there be many natures and many paths in the world. Your nature, I doubt, is not my nature; and when this voyage is over, our paths will very like be wide from each other. But as you say, comrades in danger should harbor no malice. Therefore let us be no more at strife till we meet in Christian land."

"With all my heart, brave comrade," said the captain. "And if, when we are safe among Christian men once more, Robin Ball shall show cause of grievance against Pierre Dacot, by my troth, I shall be ready to settle the score, with sword, dagger, or pistol, as the case may be."

Rob Ball appeared greatly mollified by this promise on the part of the leader, and shook the latter's hand with earnestness, as he replied: "That's fair and frank, and beshrew me but Robin will give Pierre whatever satisfaction he may claim—as my hand on the bargain now warrants. So good night, captain!"

Saying this, Rob Ball was about to cast himself on the soft grass, where he had already made a pillow of leaves, covered with his thick sailor's gabardine, but Captain Pierre had not yet finished the conversation to his liking.

"We have had the fiend's own luck in this voyage," he cried, seating himself beside the sailor. "Look at me, comrade—stripped of all I possessed by the wreck, and obliged to begin the world without a maravedi. Now, if some stroke of fortune were to offer—if we could but get away from this savage land, and fall in with some rich galion that a few stout blows might master—"

"Mass! but it would be better than shooting squaws for marksmanship," said Rob Ball. "Faith, Captain Pierre! I value my life as highly as any man's—but if a good Spanish merchantman were to be had by the risk of it, never fear to find Robin lagging in the background."

"I doubt you not, Robin, I doubt you not," answered the Creole. "But, we are not yet at the Havana, and when the Havana is reached, it is many a league to Tortugas' Isle, and further still to the Oronoco, and the Spanish main."
"Good-by, then, to Spanish galleons!" said Rob Ball, moodily.

"Not so!" answered the crafty Creole. "Have you not heard, Rob, of your bold countryman, Walter Raleigh, who sailed the great main, and went in search of the Golden People of Guiana?"

"Ay, marry have I," cried Rob, "and of Drake, the good mariner, who took great store of wealth from the Don Spaniards."

"Well, there be Drakes and Raleighs now on the main," said Captain Pierre; "there be bold mariners who go out in boats not bigger than our pinnace here, and with no arms save pistols and cutlasses; and the great galleons strike their flags when they see them, and the Dons fall on their marrowbones, begging for quarter."

"By my troth!" exclaimed Robin Ball, warmed up by the Creole's words, "say you that such bold freebooters be there? Here is my hand, then, thrice, Captain Pierre. Let bygones be bygones, and go we speedily to the brave Spanish main!"

"Oh, we are not yet there," sighed the rover. "We must first reach the Havana!"

"But the pinnace will weather her way thither, Captain Pierre. Have you not promised us that?"

"Small fear have I of the pinnace," returned the Creole. "And that we shall reach the Havana, I doubt not; but what think ye, comrade, will be our luck among the Havana planters, save, indeed, we have gold wherewith to provide for our voyage to the main? Now, I have a thought; Robin Ball—"

The captain paused, apparently revolving some new idea in his mind, while the Englishman half rose from his pillow to listen.

"If we can manage to catch a few of these wild natives, and transport them safely to the Havana, the red hides would stand us some broad pistols, Robin Ball."

The seaman's blue eyes opened widely.

"What say you, Captain Pierre—mean you to sell the Indians?"

"In good sooth I do. The heathen dogs—more especially, if they be likely youth of fifteen years or thereabout—will
bring a good price with the planters—some fifty pistoles per head, or thereabouts, Robin Ball."

"And you will sell the flesh and blood of the poor people, captain?"

"For fifty pistoles per head—male and female, Robin!"

"Then may God's malison light on ye!" cried the Englishman, suddenly starting up, and confronting his astonished leader, who had deemed his crafty words were listened to with eager ears. "Am I a Turk, Captain Pierre, that ye propose this foul traffic to me? Out with ye, for a coward and a kidnapper!"

"Robin Ball, have a care!"

"Villain that ye are, and no brave mariner—I defy you, and if my life be spared till the morrow's sun, I take my leave of your company, come what may come."

Captain Pierre's small black eyes twinkled with malice, but he made no reply to the Englishman, who threw himself back upon his pillow, with a muttered malediction. After a pause, however, the Creole glided silently away from the spot where the conversation had been held, and proceeded noiselessly toward the pinnace, in whose bows watched two others of the crew.
CHAPTER VI.

TISQUONTAM AND MONOMA.

When the dismal war-whoop of the savages rung upon the ears of Marie, and before her eyes stood the tall figure of a red-man, his features grim with paint, his wild eyes gleaming in the light of torches, and a deadly weapon upraised in his hand, it was no wonder that the senses of the maiden forsook her, or that all consciousness of what afterward took place was lost to her vision. The dreadful attack, the struggle, the capture of her brother and the Abbe Claude, were mercifully concealed from the apprehension of the young girl, and when she awoke to observation once more, the scene and all its terrors had vanished.

Marie was no longer on the mountain’s summit, no longer companioned by her beloved Louis and the priest, but, instead, she felt herself compressed by the strong arms of a plumed Indian, who bore her rapidly through the dense forest, descending the declivities with the agility of a deer, and treading the greensward with a step springy and light, as if no burden encumbered his progress.

For some moments after awaking to a realization of the change which had taken place in her situation, Marie could with difficulty reflect—all her intellect appeared confused and chaotic. Strangeness and uncertainty seemed to encompass her as with a cloud. Gradually, however, her brain grew accustomed to the rapid motion with which she was borne forward, and her thoughts began to shape themselves.

Marie felt that she was unbound, and that no wound had reached her; moreover, that her captor was alone—no other footsteps following his own. He sustained her slight form very easily with one stalwart arm, while the other bore his bow and heavy war-club. Marie noted all this, and, at the
same time, became aware that her head was pillowed upon
the red-man's shoulder, her cheek pressed against his glowing
neck. She started suddenly, and shrunk instinctively from
the contact.

The Indian's coal-black eye, revealed in the moonlight,
seemed to flash to the maiden's soul, as its quick glance was
turned upon her, recognizing her awakening. But, save a
short guttural expression, apparently of satisfaction, he gave no
other token of intelligence, but bounded onward with the same
elastic step. Thus onward through the forest and over grassy
hills, resplendent in the moonbeams, and through dim gorges,
cloven amid the rocks, until, at length, they reached the
margin of a quietly-flowing river, whose banks were clothed
with laurel, and sumach, and yellow-petaled lilies, waving in
the soft night-breeze.

Here the red-man laid his living burden upon the sward,
tenderly as a mother places her child to rest, and then, parting
the bushes that grew by the water, disclosed a light canoe of
birch-bark, which he drew to the bank. In the stern of this
frail bark he first deposited his bow, arrows and war-club, and
then, lifting once more the trembling form of his captive, dis-
posed her gently in the bow of the vessel, balancing it the
while so nicely, that even when his own heavy frame followed,
and reached its place in the middle of the craft, no motion
took place save a rapid gliding forth, straight as an arrow's
flight, upon the river's bosom. Imperceptibly, as it were, the
canoe seemed to strike the current, and, propelled by a light
paddle which the red-man wielded, shot with great velocity
down the moonlit tide.

Sad and painful were the images which poor Marie con-
jured to her fancy, as she reclined at her captor's feet in the
canoe, and beheld the dim river-banks, evermore changing, as
the birchen vessel glided swiftly past them.

Many hours, it seemed, elapsed ere the canoe was checked
by a stroke of the Indian's powerful arm, and its prow
directed to the shore. Here, with the same deliberation with
which he had embarked, the savage drew the little bark
ashore, and first taking from it his arms, lifted his captive to
his stalwart shoulder, and bounded away into the dark forest
with unrelaxed speed. Presently, however, he reached what
appeared the termination of the night's journey, and the eyes of Marie opened upon a novel and beautiful scene.

The place where her captor had halted was an interval or vale between two wooded hills, from each of which descended a small stream of water, at first gurgling musically over a pebbly bed, and then lapsing into a gentle and noiseless flow, between banks of soft grass fringed with lilies, and fragrant with wild honeysuckle and sweet fern. The two streams met, and, mingling with each other, parted again to glide on either side of a small, oval islet, and then flow afterward in a broader channel from the plain into the deep wood, where their course was lost evermore from view. But it was the little islet that most attracted the attention of Marie.

Upon it was a hut or wigwam, constructed after the rude Indian fashion, but not repulsive or naked-looking, like most of the aboriginal habitations. It was built between the massy trunks of two sycamore-trees, patriarchs of the forest, whose immense branches rose high above the roof which they sheltered. The top was arched, either by accident or design, and with the curved boughs above it, suggested somewhat of a civilized effect. Over roof-tree and sides, likewise, and around the door-posts, and on either wall, grew thick clambering flowers, honeysuckles, wild eglandine, and russet woodbines. Altogether, the wigwam, or cottage it might be called, presented an appearance sufficiently remarkable and attractive to divert for a space the thoughts of Marie, so that she forgot the affliction of herself and friends in wonder at the beauty of the scene around her.

The Indian placed her upon a moss-covered stone, washed by the stream that purled beside it, and there leaving her for a moment, with a light bound he crossed the water and stood in front of the wigwam. A dog, barking loudly, immediately ran from the open door, and the next instant a woman glided out into the moonlight, and, darting forward, fell into the Indian's outstretched arms, her own hands clasping his bending neck. The dog, meantime, a creature of the small Indian breed, leaped to and fro, and sprung upon the savage, and then, running to the streamlet's edge, barked sharply at the strange figure which his quick eyes saw upon the opposite bank.
The maiden witnessed this apparently joyful meeting with emotions of sorrow and sympathy—sorrow as she thought of her own desolate state, and sympathy with the affection which was manifested in the actions of the wild beings before her. At the same time it seemed to her that the embraces which she beheld were a guaranty for her own future security—as if they assured a gentle treatment to even a captive and an enemy. And yet to whom was the delicate girl an enemy?—she whose infancy and childhood had been passed among associations the most peaceful and love-inspiring, whose childhood had been nurtured by the deep affection of an only brother, and spent in the seclusion of cloistered walls! True, the young girl had scarcely known a mother's love ere it was lost to her forever in this world; but well she remembered the beautiful face, with its sad smile, that often bent over her infant slumbers, and the sweet voice that was wont to soothe her with the dear name of "daughter." Another countenance she half recalled, that of a majestic man, with clear, brown eyes and noble forehead, whom her heart told her was her father, but who, alas, had known as little of his child as did his wife; for the enmity of a nobleman, powerful at court, had drawn upon the elder Luzerne the unjust anger of the king, and he had been torn from his wife and children, in the latter's earliest years, and expatriated to the then dreaded climes of America. His lady did not long survive him, but departed from her lonesome state of widowed love, and left her two babes to the care of a good man, her only counselor, the Abbe Claude—him who, to the last, had followed and watched over his precious charge. Such was Marie's brief history, and it flashed vividly through her mind even in that moment, during which her glance rested upon the Indian and his companion. She had little time for reflection ere the savage was once more at her side, lifting her in his arms preparatory to recrossing the streamlet. Meantime, the Indian woman had ignited a torch, and its bright light streamed through the woven branches of trees and strips of birch-bark which formed the sides of the hut, into which the white maiden was presently carried, and placed upon a couch of soft furs that occupied a corner. Here, in the light of the torch, she had opportunity to examine closely the appearance of the two, whose singular attentions began to inspire her with wonder, if not with fear.
The Indian, in whose arms she had been borne so many miles, was a man of heavy frame, broad-chested, and erect as a mountain-pine. His arms and breast were decorated with painted figures and ornaments, and rows of wampum-string hung about his neck, denoting that he was a chief of rank. Buskins of deer-skin defended his feet and legs, and a tunic of some fibrous material, stained with various colors, and sewn with wampum, depended from his waist, over which usually was worn the blanket with which he had covered Marie, and which he now held in his hand. The chieftain's forehead was broad and high, though disfigured by a streak of crimson paint, blotches of which likewise stained his cheeks. Above the forehead the head was bare, save where a tuft of black hair was gathered at the top of the skull, and bound with wampum, out of which rose a bunch of eagle's feathers. To the eyes of Marie, the chief appeared to be a man of forty years or more, though in his mien and eyes were apparent all the vigor and spirit of youth.

The Indian girl—for it was evident that scarcely sixteen summers had passed over the head of her who stood beside the chief, and whom the French maiden at once divined to be his daughter—was of slight but graceful figure, with regular features, dark, dreamy-looking eyes, and hair of intense blackness, hanging nearly to her feet. She was clothed in a light robe or tunic, woven of threads of bark, brodered with beads, and knit together by shiny rows of shell, while a mantle of delicate otter-skins was confined to one shoulder, hanging gracefully to her knees. Her small feet were covered by little moccasins of birch-bark, gayly spangled with shells and bits of glittering grass. She stood beside her father in an attitude of native grace, her form drawn up like his, and her arching neck thrown back with the air of a princess. Nevertheless, though proud in look and mien, the Indian girl's eyes were dwelling upon the pale-faced captive with an expression of tender commiseration, which at once assured Marie that in the Indian's child she had found a friend.

Perhaps, so thought the chieftain himself; for, as he followed the look of his daughter, it seemed as if his grim brow relaxed, and something akin to a smile lingered upon his lip. The red maiden caught his eye; the next moment she advanced
to the French girl, and, kneeling beside her, took her head tenderly between the palms of her hands, and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead. Marie's heart grew full in a moment. She forgot that her companion was a strange maid, that she was a heathen and of a savage race. She only felt that warm kiss upon her forehead, and saw two tender eyes gazing into her own with a look of sympathy which won her confidence. Marie sobbed aloud, and, throwing herself upon the neck of the Indian girl, burst into a flood of tears.

The stoical red chieftain raised his hand to his forehead, brushing it hastily across his eyes. Then, striding to the door, he stooped his plumed head, and stood forth beneath the moonlight.

"Ugh!" ejaculated the Indian, as his dark eyes cast a backward glance upon the two maidens; "Ugh! the warrior feel woman his heart!"

And he struck his broad breast heavily with his hand, as if to recall his manhood.
CHAPTER VII.

THE RATTLE SNAKE.

It was early day when the Abbe Claude awoke from a lethargy into which, together with his young fellow-prisoner, he had fallen during the war-dance of the savages, on their return to their village. It was with great difficulty that he could recall to memory the incidents of the preceding night. A recollection of some frightful scene, indeed, was dimly present to his mind, but it was rather like the vagueness of a half-remembered dream than the reminiscences of a fearful reality. Gradually, however, as his eyes became accustomed to the place in which he found himself, so the shadowy events of the Indian feast grew vivid to his mind's vision. Again he listened to monotonous war-chants, sudden yells, horrid laughter—again he heard the sharp whiz of a hatchet through the air, and its dull stroke into the wood beside his cheek.

The Abbe strained his gaze until it was able to discern something of the place in which he was. His limbs were still bound, though not with that benumbing tightness which had cramped them during his weary march to the Indian village. He could slightly move his hand, and distinguish, beneath its touch, the soft wolf-skin on which he lay. He soon ascertained, from the noise of regular breathing around him, that there were other persons near, evidently wrapped in profound slumber, and he therefore concluded that he was confined in one of the wigwams or lodges of the red-men, in the midst of guards, as was customary with the Indians to bestow their prisoners. But the uppermost thought of the good Abbe concerned less himself than his friend and charge, Louis. Anxious to discover if the young man was in his neighborhood, he raised himself cautiously, as far as his thongs would permit, and cast a scrutinizing glance about him.
A swart savage, holding in his sleeping grasp a huge war-club, lay close beside the priest, while a dozen more, all apparently slumbering soundly, were dispersed over the wigwam floor; but the Abbe’s gaze fell first upon the form of Louis, encompassed by the brawny arms of a Herculean Indian. He breathed a silent prayer of gratitude, as he saw that his youthful friend was sleeping as quietly on the broad breast of his guard as if suffering and captivity were things unknown to his experience.

Upon a log, at the wigwam-entrance, reclined a gigantic warrior, with his weapon—a knotted, jagged, but beautifully polished maple club—grasped in his sinewy fingers. As the increasing light, falling between the branches of a forest-tree above, played over the red-man’s features, the prisoner was struck at once with their solemn and devout expression. The copper brow seemed gilded with the morning beams, and a strange seriousness, as of awed thoughts, invested the savage face with a quiet grandeur which drew the admiration of the priest.

“Perhaps the Indian prays! and doubtless his prayers—
even his untutored prayers—are accepted of the Lord!”

Again Abbe Claude turned his head toward the spot where Louis slept in the arms of his guard; but a thrill of deadly terror crept through his frame; he gasped for breath as his glance rested on the young man. Erect, at the very head of young Luzerne, its scaly body glistening in the dull morning light, the priest beheld the wriggling folds of a large serpent. Its malignant eyes, like sparks of fire, twinkled close to the captive’s cheek, and its forked tongue played around his forehead.

The lodge was silent, save the measured breathing of the unconscious savages. The priest alone, palsied with unutterable horror, beheld the writhing snake. A moment the venomous reptile stretched its length beside the captive; then it reared itself, with crested head, once more, and threw back its fanged mouth, as if to strike its victim. He vented his stifled feelings in a cry of terror.

Immediately, and indeed before the Abbe’s cry had ceased, the sleeping Indians were upon their feet, clutching their weapons, while a succession of short yells rung alarm
through all the village. The reclining warrior, at the lodge-
door, sprang up, brandishing his club, and a crowd of braves
and screeching squaws poured into the wigwam. They
beheld Father Claude half rising from the ground to which he
was fastened by wooden stakes driven through his thongs,
and pointing with outstretched arm toward his fellow-captive,
who lay gasping upon the earth. The serpent, gliding to a
corner of the hut, reared its crest again. It was but the work
of a moment, however, for a stout brave to hurl his club at
the angry reptile. It fell, crushed and dying, upon the ground,
and the Indian's moccasined foot bruised its head.

A gentle-featured Indian woman ran from among the
squaws, and, kneeling beside the young captive, lifted his
drooping forehead from the mat on which he had fallen from
the arms of his guard. Louis struggled for breath, as though
overcome with pain or fright, and the woman, baring his
arm, disclosed upon the shoulder a few drops of blood. The
snake had struck its victim surely, and its poison was in the
wound. This sad fact was attested to the senses of Abbe
Claude by the sudden guttural exclamation that ran from one
to another of the savage spectators. The priest strove to
crawl toward his friend, but the strong hand of one of his
guards restrained him, and a short "ugh!" imposed silence.

It became evident at once to the Abbe that his fellow-
prisoner was not to be left without immediate aid. The squaw
who had raised the youth, and discovered the hurt, now tore
away the covering of the captive's neck, and, stooping beside
him, applied her lips to the venomous bite inflicted by the
rattlesnake's fangs. At the same time an old savage, who
stood by, plucked some grass that grew near the lodge-door,
and, placing it in his mouth, began slowly to chew, while
the woman sucked at the youth's arm. Abbe Claude gazed
wonderingly at the coolness and silence of the Indians, for,
since the serpent had been struck down, not a word had fallen
from any of the party, save the guttural "ugh!" of the guards.

For a few minutes the wild group remained in a circle, and
the Abbe intently watched the squaw, as she knelt beside his
youthful countryman, her lips glued, as it were, to his wound.
At length, withdrawing her mouth, the woman turned toward
the old savage who had been chewing the weeds, and, receiving
from him the masticated pulp, placed it upon the shoulder of Louis, covering the inflamed spot where the snake's teeth had entered. Then, winding thin slivers of ash about the arm, and binding a bandage of bark tightly over all, the squaw concluded her rude surgery; after which, obedient to some directions which she gave, two Indians, lifting the wounded captive, bore him in their arms from the large wigwam.

Abbe Claude essayed once more to rise, but the savage nearest him touched his tomahawk significantly, and motioned him to lie quiet. Then the guard took his seat beside the lodge-entrance, and the other warriors, together with the squaws, retired silently from the hut.

Morning wore on, and the many sounds peculiar to an Indian village began to be heard. Dogs passed the lodge with a short, quick bark; fowls screamed; the noise of stones with which the squaws were grinding their corn mingled with the sound of wooden drums and conch-shells, making a not unpleasing dissonance to the ear. The guard at the wigwam-entrance leisurely filled his stone-pipe, and presently a powerful odor of the tobacco-weed filled the lodge. Insensibly, the Abbe sunk into a feverish sleep.

When he awoke, it was near midday, and another savage smoked at the hut-door. The new guard offered his prisoner food, of which the priest ate ravenously; for long abstinence, and the exhausting excitement that preceded his sleep, had made him like a child in weakness. The savage jailor smiled grimly as he beheld the old man devour the savory succotash, and then, unbinding his thongs, he motioned him to rise. Abbe Claude obeyed with difficulty, for the withes had cramped his limbs while he slept; but, summoning all his strength, he followed the stately form of his Indian conductor out of the wigwam, and through the monotonous bustle of an aboriginal town.

A singular scene was presented to the European's eyes. Stalwart savages lay dispersed in various attitudes, in front of their huts, or upon the green carpet of soft grass, lazily recumbent, and surveying each other in dreamy indolence, while groups of old men, youths and squaws were scattered here and there, eagerly listening to young braves, recounting tales of their maiden achievements in the late expedition. Squaws
ovens of stone were smoking near some of the lodges, at which squaws were preparing food; and steaming haunches of wild deer, and huge joints of moose-meat, hung from the boughs of trees, attesting the great success of the hunters who occupied the wigwams nearest to them. Lean, stunted dogs were running to and fro, sporting with the naked papooses who rolled on the grass, or, strapped to boards, were placed upright against the gnarled foot of oak trees; and bands of urchins, with tiny bows and blunted arrows, were performing mimic battles, or hurling light tomahawks at targets with wonderful dexterity and precision.

The Abbe's guide strode toward a spot of elevated ground, where a group of young men and women were dancing and singing, recalling to the captive's memory the scene of the preceding night. A monotonous chant sounded from their midst, and, high above their heads, they tossed weapons and hoops wreathed with evergreen, yelling and leaping, the while, in confused chorus. Father Claude shuddered, for he remembered now too well the horror of the war-dance, and a fearful thought darted through his brain that perhaps himself and companion were to be sacrificed in some heathen rite. He recovered his calmness in a moment.

"The good God seeth us, and we are in His almighty hands, to dispose of as He willeth," were his thoughts.

The Indian stalked onward, and the Abbe soon found himself in the midst of the wild throng of dancers. But his hopes revived, and a prayer of confidence rose to his lips, as he marked the scene which now unfolded itself.

A group of young men and maidens were swaying to and fro in the movements of their singular dance, circling a green bank with measured steps, while they sung in rude cadences, and waved aloft green branches and garlands of wild flowers. Seated upon the bank, as on a rural throne, sat the gentle-featured squaw who had sucked the poison from the wound of Louis; and the young captive's head now reposed quietly upon her bosom, while green leaves and blossoms were strewn thickly around them by the group of mirthful dancers.

Abbe Claude, familiar with the customs of savage tribes, recognized at once the ceremony by which a prisoner was adopted into an aboriginal community. He saw that the
Indian woman had chosen the young stranger as her son, having probably lost some youthful brave who had before called her mother. The life of the pale-face was henceforth safe, and the youths and maids were now celebrating the adoption which had secured the captive from sacrifice.

Louis raised his head, as he beheld his reverend friend, and feebly offered his hand. Father Claude knelt upon the sward, and murmured:

"Thank the good God, my son, you are saved! For me it matters not! I am but a withered branch!"

CHAPTER VIII.

GABRIEL ST. ELMO.

GABRIEL St. Elmo was a youth of scarcely eighteen summers, but of a vigorous frame, and, animated by a daring and adventurous spirit, had determined to seek his fortunes in that distant clime to which thousands of adventurers were flocking, and which promised to their ardent imaginations a realization of all the dreams that Eastern romance had pictured in the remote countries of the furthest Ind.

Gabriel had not perished, as was thought by the captive survivors of the vessel's living freight. At the terrible crisis when, amid the roar of breakers, he had felt the light skiff dashed upon sharp rocks, and despairingly released his hold of her, he gave himself up for lost. But Providence had not designed that he should share the fate of his companions. He found himself whirled into deep water, where he came in contact with one of the ship's spars, which he grasped with a desperate clutch.

Awful was the spectacle revealed to his gaze during the brief seconds that he drifted in sight of the wreck! A prolonged shriek, as of mortal agony and fear, rose around him from the voices of drowning men, women and children; but, above this shriek his sharpened senses could distinguish the triumphal yell of the savages on shore, exulting over their
anticipated victims. A flash of lightning occasionally disclosed to his horror-stricken eyes the features of some dying wretch, sinking for the last time beneath the surge, or the mangled corpse of one beaten to death upon the reef. But these lamentable sights speedily vanished, for the waves, careering like wild steeds, whirled the spar to which the youth clung, far away, dashing it hither and thither until, at last, one end rested upon a shelving sand-bank, where it remained fast. St. Elmo crawled landward, till he reached the hard shore. He ascended the bank, and, feeling secure from the ocean, fell exhausted on the wet grass.

When he awoke, the sun was flooding all the sea with radiance, and he discovered that the place where he had been cast was a small island, at a distance but still within view of the headlands and line of reefs on which the ship had stranded. Far away eastward extended the ocean, far as his vision could scan, and landward only immense forests were to be seen. He looked in vain for any portion of the wreck upon the point where it had broken up. Not a fragment was visible, save the spar on which he had himself escaped.

It was not long, however, before St. Elmo, from his sheltered position on the island, could discern signs of life upon the opposite shore. Smoke curled above the tree-tops, and presently the figures of Indians could be descried, going back and forth from the woods to the sandy beach. The savages were at too great a distance for their voices to be audible, but the young Frenchman knew very well that they were occupied in collecting from the shore whatever articles belonging to the ship had been cast there by the waves. Occasionally a group of the natives would clasp hands and dance about in a circle, as if rejoicing over some new prize, and then they would disperse, or disappear in the woods. St. Elmo did not venture beyond the covert of woods which grew nearly to the island shore, lest the vision of the savages, keen as his own, might spy out a new victim for their cruelty.

At last, however, the youth began to realize very sensibly the important fact that he had tasted no food since the previous noon. He penetrated the woody recesses of the island, searching eagerly for berries or fruit, but the place appeared barren as a desert. He ascertained, however, to his
satisfaction, that the island was totally uninhabited, and had apparently never been entered before by a human being. Many birds hopped in the branches over his head, and some flew so near that he might have struck them with a stick; but St. Elmo contented himself with devouring a few eggs of which he rifled a nest, and a root or two of palatable flavor which he digged from the earth. Somewhat satisfied with this scanty provender, he returned to the beach in time to behold, with astonishment, a fleet of canoes, containing hundreds of Indians, crossing the water that intervened between the island and the mainland.

St. Elmo's first impression was that his retreat had been discovered, and that the savages were in pursuit of him. For a few moments he gave himself up to despondency, for he had neither weapon of defense—if, indeed, defense were available against so formidable a host—nor any mode of escaping from the insulated patch of woods, in which concealment would be impossible. But a little reflection assured the young man that the Indians could have no suspicion of his presence in this place, and that, even should they discover the spar, he might himself remain hidden in the intricate thickets of the island-wilderness. One apprehension, indeed, troubled him—that the savages might tow away the spar, in which case he would be left without any means of leaving the isle; but even this reflection was succeeded by the thought, as his quick eye measured the distance to the other shore, that in the last extremity, he could reach the mainland by swimming. He watched the fleet of canoes as they advanced, resolved, should they discover the spar, and be tempted to land, that he would make at once for the center of the island to await whatever fate might be in store for him.

But, as it soon became evident, he had little cause for disquiet. Following the leading canoe in which sat a plumed Indian grasping a great club, the rest turned to the left, and passed the island in an extended line, shaping a course for another promontory far to the southernmost point of the coast. He saw in every canoe, as it passed, that one or more of the savage occupants held aloft a hooped pole, on which tangled human scalps, the long curls of women, the short locks of men, and the flowing ringlets of children, all ensan-
guined with blood—ghastly trophies of savage triumph. Sick at heart, he turned away, till the last canoe had disappeared, and then, sitting down upon the shore, he buried his face in his hands, and wept long and bitterly.

At length, rising from his despondent attitude, he saw that the sun had nearly reached its meridian, and was pouring its burning rays upon the heated sands.

"Why should I remain here?" he soliloquized. "This island affords no means of sustaining life, and one may as well be eaten by savages as to have nothing to eat himself. By my faith! I think I will make at once for the other shore, which the red villains have left. At any rate, there is no good to be gained by passing a night more or less with nothing to fill the stomach—as is very plain will be the case—on this desolate island. So, my good piece of a ship, I will e'en take command o' thee once more."

In good time, the young man drew his good spar safely to the mainland, and then kneeled down, as of right he should, and thanked the kind Providence which had thus far protected him. This done, he looked about his new locality, not alone for wherewithal to eat, but for a resting-place through the night—as his voyage from the island had consumed the greater part of the day, and the sun was now entirely sunk behind the forest-trees.

At the first dawn, the young man sprung from his couch of leaves, and, traversing the beach behind the dreadful reef and the rough headland where the ship had met her doom, reached that portion of the shore where, on the night of the catastrophe, the savages had kindled their war-fires and danced in ferocious expectation of their enemies' destruction. Here, what horrors were awaiting his sight! The bodies of his late shipmates, and companions among the emigrants, were lying cold and rigid in the gray dawning, their naked flesh mangled by the rocks or the weapons of savages, their scalpless heads half-buried in the sands. All had been massacred who escaped alive from the wreck—strong men and feeble women and babes had all fallen beneath the rancor of savage torture. Gabriel St. Elmo looked but a moment upon the fearful scene; he hurried away sickened from the spot.

Various traces of the wrecked ship met the youth's eyes as
he wandered along the beach; fragments of her heavy timbers,
spars and clumps of cordage strewed the sands; and St. Elmo
knew that much of her cargo and armament must have been
cast ashore and fallen into the hands of the savages. He dis-
covered a stout steel-headed pike, such as were used in hand-
to-hand sea-combats, and, wading into the surf, he hastily pos-
sessed himself of the weapon. He judged it well, however,
not to remain long in the vicinity of the wreck, as the quan-
tity of articles belonging to the ship—bolts of iron, casks, and
heavy chains and ropes, that had been washed up by the
waves—constituted a store of treasures for Indian cupididy,
which the youth doubted not would speedily induce another
visit from the savages.
Casting a last look at the ocean, he struck into the forest,
turning his back to the rising sun, and directing his course
westward, toward the region where, as he had been told, was
a new settlement of Hollanders at the mouth of the great river
of Hudson.
Where, indeed, the Hudson itself lay was a problem not
soluble by the young Frenchman’s geographical attainments;
indeed, the wisest minds of his time might have been puzzled
to describe its surroundings, inasmuch as but few mariners had
ever penetrated beyond its mouth; but St. Elmo had left his
native land for adventure’s sake, as well as to seek his fortune,
and it was enough for him to be satisfied that the Dutch col-
ony was near the Hudson, and that the Hudson lay to the
west from the Cape of Cod, to present to his hopes the cer-
sainty of ultimately reaching it. What to him, the youth
with a brave heart and strong limbs, whether he traversed a
wilderness of America or the forests of his own France? In
his hand was a good weapon, for boar, or wolf, or savage man,
and he doubted not that store of food could be found on his
journey. Therefore, he went sturdily forward.
CHAPTER IX.

THE CREOLE'S TREACHERY.

Robin Ball followed with his eyes the retreating form of Captain Pierre, until the latter had disappeared, and then, uttering an oath instead of a prayer, the rough seaman flung his arm beneath his head, and rolled over to an unquiet slumber, wherein dreams of shipwrecks, combats, quarrels, and perhaps darker experiences of his past life, mingled their dim shades with threatening visions of the future.

Captain Pierre, after reaching the boat, in which watched a couple of the crew, conversed with the two men for some time, with quite as much earnestness, apparently, as had marked his previous colloquy with Rob Ball. He then left the boat, and, moving noiselessly among the slumbering men, awakened two others from their drowsiness, and with these held another conversation. Altogether, it seemed that Captain Pierre was in no mood for sleep.

In truth, however, the Creole had another object in view than to keep awake or hear the sound of his own tongue. He had resolved on a little piece of villany, and required assistance in its perpetration. For this purpose he had prepared the two men in the boat, and their comrades whom he had awakened—all four staunch followers of their captain, and ready at any time to do his bidding—to await his signal for the commencement of the business in hand.

This business related most immediately to the dreaming sailor, Robin Ball, who, all unconscious of any plot against his person, lay tossing his arms about in broken slumber. The obstinate refusal of Robin to enter into Captain Pierre's plans regarding a speculation in red flesh, had not a little interfered with the latter's usual equanimity; and, foreseeing that the Englishman's influence with a portion of the boat's crew might go far to balk his own intentions, he came to the
conclusion that there was no other course left for him but to destroy that influence as speedily as possible. The most certain method of effecting this was to destroy, or render powerless, Ball himself.

He devised a mode of ridding himself of the obnoxious seaman, which would be quite as efficacious as downright murder. This was, to seize him in his sleep, and, after muffling and binding him, so that he could make neither alarm nor resistance, to convey him quietly to the interior of the forest, and there leave him helpless, a prey to wild beasts, savages, or the slow tortures of starvation.

This was a refinement of cruelty quite worthy of Captain Pierre, and he chuckled not a little over the anticipation of so easily disposing of his enemy. Captain Pierre silently motioned his followers to proceed to their work; and before Robin Ball’s fevered dreams were broken, the treacherous fellows had gagged his mouth, casting over his head a thick sailor’s jacket, completely precluding speech or vision, while they quickly bound hand and foot the poor sailor, and dragged him noiselessly away from the bank, through the covert of the brush, into the recesses of the forest. The job was executed with such dispatch, and was, withal, so entirely successful, that Captain Pierre was surprised as well as delighted. Not a struggle of Robin Ball revealed his peril to any of his neighbors, who slumbered soundly, without a suspicion of what was transpiring so near them. The Creole rubbed his hands with satisfaction, as he beheld his dextrous accomplices returning stealthily to the boat, where he had remained.

“You have disposed of him, my brave fellows?” he whispered, eagerly, as the villains neared him.

“He’ll trouble us no more, I warrant,” answered one of the men—a short, low-browed Spaniard. “By St. Dominic, captain, the good Robin was as quiet as a babe. Never before lay he so peaceably.”

“He is secure, think you, and will not be able to free himself?”

“Not if he were ten times as strong, the good bull-dog! We bound him to a tree with the ropes, captain; and, by the mass, there will he stay till judgment day, or I’m no sinner.”

The ruffian gave vent to a chuckling laugh, as he, uttered this speech, but Captain Pierre put his hand to his mouth.
“Be silent, friend, for Robin Ball has his lovers among our crew. And now, I'll e'en take his place, for an hour's nap, worthy Lopez,” added he, to the Spaniard. “Keep you watch, and let the night's work be as secret as the grave. Surely, I'll remember this brave service, comrades.”

No rest visited Captain Pierre, for his midnight wickedness had failed to give his apprehensions ease. He reflected that, though Robin Ball was out of the camping-place, and exposed to perish in a lonely and desolate situation, still, the tough sailor might extricate himself by some means, and pursue the boat, in which case the treachery would be exposed, and an unpleasant settlement demanded by Robin's friends. Revolving such thoughts in his busy brain, he resolved, at length, to make sure, if possible, of his enemy's harmlessness in the future; and so, cautiously leaving his couch, he stole back to the boat, and whispered a word to the Spaniard, Lopez, who thereupon roused himself again, and, without alarming his comrades, led the way out of the camp, penetrating the bushes through which Robin Ball had been so quietly conveyed. The Creole followed, amid the lonesome shadows of the forest, until they reached a wild nook, near where a rapid stream dashed from a great chasm in a wall of rocks. On the edge of this chasm grew a large buttonwood tree, and to this poor Ball had been securely fastened. His person was completely hid from view by underbrush that sprouted from the rocks. Thus he was left to all the horrors of a lingering death. The spot was but a few hundred rods from the shore where the boat was drawn up, but it was, nevertheless, so hidden by rocks, and concealed with tangled evergreen, that no better tomb could have been selected in which to immure a living man. Captain Pierre seemed to think so, as he looked at the pinioned body of his late follower, for he gave a grunt of satisfaction, and advanced toward the buttonwood.

“Ho! Robin Ball! we are quits now, I fancy. You will keep a civil tongue in your head for the future, good friend.”

Robin Ball's sinewy frame swelled as if it would burst the strong cords which fastened him to the tree, while a stifled groan came from his gagged mouth, which was covered with his own jacket, tied tightly about his head.

“By St. Dominic! it is, after all, no Christian thing to
leave the poor devil thus," muttered the Spaniard, but the Creole only laughed, sneeringly.

"He will do well enough, Lopez. Nevertheless, I harbor no malice, and would give him quietus with my dagger's point, had I not a horror of bloodshed."

"It were better to kill outright than to leave to wild beasts or famine," suggested the Spaniard.

"Say you so, comrade? Beshrew me, then, but your poniard may as well end the poor fellow's troubles!" said Captain Pierre, shrugging his shoulders. "Strike sure, Lopez, and wipe off old scores for yourself and me, an' it like you."

The Creole said this with a savage smile on his dark lips, and his vindictive glance on his accomplice with the cold glitter of a serpent's eye. But the words had scarcely been uttered when a rustle was heard near them. Suddenly the pinioned form of Robin Ball sprung from the tree, and fell full against the body of the captain. With a shrill whoop, a wild looking figure bounded from behind the buttonwood, to level the gleaming point of a spear against Captain Pierre's bosom.

The Spaniard, Lopez, with a shriek, rushed toward the camp, fully impressed with the belief that a legion of savages was in pursuit of him. The Creole likewise fled, crying at the top of his voice—

"Indians! Indians!"

Robin Ball, the while, lay upon the ground, where he had pitched headlong, for, though released from the tree, his hands were still fastened behind his back, his mouth gagged, and his head muffled.

The sleeping boat's crew, aroused suddenly by the shrieks of Lopez, sprung at once for the pinnace, which they cast off immediately, padding off, at a hundred yards' distance from the shore, upon which they momentarily expected a thousand savages, threatening pursuit and destruction of their small vessel. But all remained in silence.

Captain Pierre and Lopez looked at one another, wondering what mysterious power it was that had interposed to shield their victim.

"It is the cunning of the red demons!" at length cried the Creole. "They think to allure us back to shore by keeping quiet. Row, men, and let us be clear of the dogs."
"Saw you Indians, surely?" cried a sailor, as he bent to the oar.

"By the bones of St. Dominic, a legion!" cried Lopez, in response. "Did not the lance of a red villain seethe our captain here?"—and the Spaniard appealed to Captain Pierre to confirm his declaration.

"That the heathen's lance was at my heart, I am ready to be sworn," answered the Creole; "but no harm came, for my heels were nimble as your own, good Lopez."

"Ho!" cried one of the crew, "where is Rob Ball?"

"Rob Ball!" "Where is bold Robin?" echoed from one to another of the men, their bronze faces betraying surprise, as they leaned upon their oars.

"Let us go back," cried the Creole, with well counterfeited sympathy. "But, alas!" he added, "what boots our array against a forest full of foes?"

"Ay, what, indeed?" cried Lopez, coming to the relief of his leader; "lucky for us that our throats were not all cut as we slept, comrades." Moodily looking at one another, the oarsmen resumed their task, and urged the pinnace into the middle of the bay.

Meantime, after falling heavily at the foot of the tree to which he had been tied, Robin began presently to feel a pair of hands at work in the effort to release him from his bonds; and it was not long before his eyes were once more permitted to look upon the moonlight, and his tongue, long gagged and choked, was able to shape itself utterance.

"Mass! but it was a scurvy trick!" at length muttered the seaman, as he looked about him wonderingly. "Where ran the villains?—the kidnapping Pierre, and his dog Spaniard? And who are you, my fine fellow, and what do you here?"

These rapid interrogations were addressed to an individual who stood at a little distance from the Englishman, leaning on a spear.

"I am what I am, Robin Ball."

The Englishman started back in amazement at hearing his own name pronounced.

"Are you a Christian man or a savage Indian, or Sathanas himself?" ejaculated he.

"Rob Ball! where's your manners to forget an old friend?" exclaimed the other.
"Gabriel St. Elmo!"

"At your service, Robin Ball," answered the youth, gayly, as he shook the hand of his English friend. "And ye may well thank Heaven that Gabriel St. Elmo was near you to-night, for small chance of life had ye, good comrade."

"Faith, an' ye work to such good purpose, my young friend, I'll not quarrel with your likings."

St. Elmo proceeded to acquaint Robin Ball with the manner in which he had effected his release; how, after journeying all day through the forest, he had made his couch for the night near the streamlet that gushed by the buttonwood, and had there been aroused by the approach of three of the late ship's crew, dragging the pinioned figure of a fourth, whom they fastened to a tree, and then left; how he had waited anxiously for a long while, fearful to discover himself to the deserted man, until at length Captain Pierre and Lopez presented themselves; and how, hearing the Creole's proposition to murder the defenseless sailor, he crept nearer to the buttonwood, and, with his sharp pike, severed the cords which confined Robin Ball to the tree, at the same time springing boldly upon the captain with a yell like the whoop of a savage.

Robin Ball listened to his young preserver's recital, and warmly grasped his hand in gratitude, while he vented his rage against the treacherous leader.

"And now," he cried, "stand by me, Monsieur St. Elmo, and if we turn not the tables on this caitiff, my name's not Robin Ball. Come away, and ye shall see me unmask the villain, and, if he refuse me fair combat like a brave man, by the mass, but ye shall see his foul throat black under my fingers! Come away, my young friend, and remember that ye have gained Robin Ball's good will, as long as he has life to show it."

The sailor led the way in the direction in which he judged the men to be. In a few moments the two stood upon the bank where lately the boat was drawn up. No boat was there now, and no trace of the ship's crew. But, as Robin directed his gaze across the water, he could see, far away, a dark object upon the surface, and catch a plash like that of oars. The Creole had escaped, and Robin Ball was abandoned.
CHAPTER X.

TISQUONTAM A PRISONER.

Tisquontam, the Sachem of Mannamoiset, who dwelt, with his daughter Monoma, in the little wigwam to which Marie had been conveyed, was a warrior whose youth had been one of strange adventure, and whose future life was destined to yet greater vicissitudes. He was not one of the native chiefs of Massachusetts, for his cradle had been swung in the sound of Niagara’s booming waters, and his childhood nurtured among the Thousand Isles of the great river of Canada, where now the children of France had planted their lodges. There he had dwelt till the blood of manhood coursed through his veins; there he had hunted the otter and sable; there pursued the salmon as it leaped from rapid to rapid of the swift river. And there, too, among the first band of pale-faced strangers who pitched their tents on the hunting-grounds of his nation, he had beheld a dark-eyed daughter of the white race, a maiden of France, who had come with her parents to the wilderness of America, in the freshness of her youth and beauty. Tisquontam saw and loved the gentle French girl, and Blanchette returned the passion of her wild admirer; for he was graceful in form and noble of soul, and might have found favor in the eyes of many a princess of his own race. Brief had been their courtship, but their affection was sincere, and Blanchette hesitated not to exchange vows with him. But, alas! the Iroquois tribe, to whom the young brave belonged, did not share in the friendliness of Tisquontam to the white strangers who had come among them. Rising suddenly, they attacked the small settlement of French and massacred every family. Only one could Tisquontam save, of all the hapless emigrants—and to do this, he was obliged to fight his own tribe. He defended the parents of his beloved until they fell beneath the arrows of his Iroquois
kindred, and then fled with his rescued wife into the great wilderness toward the Mohawk. Many moons did the two rovers wander through the forests, pursued by the vengeful Iroquois, who were furious against Tisquantam for the part he had taken toward them; but the Great Spirit protected his children's flight, till at length they reached the shores of the mighty ocean. Here Tisquantam made his lodge by the river of Mannamaset, near where, afterward, the pale-faces were to build their first lodges in New England; and here, with his fair Christian wife, the savage dwelt, till it pleased the Great Spirit to bless his eyes with a beautiful child, the pledge of their happy union. Tisquantam was happy in his exile, roaming the forest to hunt for his beloved, storing their wigwam with the sports of the chase—skins of a hundred beasts, and plumes from a thousand birds. Blanchette did not regret her destiny, for she swayed the noble heart of her husband, and taught his lips to pray to the Christian's God in her own native tongue. But the Great Spirit at length summoned her to rejoin her parents, and Tisquantam was left in his lodge, with only the young child to comfort him.

Bitterly did the red hunter mourn the loss of his wife, and long and often did he weep at the flower-covered mound which marked her resting-place; but the infant prattle of his motherless Monoma recalled him to the duties of life. Again, therefore, he took bow and spear, and roamed the forests, to hunt for his child, as he had once hunted for Blanchette.

Monoma grew up gentle and lovely as a wildwood flower, and Tisquantam rejoiced to minister to her every wish. For her he built the islet lodge; shaped a light canoe; searched out a thousand flowers in the valleys and on the hills; for her he gathered shells by the shore, mosses on the mountain, and rare plants in the deep forests. Monoma was to Tisquantam the angel of his life—the angel whom the Great Spirit had given him for his lost Blanchette.

Meantime the bravery and skill of the Iroquois hunter had won him the esteem of the ocean tribes, on whose borders he dwelt—the Narragansetts, the Pequods, and the Mohegans; and he would have been gladly received as a warrior among either; but Tisquantam chose to dwell at Mannamaset, which was between the country of the Narragansetts and Pequods,
for there was buried his Blanchette, and there he, himself, wished to lie down when the voice of Manitou should summon him. Tisquantam was known by the tribes as the Lone Sachem of Mannamoset, and they decreed that he should possess the land he had chosen; while, in return, the Iroquois warrior assisted them in their hunts, and oftentimes defended their villages against the incursions of hostile nations. He thus became of influence in the councils of the ocean-tribes, and respected by their wise men and braves.

When news came to Tisquantam, as he sat with Monoma in their islet-wigwam, that a ship of the strangers was stranded upon the rocky coast, he straightway grasped his arms and departed to meet the victorious Narragansetts, not to join in their atrocious exploit, but to save, if possible, some victim from their cruelties. But, when he reached the shore, the massacre had been finished, and he saw only the scalps of the emigrants dangling from their lances. He, however, accompanied the Narragansetts in their triumphal journey homeward, and with them discovered the path of Louis and his companions, pursuing the trail to the mountain Wachusett. Here, unable to gain more from the good will of his savage allies, he had demanded a captive in return for services previously performed, and to his great joy had been allowed to choose the young girl Marie. Thus was the maiden saved from Narragansett captivity, and borne to the lodge of Tisquantam, to be the companion of his gentle Monoma. Glad would have been the heart of Louis could he have divined the fate of his sister.

When Marie felt the warm kiss of Monoma upon her lips, she heard the accents of her native France murmured by the Indian girl. At once the two orphans could commune with each other, and as they lay folded that night in the embrace of sisters, Marie learned a new revelation of innocence—the innocence of a maiden, born and nurtured in the solitude of an aboriginal forest, with no voice to speak to her but that of fatherly affection, and no unhallowed influence to disturb the deep religion that she daily learned from the solemn teachings of nature—the litanies of waving woods and rolling streams—the sermons of sun and stars and changing seasons.

Next morning, Marie awoke to find the tender eyes of
Monoma watching her, while Tisquantam stood at the wigwam-door, arrayed for the chase. The Iroquois smiled as the French girl's half-frightened gaze encountered his own, and he reached out his hand with an action at once graceful and encouraging. Marie rose from her soft couch, and advanced toward him.

"Has the white bird slept well in the tent of the Iroquois? Behold! the nestling of Tisquantam's lodge has pale blood in her veins. The white bird has naught to fear."

This was spoken in broken French, and the Indian's manner at once banished all apprehension from the mind of Marie.

"I do not fear my red father!" she said, placing her hand in that of the chief.

The hunter looked pleased at her frank demeanor, while Monoma stole softly to the side of her new friend, and wound an arm around her neck. The two maidens were very lovely, as they thus stood together, and Tisquantam's eye grew moist as he looked at them. But, presently, Marie's fair brow became clouded, and she sunk suddenly at the red-man's feet, clasping her hands as a suppliant.

"Oh!" she cried, "where is my brother—my beloved Louis? Where is Abbe Claude?"

"Oh! chief," she continued, "you have saved me—you are noble and good! Save my brother!—oh! if he be not already murdered by the cruel—" Marie could utter no more, her sobs stifled her voice. Monoma's tears mingled with hers. Tisquantam was deeply affected.

"Was it the white bird's brother?—the youth whom the Narragansetts have borne to their village?—and the old chief the medicine-man—"

"Abbe Claude—the good father—alas!" murmured Marie, with a flood of tears.

"Tisquantam will seek the trail of the captives!" exclaimed the Iroquois, as if he had taken a sudden resolution. "He will bring the white bird tidings of her brother and of the aged father. Let the white bird be happy; Monoma will sing for her a song of the pale-faces. Tisquantam will return ere the sun falls upon yonder bank."

Marie's eloquent face expressed her gratitude to the good Indian. She took hastily from her bosom a small gold cross,
on which a talisman was engraved, and extended it to Tisquantam.

"Here!" she murmured. "It is a cross which my brother will recognize, and know that it is from Marie. It was the last gift of our mother who is dead."

The Indian comprehended her meaning, and then, pointing to the mossy river-bank opposite the wigwam, where the last rays of the sun were wont to tremble ere they were withdrawn in the west, repeated his promise to return at the hour indicated, then turned and took his departure through the forest-aisles, while Monoma tenderly dried the eyes of her friend, and led her forth from the lodge to the flowery banks of the islet-stream, where presently they were twined in each other's arms, exchanging their guileless confidences.

Tisquantam had traversed the league or two of thick woods which bounded his own little domain, whence he could catch, through the trees, a glimpse of the quiet bay—where, in a small inlet, he had ready a light canoe, that he often used to shorten his distances by crossing the water at this point—when, as he diverged toward the shore, he was startled by the voice of a child, apparently in extreme terror. The Iroquois plunged through the thickets, and presently attained a spot where he beheld two men in strange garb, which he at once recognized as that of the pale-faces. These men bore in their arms two struggling Indian children, whom they were half strangling to quiet their cries, as they carried them rapidly toward the water. Tisquantam did not hesitate. Peeling his war-whoop till it rung through all the wood, he sprang with uplifted club upon the foremost white man, whom, with one blow, he leveled to the ground.

The other pale-face, terrified at the sudden appearance of an Indian, and the shrill whoop which was answered by a hundred echoes, released the child and darted toward the shore. Tisquantam found himself alone with two screaming urchins, and the white man he had struck, lying bleeding at his feet.

It was but for an instant; a pistol-shot, followed by another, and a third, startled the air. Tisquantam felt a sudden pain through his head. A mist gathered over his eyes; his limbs grew faint; and he fell to the ground across the man whom
he had struck down beneath his club. Soon a figure, followed by two or three, and then more, cautiously emerged from covert, and approached him.

"By St. Dominic, captain! I believe you are right. There was but one of them—though, as I'm a Christian man, I could have sworn I heard a hundred yells," cried the foremost of the new-comers.

"And so you ran like a hundred devils?" sneered Captain Pierre, as he followed close behind, "and left poor François here, to be knocked i' th' head! Look, man, quickly, and see if his hurt be mortal!"

The Spaniard, Lopez, thus adjured, dragged the Indian from the body, and, raising the latter in his arms, disclosed a severe wound upon the skull, which was bleeding profusely. The man breathed, however, and was apparently only stunned.

"Now, up with him to the boat!" cried the Creole, in a sharp, abrupt tone; for, since his riddance of Robin Ball, he had little difficulty in controlling the rest of the crew—"and the youngsters—where are they?"

"Safe and fast, captain," answered a stalwart ruffian, who was engaged in gagging one of the Indian children, while Lopez secured the other. The poor creatures, after hearing the report of the firearms, had made no effort to escape, apparently transfixed with fright.

"To the boat with them!"

"Ay, ay, captain!"

"Is the redskin dead?" said Captain Pierre to Lopez, stooping over Tisquontam.

"No! 'tis but a flesh-wound! The bullet has grazed his skull, though, and clipped the savage's scalp-lock! Look you, captain—shall I finish him?"

"He's not dead, say you?"

"By St. Dominic, no! And, faith, 'twere shame to kill so stout a knave! Look at the varlet's muscle, Captain Pierre. He were worth seventy pistoles, an' he were at Bermuda or the Havana!"

"Think you that, Lopez?" cried the Creole, his eyes sparkling with greed. "Away with him, then, to the boat, for I doubt we shall get no more o' the cattle. We must away
from this bay, or a legion will be after these cubs of heathen-dom! Lively, comrades!—to the boat!"

Without more delay, the kidnappers lifted Tisquantam, together with the Indian children, and bore them to the pinnace, where already five other children of either sex lay pinioned hand to foot, like lambs for the mart. The Iroquois was securely fastened, when the oarsmen immediately pulled the pinnace out into the sunlit bay, through the calm waters, skirting the coast, toward the sea. Meantime, some of the crew were busy in rigging the masts and bending a lateen sail, while others stowed compactly in the boat's bows the store of provisions which were to sustain them on their bold voyage to the southern islands. There were thirteen men of the crew, who had kidnapped seven red children, together with Tisquantam. Captain Pierre chuckled as he looked upon his captives, and calculated how many hard pistoles so fine a cargo would fetch him.

Meantime, Monoma and Marie waited expectantly for the sun's decline, when the Iroquois was to return with news from the Narragansett village. But the parting beams of light trembled upon the mossy river-bank, and long shadows stole around the wigwam; then twilight, and gloom, and moon-rising followed—but Tisquantam came not.
CHAPTER XI.
SAMEEDA, THE DAUGHTER OF MASSASOIT.

Many moons passed, and still the white captives remained unmolested in the Narragansett village. Abbe Claude learned that his life, as well as that of his young charge, Louis, had been decreed sacred by decision of the savages in council. Whether the Narragansetts, who, in the heat of their triumph, had sacrificed all the other emigrants thrown into their power, were now disposed to preserve the remaining two as living trophies of the prowess of the tribe, or whether some other line of savage policy actuated their course, could not be divined by the captives; but, it became evident that they were both received under the protection of the red-men, and that, though still watched as prisoners, they were treated as members of the common family.

It might be that a spice of superstition mingled in the natures of the Indians, and that they deemed it better to restrain the exercise of further cruelty toward the strange invaders, whom they firmly believed to be sent by Hobnomocko, the Evil One, for the especial trial and tribulation of the red possessors of the land. As the Chinese and Yezidees endeavor at all times to keep, as they express it, "on good terms with the devil," so the aborigines were accustomed to pay a sort of deference to the Arch Enemy, for the purpose of conciliating any unusually hostile feelings which he might be supposed to entertain; and thus, in the reservation of their captives, the shrewd Narragansetts doubtless conceived themselves to be subserving a double purpose: that of retaining living monuments of their own valor, and palliating with Hobnomocko the deed of wholesale massacre they had committed upon the hapless passengers of the ship.

During many seasons and years, mysterious and startling rumors had been rife through all the northern tribes. Strange
intelligence had reached them, by runners who had visited the red nations of the South, concerning armies of terrible men, with beards and white faces, who had come from across the great waters, walking the raging waves in a "big canoe," and carrying in their hands thunder and lightning. But now, at length, the tribes of the North had delivered their brethren of the strange enemies. The "big canoe" was now no more; it had been ground to pieces on the rocks of Massachusetts, and the invaders had become as the dust of the earth.

These were the words of the medicine-men and chief counselors in the grand lodge of the Narragansetts; therefore the warriors of that tribe no longer feared the pale-faces. They resolved that their captives should be held as slaves, in order that the far southern tribes might know the valor of the ocean-Indians. For the Narragansetts could behold the great sea from their hunting-grounds, while the south-tribes dwelt among the big rivers and swamps.

So, moons passed away, and still Father Claude and Louis remained prisoners among the red-men. They had learned the tongue of the Indians, and mingled in the councils of the chiefs. Abbe Claude spoke words of wisdom to the old men, and Louis hunted with the young braves, trapping the beaver and shooting the wild deer in the forest.

The good Abbe spoke to the ancient chiefs, who no longer went forth to battle, of the sweetness that dwells with peace. He told them of the great Manitou of the white men, and His mighty works. He comforted the aged braves when the Great Spirit's voice was heard calling them to the eternal hunting-grounds; and his tongue murmured gentle words to the little children whose fathers were no more.

Louis soon became beloved by the Indian maidens. They wove rich belts of wampum to hang his quiver, made soft moccasins for his feet, and plucked the feathers of eagles to knit him a warrior's head-dress; for the young stranger was comely to look upon, skillful in the chase, and graceful in the dance.

Sameeda, the daughter of the Sachem, Massasoit, was the pride of her father's tribe. Whose voice was so sweet in the songs of morning? Whose feet moved so lightly in the evening dance? Who was so fleet upon the hills? Like a
young fawn was Sameeda, daughter of the mighty war-chief, Massasoit.

Sameeda, the Narragansett princess, learned to love the young stranger-chief who had been made captive by her father's bow and spear. The voice of Louis became like the murmur of fountains in her ears, and his glances stole into her bosom like sunlight into the wild-wood bowers. She loved in secret, speaking no word, for she feared the wrath of her stern sire. Therefore she would wander away in the stillness of night to seek the shores of the sea—there to think alone of the young pale chief.

To the silent shore oftentimes repaired Louis; for he, too, loved to gaze upon the broad ocean, and dream of the land he had left beyond it. No wonder then that upon the lonely beach the youth and maiden met, and, need we say, loved?

He whispered to her, in broken but intelligible words, tales of his far native land, and told the sad story of his own orphaned life, and of that beloved one, the sister of his youth, whose fair form he believed was now mouldering on Wachusett's height. Sameeda's heart throbbed with beautiful sympathy. She wound her arms around the neck of her lover, she dried his tearful eyes with her long, dark hair, and then murmured sweetly, in the musical language he had taught her:

"Sameeda will be the sister of the white chief. The daughter of Massasoit will make her couch at the feet of him she loves!"

Ah! how rapturously sped those hours of dear communion by the sounding sea. But a cloud was arising to darken loving hearts and starry hopes.

Sakanto was a mighty chief, and medicine-man of the tribe, wise in council, and cunning in the field. The enemies of the Narragansetts feared his valor and wisdom, and no less was he dreaded by the braves of his own nation; for he dealt in strange secrets, and it was said that Hobbomock had charged his evil spirits to minister to Sakanto's will. Men feared his eye when its glances crossed their own; children fled from his path, to hide their faces in the bosoms of their trembling mothers.

But Sakanto was chief among the war-councilors, and his
fame went far abroad, along the sea-shores, among all the tribes that dwelt by the waters. He it was who had called together the young braves, and bade them watch the big canoe from the dark forests that overlooked the ocean. He it was, the old men said, who commanded the spirits of air to lash up the waters into anger, and to drive the big canoe upon frightful rocks, that his red nation might conquer the white strangers. Therefore was Sakanto feared by all—even more than was Massasoit, the Sachem of many nations.

Sakanto stalked from his wigwam, through the village, smiling not on the maidens, nor nodding his haughty head to the braves. He entered the lodge of Massasoit, and smoked with the Indian king the pipe of council. When the dark chieftain returned again to his wigwam, a whisper went from one to another of the youths and maidens that Sameeda, the beautiful princess, had been betrothed to the medicine-man!

Sorrow bowed the hearts of the youthful princess and her lover, when next they met beside the murmuring sea. Sameeda knew the power of that dread chieftain who sought her hand, and that Massasoit would never dare to provoke his anger, even should her own prayers be able to move her father's sympathies.

"Alas! must I fly from my beloved?" she cried, weeping upon the bosom of her pale-faced friend. "Must Sameeda sit down in the lodge of Sakanto, and smile no more?"

"Never!" answered Louis, passionately. "One being whom I loved have your cruel kindred torn from me; but from Sameeda I will never part!"

As the youth spoke, the figure of a man approached. It was the aged Abbe Claude, whose calm voice was now heard:

"My son! is it indeed so? Do you love this daughter of the red people?"

"Father—father, unite us!" was the earnest reply of Louis, "Hear me! we are one in the sight of Heaven, but let us be made one by the rites of our holy religion. O, father! unite two loving hearts in the blessed bonds of marriage!" implored the young man.

"My son, what would you do? Know you not that Sakanto is the most powerful chieftain of the nation, save alone the king Massasoit? We are but captives, and at the mercy of our rude masters."
"We can but die, Abbe Claude. Unite us, and let us fly together far from the Narragansett villages. I have learned from a runner the route to the English settlements in the South. Thither we will fly! Say you not so, Sameeda? Wilt go with me?"

"Sameeda is the wife of the white chief. She will follow him to his nation's hunting-grounds."

"Hear you that, Abbe Claude? No time is to be lost. Unite us in marriage, and we will away together. God will conduct us."

Louis supported the light form of Sameeda, who gazed into his eyes with a look of mute confidence. She knew not what marriage meant; she cared to know but one thing—that her fate would be joined to that of the young pale-face forever.

"Heaven wills it!" at length murmured the Abbe, devoutly.

"I feel that it is right, and that our Father in Heaven sanctifies the union. Ye shall be married, dear children!"

Joining the hands of the youthful lovers, the good priest knelt and prayed that their union might be blessed by the Creator of Love. There, in the sight of the bright stars and the rolling ocean, in the hour of night, Sameeda plighted her faith to the stranger who possessed her heart, and received the earnest response of her lover's vows. And then Abbe Claude uttered the solemn adjuration:

"Whom God hath joined together, let no one put asunder."

The nuptial party then stole from the lonely beach; all became quiet, save the low murmur of surges upon the sands, or the sough of swaying forest-trees that overlooked the waters.

But the quiet was broken by the plash of a paddle in the wave, and from the shadow of a jutting rock, close beneath the spot where Sameeda and her lover had knelt, shot forth a small canoe. It skimmed over the smooth water, along the shelving beach, and erect within it, his ominous glance following the receding figures of the maiden, the youth, and the priest, appeared a dusky Indian form.

It was Sakanto, medicine-man of the tribe!
CHAPTER XII.

THE CREOLE'S PIRatical CRUISE.

Meanwhile, during the transition of events in the Narragansett village, Captain Pierre and his crew steered their little vessel to the southward, coasting the perilous shoals of Cape Mollacar, rounding the isles of Capewak and Sagaquob, names now forgotten, or usurped by modern appellations, and keeping close to land withal, until the compass which they had preserved from the wreck showed them the favorable place for striking forth to the islands lying nearest to the continent. No storms interposed, and their progress during the long summer days and moonlit nights, was checked by no tedious calm; without danger or delay, they at length reached the Havana. Here, taking counsel with their leader, the company disposed of the pinnace, and sold the Indian children to the captain of a merchantman, who was about to sail forthwith for Bermuda, where servants of the sort were then in great demand. Tisquantam, who had recovered from his wound, was kept, in hopes of his fetching even more than forty-five pistoles, the round sum which had been received for each of the seven children, male and female; and then the gold, gained by the sale of the pinnace and slaves, was, by Captain Pierre's advice, invested in the purchase of a brigantine, wherewith they resolved to essay their fortunes on the high seas.

The Creole found no difficulty in increasing his company by the enlistment of several desperate fellows, then idling about the island, ready for any adventure, and who gladly entered into an engagement to share the excitement and profits of a rover's life. The Creole selected the Spaniard, Lopez, for his chief officer or lieutenant, and, mustering the men, now increased to a score or more of reckless desperadoes, opened his plans in business style.

"We are now about to follow the example of many brave
gentlemen," said Captain Pierre. "There be great store of treasure for strong hands to win, and I bethink me, comrades, of a notable place whereto we may gallantly steer. It is a cruising-ground near the island of the Dutch, called Curassoo. In those seas resort divers merchantmen, and Spanish boats withal, laden with gold and silver, silks and Indian stuffs, laces, ribbons, and quicksilver, together with spices, vanilla, cochineal and cocoa, which fetch heavy prices at the Havans, or in the new colonies of America. Peradventure, comrades, if we take a dozen of these Spanish boats, as they go on their trading occasions, we shall find such mass of rich booty as will buy a great cruising ship for us. Then can we trade briskly in slaves, which are easily caught, as were those heathen imps, and mayhap make capture of some great galleon of the Dons or Portugals, so that we be speedily enriched for our lives."

The announcement of this scheme was received with much favor by the Creole's motley followers, and they set themselves directly to the work of fitting their brigantine for the voyage. Nevertheless, as it was not thought best to leave any traces whereby their course from the Havana might be too easily traced, Captain Pierre directed his lieutenant, Lopez, as well as others of the crew, to give out among the townspeople that the vessel was bound to France, to bring thence certain stores for the new colonies of that nation. Meantime, Captain Pierre purchased arms and ammunition, with such hard pieces of gold as he had saved from the wreck of the emigrant-ship.

Very soon the brigantine was made ready for sea, and word given to her crew to repair on board, which all were right glad to do, impatient for the adventures and booty promised by the leader. But, as they were about to weigh anchor, there appeared a tall, well-favored man upon the shore, whose bronzed countenance gave evidence of its possessor's acquaintance with the vicissitudes of American climates. He was, moreover, well appareled, and wore a mien of much dignity. With him came a sea-captain, who commanded a large ship of Britain, which was anchored in the roadstead, and behind followed a couple of mariners, who bore a heavy and iron-bound box.

"I would have speech immediate with the captain of this
brigantine, whereof I hear that she is presently departing for France," said the new-comer.

"I am at your service, monsieur," replied the Creole, in French, which was the language used by the other. "What would you of Captain Pierre Dacot?"

"Captain Pierre Dacot—if that be your name—I desire to bargain with you for my passage hence to France, whither I am bound," said the stranger.

The Creole started, for he had not looked for such an application. Nevertheless, he found himself compelled to make answer, and therefore rejoined that the brigantine's accommodations were very narrow, and badly suited to the comfort of a man of quality such as the applicant appeared to be.

"Oh, as for that matter, worthy Captain Pierre Dacot," returned the stranger, "I am not difficult to please in the matter of accommodations, having borne many hardships in my day. But it is necessary that I depart speedily, for there be those in France I would fain see before I die. Some store of wealth I have, Captain Pierre!" continued he, with a glance at the iron-bound box, which a sailor had deposited on the land at his feet—"and I promise you will be no loser by the bargain we shall make."

The Creole's avaricious spirit was roused at once; and as his eye became riveted on the chest, wherein his active fancy already pictured ingots of gold, and precious stones in glittering confusion, he paused a moment, evolving in his dark mind the first inception of a scheme to get possession of the stranger's treasure, at small risk to himself.

"If such be your willingness, monsieur," he said, presently, "and if you can abide such poor comforts as we can bestow, I will gladly make shift to dispose a berth at your service—you yourself being without company."

"Myself and this chest are all the extra burden your brigantine will have to carry," replied the other. "My good friend here, and a brave captain who commands yon English ship, proffered me a cabin, which I would gladly accept; but unluckily he must wait for freight of peltries from the mainland, and I must needs make what haste I may."

"And good faith," responded the bluff merchant-captain, "I am right loth to lose your good company, sir, which I
have had from the French settlements. Fare you well, sir, for what says the song—"The best of friends must part." Saying this, the Briton shook the hand of his late passenger, and, turning to Pierre Dacot, cried out—"You'll find him a prince and a Christian man!"

The Creole's lip twitched, as he attempted to smile; and the stranger, with another friendly grasp of the merchantman's hand, prepared to get aboard the brigantine, first ordering his strong box to be lifted from the strand. "The trash is somewhat weighty," he remarked, "and 'twill tax a sturdy man's strength, mayhap, to handle well."

"Whip up yon savage Tisquontam," said the Creole, addressing Lopez. "He is strong as a bullock, and will have the chest stowed safely in a trice."

The two villains exchanged glances; while Tisquontam, driven ashore, was commanded to take up the box, which he did with scarcely an apparent effort, much to the astonishment of two English mariners, who had strained their tough joints somewhat in conveying the ponderous burden from their own vessel to the shore. The Indian, in grave silence, carried the chest over the brigantine's side and deposited it on the deck, as if it had been but a traveler's portmanteau.

"A lusty rascal, Captain Pierre," remarked the English skipper, surveying Tisquontam's muscular proportions and stately demeanor with an admiring glance; while the Indian himself, having accomplished his task, remained with folded arms, and calm eyes, near the taffrail.

"The dog is sturdy enough," answered Pierre Dacot; "but his room were as good as his company in my small craft. So, if you like, friend, you shall have him for a hundred pistoles."

"'Tis too much," said the Englishman. "Mayhap, we might agree on a matter of sixty pistoles; but, a hundred—my purse would never stand that, shipmate." So saying, the Briton turned away.

"Get you forward, there, red dog!" cried the Creole; but Tisquontam, absorbed, perchance, in thoughts of the daughter of his love, appeared not to hear the gruff voice of his kidnapper.

"Hound! do you mock me?" roared Captain Pierre, observing the Indian's inattention. "Take that, now, to help
your savage wits!" Seizing a rope's-end, he dealt his uncon-
sscious captive a sudden blow upon the face, stripping the skin
from his forehead in a bleeding welt.

"By St. Denis!—that's a cruel stroke!" exclaimed the
French passenger, in disgust at the unprovoked assault.

"Nay, nay!" he continued, interposing his arm; for he per-
ceived that the Creole had already raised his weapon for
another blow, as if apprehensive of the red-man's resentment.

"'Tis no Christian act to strike the defenseless! Look you,
sir, how the poor man bleeds!"

"Bleed he, or die he, the loss is mine own, since there's no
sale for such cattle at a fair price!" rejoined the Creole,
modestly. "But there's no danger—the heathen dog is tough."

The stranger turned from the brutal rover and caught the
eye of Tisquantam fixed on his own, with a glance at once
intelligent and grateful. He felt compassion moving him at
the sight, and a sudden impulse inspired him to rescue the
poor savage from his cruel owner. Turning immediately to
the English mariner, who, like himself, had witnesse-
with disgust the uncalled for brutality of Captain Pierre, he said,

hastily:

"When good friends part, Captain, it is a good custom that
bids to exchange tokens of remembrance between them. Give
me now that plain gold ring on your little finger, Captain, and
on my part, I will bestow this Indian Hercules upon you for a
body-servant. Nay, no demur, I pray you, friend—I like it
well."

Saying this, and in spite of the opposition of the British
captain, who protested against the smallness of the equivalent
which the Frenchman demanded, being a ring of little value
against one hundred pistoles, the price asked for Tisquantam,
the money was counted out and paid into the Creole's hands,
though the latter would fain have retracted his offer, when he
saw that his passenger was to pay for the slave. For the
treacherous Creole had resolved in his own mind to make
away with the Frenchman, so soon as they should be got upon
their voyage, in order that the strong box, which, as he rightly
deemed, contained much wealth, might fall into the hands of
himself and pirate-crew.

But Heaven had ordained all these events for its own wise
purposes, and so Captain Pierre was constrained to adhere to his bargain, and transfer the Indian man Tisquontam to the merchant-captain. The poor savage, who seemed very well to comprehend the motives of compassion which had impelled the French stranger to become his purchaser, cast a look of renewed gratitude toward the latter, as he followed his new master and the two sailors from the brigantine. Captain Pierre, looking after him with a gloomy expression, gave hurried orders to cast off the vessel. Presently the forts and harbor were passed, and, before evening, the swift-sailing little craft had many a league of ocean between herself and the Havana.

But the Creole, impatient to obtain possession of the strong box belonging to his passenger, and to proceed, thereafter, on his voyage of plunder to the windward islands, did not delay developing his design to the Spaniard, Lopez, and a few of his ready men. It was resolved at once to attack the Frenchman in his sleep, and make away with him as speedily as possible, casting his body into the sea; after which his treasure could be ransacked, without making known the circumstance to all the rovers; and thus, whatever valuables should be secured, could be divided among the few actual participants in the deed of murder. In this manner the Creole desired to rob his passenger and cheat the most of his followers of their share of the plunder.

At the dead of night, the Frenchman was startled from his slumber by the sudden stroke of a knife, wielded by the ruffian Spaniard, which, though intended to penetrate his heart, fell short of the mark, and only inflicted a slight wound, sufficient to arouse the intended victim to a vigorous struggle for his life. No less than three villains were assailing him at once, while, by the glimmer of a binnacle-lamp, the malicious eyes of Captain Pierre overlooked the work of his myrmidons. Opposite the Frenchman's resting-place—a small locker in the round-house—was an open window, and through this could be discerned the water, black as the grave, for neither moon nor star was visible in the heavens.

It had been the intention of Lopez to strike so sure a blow in the sleeping Frenchman's breast, as should deprive him of all power of resistance, when he might be dragged imme-
diately to the round-house window and cast into the sea. But either the dim light misted his sight, or his unsteady hand deceived him—he missed his aim, and the next moment felt his own throat compressed in the grip of his contemplated victim.

Then took place, in that narrow round-house, a deadly conflict. The passenger, armed only with a short dagger, made shift to keep at bay not only the three villains, but the captain himself, who came, cutlass in hand, to their assistance. Naught illumined the scene but the dull binnacle-light, whose rays dimly entered through the open door of the round-house, and no noise was made but the wrestle of those who attempted to grasp the Frenchman, and once or twice the sound of a heavy stroke against the panels of the berth. At last, a desperado, who had approached within fatal range of the brave passenger's weapon, received a powerful downward blow upon his heart, and sunk heavily to the deck, mortally wounded, while the Frenchman made a desperate spring for the round-house door.

"We must call the crew—this fellow is a devil!" muttered Captain Pierre, placing a whistle to his lips, and blowing it shrilly. Immediately a rush of feet was heard from the forward part of the brigantine, and the Creole, darting from the round-house, beheld Lopez, the Spaniard, and his French passenger, grappled together beside the starboard taffrail of the vessel, bending like wrestlers in a close embrace, their arms locked, and the knife of each glittering in the obscurity.

"Upon him, comrades! Hew him to pieces!—the Frenchman! He has killed one of us already!" cried Captain Pierre to the men, who now came hurrying aft. "Stab him, or Lopez will be strangled."

It did indeed seem that the Spaniard's breath was about to be effectually stopped, for the Frenchman had suddenly dropped his own weapon, and, clasping the armed hand of Lopez with his left fingers, shifted his right to the throat of his adversary, which he pressed against the taffrail with a grasp like iron. The lieutenant's comrades saw his danger, and, with raised cutlasses, rushed together upon the now unarmed Frenchman. But, ere they could reach him, the combat was decided by the weight of the two men breaking
the taffrail on which they pressed so heavily. It parted with a crash, and pirate, as well as passenger, fell headlong from the brigantine, and disappeared beneath the black waves under her quarter.

A single sound—half gurgling gasp, half shriek—came to the ears of the horror-stricken rovers. Then the brigantine plunged on her way, and the moaning wind in her shrouds was all that disturbed the night's stillness.

Captain Pierre, quickly as possible, ordered the vessel to be rounded to, and a boat to be got in readiness. But in vain the ready sailors listened for a voice or struggle in the water. All remained quiet, and the Creole, with a curse, led the way to the round-house, where, all stark, lay the body of the ruffian whose breast had been cloven by the Frenchman's dagger.

"Curses! this business has cost me two of my best men!" muttered the Creole. "Ay, indeed, better had I lost three than Lopez, for he stuck at nothing that I commanded!"

Thus grumbled Captain Pierre, as the slain rover's body was committed to the waves; but his regrets became less poignant when a scrutiny of the lost stranger's strong box revealed to him, not, indeed, as he had fancied, ingots and diamonds, but still a goodly store of roubles and pistoles, enough to ransom a whole ship's crew from Barbary. The Creole's eyes danced over the plunder, and forgot Lopez.
CHAPTER XIII.

MONOMA AND HER GUEST.

Marie and Monoma watched long into the night, awaiting the return of Tisquantam. Sleep, at last, overpowered them, and the hour of morning broke once more. Still the Indian hunter did not return.

"I will seek my father's trail," said Monoma; and, kissing the cheek of Marie, she bounded away to the forest-path.

Monoma was no novice in woodcraft; her steps from infancy had been accustomed to thicket and turf. She had tracked the wild fox to his covert in the summer, and pursued during wintry moons the fleet-footed deer or howling wolf far away over icy crusts and drifted snows. She was familiar with every sign by which the aborigines trace their friends or foes through the pathless wilds; for often had she roamed with her father for leagues and leagues away from their islet-home, scaling the great hills of the interior, or launching their birchen canoe upon the rivers of the Penobscot, the Merrimac, and Piscataqua, even to the far Connecticut. Consequently, Monoma thought little of threading the wood-depths, and found no difficulty in striking very soon the trail of her father, Tisquantam, on the following day.

What terror shook her frame when she reached, at length, the spot where the brief struggle between the Indian and his captors had taken place. She knelt upon the trampled grass, and saw the discolored blades where the blood that oozed from Tisquantam's wound had dried. She marked the rough trail made by the kidnappers as they dragged their victims to the pinnace, and at last saw, with renewed grief, the print of the boat's keel upon the white sands of the shore. Then, as the full realization of her father's fate broke over her mind, and she felt that he had been carried away by enemies, she sat down upon the shore overwhelmed with sorrow.
But no tear came, even then, to moisten the burning eyes of Monoma; for her wild nature, even in its despair, refused the manifestations customary to civilized life. She remained mute and motionless, thinking of her sire, but even in her agony striving to shape forth plans for following and rescuing the captive warrior.

Monoma well knew, by the signs she had diligently examined, that no war-party of Indians had made prisoner of her father; for, apart from the fact that Tisquantam was on the best of terms with all the neighboring tribes, and that distant red-men could not have approached these shores without previous notice of their coming, she knew likewise that the print upon the shore-sands must have been caused by another bark than a canoe; therefore her quick apprehension told her that Tisquantam must have fallen into the hands of some survivors of the white strangers lately cast upon the coast. But this conviction increased her alarm, for she feared, after discovery of the marks of conflict on the grass, that her father might have incurred the anger of the strangers, or been seized as a victim in revenge for the massacre of the wrecked emigrants.

Monoma ventured to hope even amid her despair. Tisquantam was acquainted with her mother’s tongue, and could therefore explain his kindred as well as friendliness to the pale-faces; and perhaps, reflected the maiden, after all, he has been taken but as a guide to the strangers through the islands, and will be allowed to return when he has safely conducted them to the great ocean. Monoma stifled her grief, and turned her face once more to the lodge where the lonely Marie waited her coming with ill-concealed anxiety.

Another night passed, and with returning morn Monoma prepared to set forth on a journey to the Narragansett village. For, during the sleepless hours, the Indian girl had promised her mourning friend that she would herself seek to discover whether Louis and the Abbe still lived. Monoma had often accompanied Tisquantam on his visits to the neighboring tribes, and twice she had passed the threshold of the great Sachem Woosameguen, which was the warrior’s name of the powerful Massasoit. She now resolved to go alone to the lodges of the Narragansetts, not to make known the disap-
pearance of her father, but only to note if the white captives were still spared from sacrifice. Marie, in truth, desired to know the worst, for the dreadful suspense in which she remained, concerning her brother, was torturing in the extreme. Rather, indeed, would she welcome death, knowing that her friends had preceded her to the Mansions of Rest.

Monoma, therefore, promising to return by evening, set forth at the first dawning to traverse the woods and hills toward the Narraganssett town. Much she dreaded that she should arrive only to witness the catastrophe of sacrifice, or to hear that the fearful rite of vengeance had been consummated. She hoped, however, that the captives were still living, and resolved, even though it might involve her own safety, to intercede for their preservation with the king, Massasoit, should the tribe have yet delayed their death. With these feelings her fleet footsteps soon carried her to the shore, where Tisquantam's canoe still lay concealed. The little bark clove the still waters of the bay from point to point, until the country of the Narragansetts was gained, and she stood among Woosamegun's lodges.

Many daughters of chiefs and young braves greeted the arrival of Monoma in the village, for she was known far and wide as the child of Tisquantam, the Lone Sachem of Manna-moset; but to the interrogatories concerning her father, the prudent maiden only replied that he had gone forth on the hunt alone, and she had come to visit for a few hours her Narragansett cousins, and then return swiftly to the lodge of Tisquantam. This answer satisfied all inquiries, and Monoma was permitted to range freely with her young Indian friends from wigwam to wigwam of the village. It was not long, therefore, before she learned all that could be communicated by the Narragansett maidens, and discovered, greatly to her joy, that the captive youth, Louis, was adopted by a squaw of the tribe. Moreover, she soon obtained a glimpse of the French youth and his elder friend, and saw that both appeared calm and in good health. Monoma bade adieu to the admiring braves who had greeted her, and, with a flowery garland or two presented by some gentle squaws, set out on her return to the islet, which she reached without difficulty just as the sun was declining.
Great was the sorrow of the Indian maiden to find that Marie was unable to comprehend her words or even recognize her at all. The anxiety, excitement and fear, which had alternated in the poor French girl's mind during the last few days, had at length forced her delicate frame to succumb, and she now lay upon her bed in the lodge, burning and tossing with a raging fever, that completely deprived her of reason.

Tenderly, though sadly, throughout that night, Monoma watched beside Marie, preparing for her relief the simple herbal medicaments which, in common with all aboriginal females, she knew well how to cull and prepare for use. But the French maiden's malady was of a grievous nature, and did not yield lightly to the young leech's skill. Not alone that night succeeding her return from the Narragansett village, but many nights, and many weeks succeeding, Monoma tended the sick and wandering girl, till at last the fever broke, and the light of intelligence once more revisited the stricken Marie.

When the crisis of the disease was at length over, and Marie could realize the sweet hope of life, and feel that, though in savage captivity, Louis was yet in no danger, but, with the good Abbe, was allowed all liberty to rove amid the tribe, she began soon to gather strength, and looked forward with returning confidence to a meeting with her brother in the forest, and perhaps their ultimate escape to the white settlements. Monoma encouraged the anticipation, though her own spirit was growing every day more despondent, because of the long absence of her father.

Meanwhile, the store of provisions with which, at Tisquantum's departure, the wigwam had been bountifully supplied, had long since been consumed, and Monoma's skill was fain to supply the place of her father. Daily, ere the sun penetrated the forest, and often at night, when Marie slept, the Indian huntress would steal forth through the glades and by the river banks, to set her snares for game, or launch her arrows with unerring dexterity, until, loaded with her spoils, she could return to the lodge, unperceived by Marie, who dreamt not of the arduous labors of her young hostess. Often, indeed, Marie beheld the trophies of Monoma's hunting exploits in the soft skins of beaver which lined the hut, as well as the many wild birds and other game upon which her returning appetites
feasted deliciously. But little did Marie know of the really perilous as well as difficult expeditions which Monoma undertook, nor know that the Indian maiden's hands had worked the ground and gathered the maize of which was made the excellent succotash which tempted her palate in the mornings.

Thus months wore away—summer passed, and the glorious Indian-summer followed with its gorgeous train of glowing sunsets, cloudless skies, and moonlit nights of dazzling brilliancy. Need was there now for Monoma to exert all her skill and energy in taking advantage of the proper hunting season in order to lay in store of food for the winter's consumption; for well she knew the glorious autumnal noons would be succeeded by storms and snows, when her islet-home would be barricaded by great drifts, and the great bay waters congealed, so that no fish could be taken by her weak hands, and when, mayhap, for months, naught would be heard in the wilderness but the howl of wolves and panthers ravenous for prey. All this Monoma knew, and, hopeless of her father's return, she prepared to exert herself to the utmost in providing the lodge with stores of game, and corn, and other necessaries, by means of which the winter might be passed in something like comfort; for she felt that Marie was ill-calculated to bear privation, and resolved, with generous courage, that no want of her friend should be unsupplied which her devotion might anticipate.

Thus, indeed, Monoma exposed herself to many risks which she might otherwise have avoided; and thus it happened, one lonely starlit night, as she eagerly pursued a wild fawn over hill and through dale, the dauntless maiden found herself suddenly checked by the ominous growl of a panther, which, crouching on the gigantic bough of an oak immediately in her path, was prepared to spring upon her as she passed.

Marie, at the fearful sight, would have fainted and been devoured in an instant. Monoma was of a different mould, and, moreover, accustomed to wilderness-perils. She, therefore, as her quick eye caught sight of the crouching panther, manifested no symptom of alarm, but quietly swerved from the direction in which she was bounding, and sprung for the shelter of another tree at a few paces distance. She was thus
saved for an instant, but only to be placed in increased danger by the anger of the animal, which, baulked in its first design, hastened, by leaping to another tree, to gain a position where it could pounce upon the anticipated victim.

The Indian girl, far from giving way to despair, coolly placed an arrow in her bow and let it fly at the animal, just as it made a furious spring toward her. The shaft entered one of the panther's eyes, so truly was it aimed. The beast fell short of the maiden, who adroitly slipped around the great tree.

The wood resounded with the horrible cry of the panther, as, terribly galled by the shaft which still stuck in his bleeding eye, he dashed with terrible force at the tree where Monoma stood. It seemed as if the noble Indian girl must fall at once a victim to the ferocious animal.

Providence, however, had ordered otherwise, and, in this great strait, sent an unlooked for deliverance; for, in the moment when she herself believed no hope remained, a loud shout was heard close beside her. A man sprang forward, ran boldly at the panther, striking it full in the breast, and bearing its ponderous body against the tree, within a foot of Monoma herself. At the same moment another figure emerged from the thicket and advanced toward the tree.

"Well, Robin Ball, have you settled him?" demanded the new-comer, in a voice which made the heart of Monoma leap in her breast, for it spoke in the French tongue, and was perfectly intelligible to her.

"Mass! St. Elmo! but I think he is done for!" was the reply of Robin Ball, as he shook the dead panther from the heavy pike of St. Elmo.

"Let us see, then, what manner of being you have rescued from the ferocious beast," said St. Elmo, stepping forward, while Monoma threw herself at the feet of Robin Ball, and, in her sweet accents, thanked him in excellent French for his timely action which had saved her life.

Had some visitant dropped from the skies, Robin and St. Elmo could not have been more astonished than they were now, to hear the foreign language spoken by an Indian Diana, who had just narrowly escaped death from an American tiger. It was not, therefore, to be marveled at, that they both pres-
ently plied the young huntress with questions, or that they speedily learned of the relationship in which Monoma stood to the white race. On his part, feeling instinctively that he might trust the red maiden, St. Elmo informed her that himself and companion had dwelt for several months in a cavern hard by, where they had stored provisions and furs, the spoils of their chase in the surrounding wilds. Much Monoma wondered that she had never before encountered the white hunters, but the circumstance was accounted for by the fact that they had roamed the forest with great caution, never venturing far from their retreat, lest they should meet and be taken captive by savages, many bands of whom, at divers times, they had seen traversing the wilderness.

But, what was Gabriel St. Elmo's surprise and joy, when Monoma informed him that one of his countrywomen had survived the wreck, and that the name of that one was Marie. The youth was nearly wild with delight, and implored to be conducted at once to Marie, and testified such ardent emotion, repeating over and over the French maiden's name, that Monoma at once, with a woman's tact, perceived the relation of the youth to her fair young friend.

All this time Robin Ball had remained gazing upon her sweet countenance, with a stare of blank wonder. So royal in her wild hunting garb, yet, withal, so gentle and engaging did Monoma appear to the rude English seaman, that he could find no words which he deemed suitable to address her in reply to the gratitude that she had expressed for his opportune service; and it was not till, in answer to St. Elmo's earnest prayer to be conducted to Marie, and Monoma had stepped forward to lead the way, that Robin could collect his faculties sufficiently to withdraw his gaze from her. Then, heaving a sigh, which seemed to shake his great heart, and wiping on the grass the bloody pike with which he had slain the panther, Robin Ball followed St. Elmo and the Indian maiden away from the glen, in the direction of Tisquantam's wigwam.
CHAPTER XIV.

THE SANOP OF THE DEAD.

A solitary Indian stood upon a lofty rock that frowned over the shores of the Connecticut, near the mouth of that beautiful river. His arms were crossed upon his broad bosom, and his tall form, towering in loneliness upon the ridge of the precipice, seemed like a statue wrought from the rock itself. It was Mattakan, the Pequod chieftain. He was not alone. Reposing at the base of the rock, concealed in its shadow, lay nine swarthy sons of the forest, savages of the Pequod nation. They were the war-brethren of Mattakan, and sworn avengers of the Indian's wrongs.

Many moons had come and flitted since Outesie had been slain, with her babe in her arms. During these months Mattakan had neither crossed the threshold of his council-lodge, nor joined in hunt or war-expedition. But away from his tribe, along the shores of the big waters, and to the settlements of the pale-faces on the great Hudson, had the chieftain wandered, to behold the stranger-ships as they came from the great ocean. Mattakan nursed but one image in his memory—the form of the white man who had slain Outesie; he nursed but one desire—for vengeance on the murderer of his wife.

The chieftain's deserted wigwam mouldered in the forest; his babe pined among the Pequod squaws; but Mattakan beheld it not, till at length the child sickened and died. Then the father took it from his village, and buried it with Outesie, in the lonely grave beneath the oak tree. But Mattakan spoke big words no more in the councils of his tribe, nor smoked with the ancient braves, nor hearkened to the songs of Pequod maids. The life of his heart was no more; he had buried it with Outesie and her child.

But, ever and anon, when the wandering chieftain returned
from afar, he whispered low words to the brethren of his youthful days, and they bent their ears, listening to the tale of the white man's wrong, and then, grasping each others' hands, swore by the Great Spirit that they would revenge the death of Outesie. Then Mattakan and his nine war-brethren went forth from their nation, and roamed among other tribes, and afar to the white settlements, seeking evermore the murderer; till at length the pale-faces grew fearful at the dark looks of that Pequod band, and the white squaws hushed their children with the name of Mattakan, the Sanop of the Dead.

But Mattakan warred not against the innocent pale-faces who dwelt near the great sea, nor against those whose lodge-fires smoked in the forests. He waited in patience to discover the slayer of Outesie, for the Great Spirit had talked to him in dreams, and promised that he should one day stand face to face with his enemy. So Mattakan waited for revenge.

Nor, in good sooth, was the time far distant when the wronged Indian was to encounter his desperate foeman; for Captain Pierre was even then not far from the shores whither the Pequod war-brethren had followed their leader. The brigantine had, it is true, pursued her expedition, and the place of Lopez, the Spaniard, had been speedily filled by another of the reckless crew, after which, for some months, they cruised upon the main; till at length it chanced that in an attack which Captain Pierre made upon the Spanish boats near Curassoo, he encountered a resistance totally unlooked for; and, though the pirates succeeded in capturing the trading boats, with a great store of merchandise, yet their own numbers were so thinned in the fight, that it became necessary for the Creole to retrace his course, and steer for some point where he could recruit the band. He dared not enter Curassoo, or St. Thomas, near by, neither to venture to the main coast opposite, since many of those Spaniards who manned the merchant-boats had escaped from the combat, and the rover feared would give the alarm to men-of-war of their own country; in which case his own vessel might be shortly captured, and his own career ended on the scaffold. So, Captain Pierre deemed it his wisest course to shape at once for the
north shores of America, and strive for recruits among the settlements of Virginia or Hudson's river, where, he doubted not, many restless spirits were to be found, disgusted with the hardships of emigrant-life; more especially among those who had been, in times past, followers of Walter Raleigh and the other English adventurers. It happened that the Creole arrived in his brigantine, and stood off near the straits of the ocean that lead into Hudson's waters, at the moment that Mattakan, his enemy, was tarrying with his comrades at the mouth of the river Connecticut. Wondrous are the dispositions of Providence, which, when even known not, are working to the good and evil of mankind, according as their deserts determine.

It was near eventide when Captain Pierre's vessel passed around the long island which lay at the entrance of the waters upon whose banks a few huts and a trading stockade, planted by Hollanders, marked the small beginnings of what was hereafter to grow into the great commercial metropolis of the New World. The rover had, indeed, steered for the Virginia coast; but, miscalculating his neighborhood, had run around the rocky capes at the northward, and found himself at night near the waters claimed by Dutch settlers. Accordingly he resolved to visit them, and perhaps, after a profitable trade of his plundered cloths for beavers and other furs, to finish the expedition by another foray for slaves among the aborigines.

But the evening approached while yet the brigantine sounded through the unknown channel which she had entered, and, as the sky gave no promise of a moonlit night, but rather wore a murky and unusual hue, the buccaneer resolved to cast anchor in the shelter of a jutting point, near which emptied into the sea a wide river, evidently rising far inland. So, when the evening grew darker, the shallop rode at anchor upon the channel's edge, her trim hull motionless, and scarcely definable as it swayed sluggishly with the tide. One dim lantern hung over the bows, its flickering rays revealing a swivel-gun there mounted; but all portions of the brigantine were wrapped in the increasing obscurity of the night.

But, though the weather's aspect was gloomy and unpromising, no sign of approaching tempest was observable; rather, it seemed, that a sluggish calm had dropped over land and
water—one of those sultry calms, when life seems to stagnate, and all nature yields to apathy. Nevertheless, Captain Pierre and his reckless crew seemed little influenced by the heavy atmosphere, but, as they gathered with song and jest in the roundhouse of the brigantine, and quaffed deeply of Jamaica spirits, sweetened with the cane of St. Eustatia, appeared resolved on maintaining the soundness of the favorite though questionable morality contained in one of their drinking songs:

“Nor care nor fear hath the bold buccaneer,
The headsman’s stall he troubleth not—
He keepeth his prayer till he swings i’the air—
For he’ll need it then if at all, God wot.”

But better had it been for that roystering company had they watched with fear and care in those unknown waters; for they had then beheld, perchance, the dusky human form that swam cautiously about the shallop, and climbed to the anchor-cable; and they had met, perhaps, the glare of those savage eyes which, through the open window of the roundhouse, looked in on them with ominous glare, fixed upon the dark features of the Creole captain with a look of hate, deadly as the fascination of a serpent.

But no suspicion crossed the drunken minds of the rovers, as they plied their cans, and bandied jest and song. Mattak-an, the Pequod, marked well the murderer of his wife, and then, noiselessly as he had come, descended from the cable, and clove his way to shore beneath the sultry cloud that concealed the water like a pall.

Far into the night extended the revels of the buccaneers, their hoarse laughter mocking the solemn stillness of nature—the ominous unnatural stillness of all things else. Throughout that sultry night the waters remained sluggish and dark, not a breath of air rippling their surface, not a passing zephyr flapping the listless canvas. Motionless the brigantine lay upon the midnight sea.

On the shore, likewise, brooded a similar stillness. Even when the gray morning gave signs of breaking, no breeze arose to bear away the clouds; the birds remained silent, or dropped from their tree-top nests to the ground, or wheeled above in slow, bewildered circles. The quiet over nature’s face appeared, indeed, like the quiet of death, for it was that
quiet pregnant with presentiment—the quiet that presages the earthquake’s approach.

The tradition that tells of this first strange convulsion of nature known to New-England chronicles, is almost lost in the mazy history of two hundred and forty years. Still, in a few legends preserved in the white man’s books, and more vividly in the unwritten stories still rife among the remnant of Eastern tribes, it yet lives—descending by the mouths of old men, who relate it in the language of their fathers—how the big waters upsweled, and then subsided into dead calmness; how the voice of Manitou was heard in the heavens, and from the wood-depths and caverns the wild breath of Hobbomock replied to him; how the red-man’s corn was uptorn, and their dwellings made like canoes to swim upon the swollen waters; how hundreds and thousands of trees were uprooted—tall oaks and walnuts blown from their places, and wound up like withes by the hurricane; and how, at last, the moon shrouded her face in the great darkness which followed, and medicine-men shuddered, and soothsayers prophesied the doom of the Indian. The tradition yet lives of all this, though the historian scarce notices date or event.

Mattakan, as his stately form towered loftily amid the nine Pequod war-brethren, and his straining eyes watched the breaking of night’s shadows around, could behold a heavy black cloud hanging like a pall over the broad mouth of Connecticut river—making darkness from the heavens to the ocean; and he knew that within the bosom of this cloud lay the brigantine of the pale-faces. Descending to the riverbank, followed by his Pequod braves, he pointed toward the spot, and then silently took his station in the prow of a canoe, which, though apparently so slight that a child’s finger might rock it, was yet of capacity sufficient to accommodate the ten Indians. Quickly a dozen paddles dashed aside the waters, though their splash was almost noiseless, and the dark birch-filed vessel shot out upon the wide river, unnoticeable in the thick gloom.

Afar at the east stretched a sickly yellow line, marking the struggling break of day; but in the west, the ominous cloud mingled with a dense fog that arose from the river. Silently, and shrouded in the mist, crept the Pequod’s canoe toward
the hidden shallow of the stranger; while still the solemn and
deathlike apathy brooded over the life of all things else, and
the terrible immobility of nature was unbroken by breath or
agitation.

Meanwhile, Captain Pierre and his reveling companions
continued unwearied their night's orgies. The Creole held
aloft his foaming goblet, and trolled a reckless distich, while
anon the laugh of his crew echoed the drunken strain. The
watchmen on the brigantine's deck drew near to the round-
house, joining in the mirth of their comrades, or, exchanging
with them some covert jest. But Captain Pierre, as he thus
made merry on these strange waters, did not remember the
cries that gathered darkly behind him during the five moons
since he had arrived in the French ship, off the headlands of
Wollocar—did not recall his cruel desertion of the emigrants,
his cold-blooded murder of the Indian wife, his attempted
assassination of Robin Ball, and the kidnapping of Tisquontam
and the red children. Yet, though all these wicked deeds
had been committed within the space of a single summer, and
near the spot where his bark now rode at anchor, Captain
Pierre little dreamed that his presence had been traced with
the unerring cunning of a savage, or that his revels—that night
were watched by Mattakan, avenger of the murdered Outesie.
So he drank and reveled with his rover-crew.

What plash was that beside the anchored shallow? What
shadows were those which stole silently up the cables, and
crouched in the shadow of the galley? The dead quiet
remained unbroken by the watchman's alarm—naught had
been seen by his drunken eyes.

What glimmer, as of angry eyes, was that which suddenly
intercepted the lantern-rays? The watch beheld it not, yet it
marked the stealthy progress of Mattakan and his braves, as,
slowly and silently, they crept toward the round-house, and
drew near to the careless sentinels.

A wild yell rung upon the sluggish air, and then a shout,
like the war-cry of demons; then followed a struggle, a groan,
and the watchmen were hurled backward upon the shallow's
deck, their foreheads red with the mark of tomahawks.

The revelers in the round-house sprung appalled to their
feet. They beheld, crouching at the door, a half-dozen red
men, and heard the Pequod war-whoop pealing through the brigantine. And, foremost of the yelling savages, his wild eyes seeking but one object, Captain Pierre beheld Mattakan. The Creole instantly recognized the stately warrior whom he had once seen upon the shores of Massachusetts bay; and at the same instant the chieftain's eyes encountered the slayer of his loved Outesie. He had tracked the murderer to his lair, and the oath sworn at the grave of his wife would now be fulfilled. Many moons had Mattakan waited for this hour; it had come at last!

Captain Pierre's quick glance ranged over the dark faces clustering around the Pequod chieftain, and then fell upon his own few men. The savages outnumbered the pale-faced crew, but what recked the buccaneer of that? He knew that his own stalwart arm and iron blade could sweep a red-man to the deck with a single blow, and his firearms were all within reach. Yet, he paused a moment, dropping the point of his raised sword, and waving his hand, as if to invoke parley—

"Brothers!" he then said, in a low voice.

But Mattakan's brow grew dark as midnight.

"Outesie!" he cried in answer, and, springing back from the round-house door, seized a pine-knot from one of his savage companions, and then, plucking a hatchet from his wampum-belt, broke the glass that protected the binacle-lamp, while a yell of the Pequods, and a sudden rush of all toward the round-house, cast the white men at once upon their defense.

But Captain Pierre, as he beat back the first Indian who advanced, kept his eyes fixed upon the motions of Mattakan, and beheld the chief ignite the resinous wood which he held, and then, as its blaze streamed wildly out, cast it among the cordage and sails that flapped heavily against the masts of the brigantine. In an instant a besom of flame swept the rigging and overspread the deck as with a woof of fire, while beneath, the red and white combatants confronted each other, their wild countenances illumined by the light that streamed far across the gloomy waters. With foot advanced, and hatchet brandished above his head, pressed Mattakan in their midst, and opposing him, with bronzed brow shining in the red gleam, stood his enemy, the Creole. It was but for one moment, however, that the antagonists thus remained; the
next, uttering a fierce yell, the Pequods mingled with their foes.

Captain Pierre cast his back against the solid lockers of the round-house, and with a sweep of his heavy sword struck the foremost Indian bleeding to the deck. Then, white and red met, and presently interlocked in furious struggles for mastery. Mattakan, the Sanop of the Dead, sprung before his brethren, and hurled his tomahawk at the captain’s forehead. It struck the iron blade of the Creole’s sword, and fell harmless to the deck. Instantly the Pequod had grappled his foe.

But what meaneth that dismal shiver of the waters around the brigantine? Whence that moaning rush of wind through the forests that skirt the river’s mouth? Truly doth the black cloud that filled the heavens now sink suddenly down, swallowing the yellow line of morning.

The earthquake! the hurricane!

It rushed suddenly from the forest-caves—it swept up from the river’s mouth—it fell darkly from the heavens—at once, and terribly.

The waves uprose like a boiling caldron—the water rocked to and fro, and the slight vessel was lifted in the air. Her masts groaned and snapped; the burning sails streamed afar like banners of fire. Then came a shock, a heaving swell, a horrible crash around the entire horizon; then a hundred lightnings leaped from the sable cloud, while the roaring of multitudinous thunders seemed bent in the one fierce throb of earth, sea, and sky.

The hatchets of the Indians fell upon the bloody deck, and their fingers loosed the gripe of quivering scalps. The white men likewise paused, affrighted at the new and supernatural peril which threatened them.

In a moment the stroke of the hurricane fell, and the brigantine rolled over in the trough of the sea. The swelling waters mounted in an immense wave, and swept her decks of red-men and pale-faces; the hurricane clove her like the sudden sweep of a sword, and, ere a cry of horror could be raised, the grappling combatants were hurled into the black water.
CHAPTER XV.

THE FRENCH PASSANGER AND HIS HISTORY.

To be awakened from a comfortable slumber by the misdirected stroke of a dagger aimed at his heart; to be compelled to fight for life against four stalwart pirates; to plunge headlong into the ocean, grasping the throat of an assassin—are experiences well calculated to dampen the energy of any man; therefore the French passenger of the brigantine, when he rose from under the water where he had sunk with Lopez the Spaniard, was, as may be imagined, in no comfortable frame of mind. Nevertheless, it behoved him to strike out for immediate safety, though the night was dark as Erebus. Neither the brigantine could be seen nor the pirate whom he had grappled with, and the brave man swam lustily for a few moments; then, becoming somewhat freed from his bewilderment, floated for a few moments upon his back, reflecting on his novel situation.

The Frenchman was not unused to adventure, nor, as he had assured Captain Pierre, unacquainted with hardships; yet the predicament in which he now discovered himself decidedly transcended in interest all his previous experiences. But, at the moment he was debating the chances of his surviving long enough afloat to become a living meal for the sharks that infested those latitudes, the sudden contact of his limbs with a floating object startled his thoughts. Striking out his hands, he immediately felt a fragment of wood, which he at once concluded was a piece of the taffrail that, in breaking, had precipitated himself and the Spaniard into the ocean. Scarcely had he grappled with what promised to assist him to sustain himself, when he heard a feeble voice near him cry:

"St. Dominic preserve me! it is he!"

"Hah!" cried the Frenchman, "is this my caitiff antagonist? Truly, we are both at even chances for life! Ho, friend! art not drowned yet?"
“Mercy!” gasped the trembling voice of Lopez, sounding through the darkness in the ear of his intended victim; for, so dense was the black fog which enveloped the sea, that the two men, though clinging to extremities of the same fragment of taffrail, were yet unable to discern one another. “We must die—we must drown!”

“Speak for yourself, my good fellow,” returned the Frenchman. “For my part, I intend to live as long as I can, and so I shall stick to this bit of wood, advising you to do the same.”

“Do you forgive me?” gasped the wretched Spaniard.

“Are you not about to cast me off from this frail support?”

“I have as much as I can do, good fellow, to keep my own grasp, without troubling myself about casting off a fellow-creature. There is support for both, as it chances, so I counsel you to hold on fast.”

“St. Dominic reward you!” murmured the Spaniard. “But alas! I see no way of escape!”

“Truly, one must have better eyes than mine to see at all,” said the other man. “Nevertheless, morning can not be far away, and meantime we are in no great peril, the sea being so calm. Therefore say your prayers, good fellow, and ask St. Dominic to forgive you for the grievous crime that you would have perpetrated.”

Lopez groaned, and presently began to implore the mercy of all the saints in his calendar, at the same time venting not a few maledictions upon Captain Pierre, whom he charged with all the responsibility of his own sins. But the Frenchman gave little heed to the wretch’s abjurations, being himself intently watching for the streaks of day, which at length began to dissipate the mist that shrouded the ocean. At first, indeed, he could distinguish nothing save the sea; but as the dull, gray light broadened by degrees above the gazer’s vision, he could discern the outlines of a shore at the leeward, to which apparently the taffrail was drifting. At the same time the Frenchman’s regards fell upon the face of Lopez the Spaniard, now revealed in the dim atmosphere, as he clung at the other end of the fragment of wood. It was ghastly and fear-stricken, and the fixed eyes almost glared in returning the look they met.

“Well, comrade! what think you now of our chances?”
cried the Frenchman, in a cheery tone, willing, if possible, to raise the spirits of his wretched fellow-sufferer. "Mark you your land, to which we drift fast? God's mercy has preserved us both, and it is meet that we should be grateful!"

"Mercy!" muttered Lopez, in a despairing voice. "God's mercy is not for the Jonah. But you, Monsieur, whom I would fain have slain—do you pardon me in truth?"

"As freely as I trust in pardon myself for manifold transgressions," answered the Frenchman. "But now, lest the sea may speedily ebb from the land, and thus bear us away, I pray you strike out lustily, and let us swim together, pushing this taffrail withal. Thus shall we reach the shore and be safe."

"Heaven help me! I fear I shall ne'er put foot on shore again," groaned the Spaniard. "Neither can I strike out nor swim, for strength nor skill have I in the water. St. Dominic be my witness, I can but hold fast to the wood."

"Hold fast, then, in God's name!" answered the Frenchman. "I will strive if mine own limbs can force forward both you and the taffrail."

So saying, the bold swimmer forced the taffrail forward toward the shore. Lopez hung a dead weight upon it. Thus, by dint of the Frenchman's exertions assisting the drift, they approached the land, which appeared to be a small island, until the white sands of the shore could be plainly discerned gleaming through the transparent waves. Already the swimmer had slackened his efforts, sure that the goal would be easily attained; already Lopez began to hope, when suddenly, immediately from the bright sands beneath, arose the form of an enormous ground-shark. Turning, as it ascended, it presented to view its white belly, which flashed like silver in the clear waters.

The ground-shark, infesting the tropical seas, is the deadliest of its kind, being poisonous as well as ferocious, and, unlike the more timid follower of ships, can not be frightened away by blows or splashing of the waves. As this dreadful fish became visible, the Frenchman, as he swam, cried loudly to his companion:

"A shark—have a care! Leave the wood and make for the shore!"
Then, with a generous thought to save the Spaniard, he turned the taffrail about, so that Lopez was near the sands and might easily scramble into shoal-water. But Heaven had ordained that the wretch should perish, as he expected, before reaching the land; for he persisted in clinging to the wood, as it were, fearing to making an effort to gain the shallow water, which seeing, and being anxious to save his own life, the Frenchman no longer held to the boards, but struck off, and presently reached the shore. Then, casting his eyes about, he beheld the spectacle he feared to encounter—an agonized face appearing a moment beside the taffrail, then another wild leap upward of the Spaniard's mangled body, as the teeth of the shark cut him in twain, his life-blood gushing out on the waters, which it discolored even to the pebbly beach. This was the end of Lopez the Spaniard, who had been spared from the ocean only to meet a doom more fearful, in punishment of his wicked life. The Frenchman felt unbounded gratitude to the gracious Providence which had preserved him from the fate of his companion.

"See, now," he murmured, "how inscrutable are the mercies of Almighty Wisdom! Had not you taffrail become broken off, in my struggle on board the brigantine, we had not fallen into the deep, it is true, but I should assuredly have been slain by those desperadoes who sought my life. Then, had not the wretch grasped the wood, and thus floated it, unknowingly, near where I swam, peradventure I had soon become exhausted, and sunk in the sea! And now, at the last, I am saved by the sacrifice of this unhappy man; for it is plain that the fish would have made a meal of me, had not the other been there! Truly, wondrous are thy ways, oh Lord!"

Thus the Frenchman communed, as he walked along the beach from which the tide was now ebbing, as he had expected, leaving bare the white sands where so lately had lain in ambush the deadly ground-shark. But what was his surprise and joy to discover, just as the morning sun had partly broken over the ocean, irradiating every object, that a large ship was in sight, apparently standing in full sail toward the island.

This joyful sight renewed the prayers and thanksgivings of
the Frenchman, who impatiently ran back and forth upon the shore, displaying a flag which he made with his torn doublet and shirt, and shouting at the top of his lungs so soon as he deemed the vessel to be within hailing distance. Presently he became aware that his presence upon the island had been discovered, for soon a boat was seen to leave the ship and shape its course for the beach. In a little time, much to his satisfaction, the Frenchman trod the decks of a first-class galleon of England, bound homeward from the New World with a cargo of fish and beaver-skins, in all near ten thousand pounds, and of great value. To the master of this galleon the Frenchman made known his wonderful adventure and deliverance. From the English mariner he received all friendly consolation and assurance of future safety, and presently stipulated with the worthy captain to carry him as passenger to a port in Britain. The Frenchman was far from being destitute of means wherewith to bargain for his voyage to England; for, closely sewn in the girdle beneath his doublet, were store of diamonds and other precious stones, worth even more than the strong box which he had left on board the brigantine. These valuables, however, the Frenchman still concealed, only bargaining with the English master to reward him for his kindness when the ship should arrive at her destined port.

At this port, in time, the galleon arrived. And when the adventurer had once more set foot on land, and generously remunerated the master for all the attentions shown him on the passage, he went about among the smaller shipping, to engage some craft wherein he might immediately set out for his native France.

"For since I have been preserved through many years of hardship, and escaped divers perils, so that I now return with store of this world's goods, obtained by lawful toil and profit, it now appeareth to me that Heaven, in its goodness, hath determined on my future happiness, and union with my dearest family! I will hasten, therefore, to lovely France, trusting still in the good God who has ever been my support."

Thus the pious Frenchman talked to himself, as he sought among the mariners for one that could convey him to France. What was his surprise, as he stood upon one of the quays, to be greeted in his native language by a dark-looking man, clad
in sailor's garb, who came toward him with an air at once dignified and deferential, and, removing his coarse hat, disclosed a face which he fancied familiar, yet could not immediately recall to memory.

"The white chief does not remember the poor Indian. But the Indian never forgets his friend!"

These words at once brought to the Frenchman's recollection the scene upon the shore at the Havana, when he had purchased a red-man from the brutal Captain Pierre, and given him to the protection of an English merchant-captain.

"Ah! I now remember you well! and your worthy master—where is he?"

"Tisquantam has no master. The white chief is his friend," returned the red-man, proudly, as, turning, he made way for the merchant-skipper of the Havana, who now approached and grasped the Frenchman's hand.

In a few moments the latter related to the Englishman all that he had endured since parting from him in the New World, and in return was informed that the Indian Tisquantam had proved himself a very valuable acquisition to the ship's company, and won the good wishes of all the crew. He was not considered as a servant or slave, the customs of England repudiating the latter condition, at least at home, and the native dignity of the red-man making it impossible for a noble mind to treat him otherwise than with respect. Tisquantam, indeed, bore himself with much freedom and discretion, and endeavored in every manner to testify his gratitude to the Frenchman who had befriended him.

"The white chief," he said, alluding to the merchant-captain, "will soon take Tisquantam back to his hunting-grounds, to the lodge where his daughter mourns her lost father. There Tisquantam will remember his French brother, and Monoma shall pray for the chief who rescued her father from the man-stealer."

"I am glad that my red brother remembers his friend," answered the Frenchman. "Let him wear this to his lodge, and present it to his young squaw."

Saying this, he took a ring of plain gold from his finger, and placed it in the red-man's hand.

Tisquantam's noble features were agitated with emotion.
He seized the hand of his friend and raised it to his lips. Then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he thrust his hand into his bosom and drew forth a small golden cross. It was the token which Marie de Luzerne had given him to bear to her brother on the morning of that unhappy day when he had been kidnapped by the ruffian Creole.

"Here," cried the Indian, "Tisquantam has naught but this. He will tell the white bird that he gave it to a chief of her nation, his friend and brother, and she will—"

The red-man paused in sudden alarm as his glance rested upon the face of the Frenchman, who had seized the cross and was holding it extended at arm's length, his eyes fixed upon the cipher which, as we have before noticed, was engraven upon the small relic that Marie had inherited from her departed mother. His cheek grew flushed and pale by turns, his bosom heaved, and all his limbs were agitated as with violent emotion. Clasping his hands wildly together, he exclaimed:

"'Tis hers—'tis hers!"

"The white-bird—Marie!" cried the Indian, as if intuitively following the other's thoughts.

"Ay! Marie—Marie! Whence came this cross? Long years ago I gave it to my lost wife. How is it I find it in the hands of an Indian? Speak, Tisquantam! who and what are you? How came you by this relic?"

Then gravely, but with minute accuracy, the Indian related all the circumstances connected with his possession of the cross—the fearful wreck of the emigrant-ship—the massacre and captivity of its survivors—his rescue of Marie de Luzerne, and the subsequent adventure through which he had been divined from his own liberty. The Frenchman listened, transfixed with astonishment, till Tisquantam concluded the recital. Then, falling on his knees, and raising his hands, which still clasped the golden cross, he acknowledged anew the wonderful power and benevolence of the Almighty Ruler of human events.

"O Father of Mercies!" he cried, "I thank Thee for this new work of Thy watchful providence—Thy protecting wisdom! Behold, through this savage, whom I but kindly treated in a small thing, Thou hast chosen to manifest Thy
love, and to reveal to me the fate of those dearer to me than life! O Holy One, I thank Thee for all Thy wonderful kindness, and may all my future life be witness to Thy praises!"

It was indeed the Sieur de la Luzerne, the long-absent father of Louis and Marie, who had returned to the Old World enriched, it is true, by toil and adventure during his exile, but yet weighed down with solicitude concerning the fate of his family, from whom he had been parted for so many years. His sentence of banishment, after having doomed him to an unjust expatriation from France, during the prime of his life, had at last been reversed by the successor of the monarch whose misjudging severity had inflicted it, and the Sieur Luzerne hastened at once his return to his native land, to seek out, if they were still living, the objects of his affection. But, alas! ill-fated would have been his quest, disappointed his hopes, had not the chance-meeting with Tisquantam, at the Havana and in England, revealed to him what no other than the Indian could have told—the fate and abiding-place of his orphaned children. Reason, indeed, had the exile to be thankful for Heaven's kindness, and cause enough to admire that wonder-working Providence which had permitted the Iroquois to be torn from his daughter and his home, in order that through his instrumentality another sundered family might be reunited. Tisquantam and the English captain, as well as Luzerne, joined in acknowledgment of the Divine Power, and together, with solemn steps, they wended their way to the British galleon which was soon to sail again for the Colonies, and in which the French exile resolved at once to return in search of his beloved children.

It was not long before, with the Iroquois at his side, the Sieur de la Luzerne stood upon the decks of the English ship, and bade adieu to the white shores of Albion's sea-girt isle, as the vessel clove her way once more across the wide Atlantic.
CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN PIERRE AND THE AVENGER.

In the darkness that succeeded the stroke of the hurricane, two stalwart forms arose in the boiling surf, and, unseen by each other, breasted the billows, as they struck vigorously for the shore. These were Mattakan, the Pequod, and the Creole, Captain Pierre. They did not see one another, for the immense cloud, which followed the hurricane's devastating track, bowed down over the waters and land in an impervious bank of mist.

Though appalled at the terrible manifestation of nature's power that had interrupted his work of vengeance, Mattakan plied his strong limbs in the effort to keep afloat, though his eyes were blinded by the spray, and his ears stunned by the roar around him, mingled with terrific noises from the land to which he sought to swim—the crack of whole forests snapping like reeds before the ponderous force of the typhoon.

He reached, at length, a point of elevated earth, that once had marked the extremity of the river's banks; but in vain did the chief now search for a landing-place. Water was all around and before him—water, black and gloomy as the grave, stretched far on either side. Mattakan then knew that the river had overflowed its boundaries, inundating the forests and fields. The quick instinct of his savage nature taught him the course of safety. He struck boldly forward for the hills which he knew could not be very far away. After a fearful struggle for life, his eyes were gladdened with the sight of land, and he was soon under the shelter of a friendly shore. What a scene of devastation met his view! Everywhere a wide waste of waters—trees uptorn, deep channels cut in the land by the earthquake's mighty shock! Far away on the bosom of the wild waters rode the shallow—a mere wreck of its former beauty, and her decks silent as the stars in midnight. The
Indian sat down to contemplate the fearful change which had so suddenly taken place, and mourned inwardly that his companions should all have been lost ere their vengeance was consummated by the tomahawk and scalping-knife.

Mattakan sought a brief rest in repose, for his powerful frame was well nigh prostrate from his great exertion. He slept peacefully for an hour. When he awoke it was still dark, but to his surprise he found that the ship had been driven into shore by the return tide, and was now lying stranded at the river's edge.

The Pequod's keen glance explored in an instant everything within its range, and noticed, what a white man might have passed unheeded, that there were signs of life about the vessel. Hastily plunging beneath the water's surface, he swam silently past the dismantled shallop, and, gaining a clump of trees which commanded a view of her decks, concealed himself among the leaves, patiently awaiting the setting in of night.

The shades deepened. Sky, forest and water darkened into indistinctness, but the Pequod's watchful eye was fixed upon the brigantine, till at length it marked a filmy smoke mingling with the gloom above her decks, and then a sudden light gleaming through the window of the round-house. No human form appeared, yet Mattakan knew that some living being was there. Cautiously leaving his hiding-place, he swam to the bluff, and noiselessly climbed his way to the vessel's deck. All was still as the grave, but the rays of light glimmering from the round-house, guided the Indian's progress, as with wild-cat stealthiness he crawled along the slippery planks, and at length reached the galley, close beside the half-open door of the cabin, where, shrouded in darkness, he crouched low, and peered forward. 'What did Mattakan behold? The murderer of his wife was there—the Creole, Captain Pierre; and he slept.

The rover and his enemy, the Pequod, were the sole survivors of that terrible tempest. Their companions, white and red, had perished in the swollen waters, and only the two foes now met once more upon the decks of that fated bark.

Still the rover slept. An iron lamp burned on the table before him, and near it the Creole leaned, resting upon his folded arms, overpowered by the fatigues and perils of the day. His pistols, primed and loaded, lay beside the lamp.
Mattakan cautiously drew nearer to the door of the round house, and at last entered. Still the Creole remained motionless, and the Pequot crept on until he reached the table, and, stretching out his hand, seized the firearms of his white enemy.

Now, indeed, was the slayer of his wife within the red-man's power. The murderer of Outesie was defenseless before him. He remembered his wife and child, and their grave beneath the oak tree, on the borders of his native waters, and, raising the deadly weapon which he had grasped in his right hand, he pointed it at the white man's heart. But Mattakan could not slay a sleeping foe.

He struck the table with the iron muzzle of the pistol, and pealed at the same instant the war-whoop of his race. Terribly rung that yell upon the still night-air, and was answered by the alarmed voice of Captain Pierre, startled from his slumber. The rover sprung to his feet, and beheld his pistols in the hands of a red-man. He saw before him the Sanop of the Dead, and heard one word uttered by the Indian's lips:

"Outesie!"

The rover's cheek grew pale as he rolled his blood-shot eyes around the cabin, in the vain hope of escape. Still his craft did not forsake him. He knew something of the Indian language, as well as character, and at once essayed to parley.

"Is my red brother a warrior?" demanded he, in the dialect used by the northern tribes.

"Outesie!" was the sullen response of the chief.

"I am not armed," continued Captain Pierre. "Will the brave slay a chained buffalo?"

"Mattakan will not slay his chained enemy."

"Then let us fight with knives," said the Creole.

"The pale-face shall have a knife! Let him be armed."

"Be it so; we will then be even," said the rover. And, stepping back as he spoke, while the crafty Pequot still held the pistol leveled at his enemy's heart, he threw open a small closet at the side of the round-house. Within this closet, or locker, were divers arms ranged upon a shelf; and on the floor beneath, an iron-bound keg, the lid of which had fallen off, and disclosed its contents. Mattakan shuddered as he recognized in the open keg the white man's thunder-seed.
— the terrible gunpowder of the pale-faces. But his inflexible Indian visage exhibited no trace of what he observed. His eye calmly surveyed the Creole, who had grasped a brace of hunting-knives.

"Now I will fight the red chief!" cried Captain Pierre, as he extended one of the bright blades to Mattakan, who received it but with one response—"Outesie," and then flung the pistols which he held upon the deck behind him.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Captain Pierre, who had rightly reckoned on this magnanimous action of the red warrior; and then, quick as thought, he grasped a carbine which stood loaded within reach of his hand, and, springing back, leveled it at the Pequod's breast.

The white man's treachery had outwitted the simple Indian, and the Creole's mirth rung out in anticipated triumph. But Mattakan was cunning, and desperate as his foe.

For, scarcely had the rover's laughter marked his sudden possession of the carbine, than the Pequod's hand was thrust forward, and grasped the iron lamp which burned upon the table. Captain Pierre divined his purpose, and snapped the trigger of the deadly weapon which he held, but it was too late. The red-man had hurled the burning lamp into the powder which had caught his quick eye.

A bright flash followed, a crash, and the rocking swell of crushed timbers. And then, fast and thick, upon the startled waters, the hill beyond, and the half-sunken trees, fell down the fragments of destruction. Fragments of the doomed brigantine rose into the gloomy air—then pattered on the river's face in terrible hail. And when the bright sun arose on the ensuing morn, gilding the turbid Connecticut, there floated from the silent river the mangled remains of two men, blackened, mutilated, and scorched by fire, yet in death they seemed to clench each other, and interlock their limbs. They were Mattakan, the Sanop of the Dead, and his enemy, Captain Pierre.

The Pequod had avenged his Outesie.
CHAPTER XVII.

FATHER AND CHILD.

When Monoma returned to her islet-lodge, accompanied by Robin Ball and Gabriel St. Elmo, Marie was sleeping upon her sylvan couch. Monoma would have approached her quietly, but St. Elmo’s impatience could not be restrained. He rushed to the side of the slumbering girl, and, sinking on his knees, murmured her name. Marie started.

"St. Elmo!" she cried, and then, with a low cry, sunk back upon the couch.

"Oh, Father in Heaven! I have killed her!" cried the youth wildly, clasping the maiden’s hands. But Monoma, with her gentle ministrations, was instantly at hand, and, under her care, Marie soon awoke again to animation. Nevertheless it was apparent that, in her weak condition, all undue excitement was fraught with danger, and St. Elmo was accordingly banished immediately to the outer lodge which had been once used by Tisquotam. Here he bore patiently the reproaches of Robin Ball for his ill-advised conduct in so rashly approaching the young invalid.

"An’ it were Bob Ball," cried the bluff sailor, "no better sense could be expected. But for you, monsieur, to my mind it was a shame to frighten the poor young body so woundily."

"I know I am an ass—a brute—and worse than the heathen savages themselves," returned St. Elmo, with perplexed contrition. "But, Robin Ball, when I looked upon that sweet maiden slumbering so quietly, I lost all thought save the desire to hear her voice in greeting of my poor name."

"And so you would fain frighten her into dumbness forever," quoth Rob Ball. "Beshrew me, but such things have been where the Christian’s voice has been lost, only by reason of great alarm like that."
"Oh that I had heeded the counsel of the Indian girl!" cried St. Elmo, bitterly bemoaning his rashness. "She bade me take caution when I approached."

"Ah, indeed! what a princess is that!" exclaimed the Englishman; "a gentle and comely maiden, with a step like a fawn, and movements as graceful as a dolphin. Oh, that a heathen land should boast such a miracle of maiden beauty!"

"Ho!" cried St. Elmo, smiling in spite of his previous alarm, at the sudden enthusiasm manifested by his comrade. "By St. Denis, you talk like an enamored swain, instead of Robin Ball."

"And if I be enamored of so dainty a damsel as yon red-skinned maid," answered the sailor, nothing daunted, "twould not be the first of my land who wedded with a dusky princess. By my troth, but this huntress, or witch, or whate'er she be, is quite as comely as the queen Pocahontas, whom Master Rolfe brought to England with him, ere I set sail on my last voyage."

"She who saved the life of your countryman, Captain Smith," remarked St. Elmo.

"The same—a notable princess and daughter of a great king in the Virginia country," responded Robin Ball. "But, by my troth, monsieur, this witch o' th' woods would shame the Princess Pocahontas herself."

"She hath plainly bewitched thee, poor Robin," cried St. Elmo, as he rose quickly to greet the Indian girl, who now stepped lightly from the lodge. The sailor, on his part, became silent at once, contenting himself with following with his glances every motion of the graceful maiden.

Monoma soothed her protégé to sleep once more, and commanded St. Elmo, with a sweet decision, that he should attempt no more rash surprises.

"Let the white braves now sleep!" said she, pointing to a pile of soft skins which lay in a corner of the outer wigwam. "To-morrow the white bird will sing in the ears of her friend."

And then, with a glance at St. Elmo, which told the youth that the shrewd maiden already guessed the secret of his love, Monoma bade the white man good-night. But long after she had departed, to watch beside Mary, Robin Ball, who immediately regained his volubility, kept himself and companion
awake by converse concerning infidel princesses and Indian queens won by the valor of British adventurers, and leaving their heathen homes to dwell in the far-off "merrie England" of their bold lovers.

On the following day Marie recovered from her agitation, rejoiced to meet the young companion of her ill-fated voyage, conversed long with St. Elmo, and listened with interest to the quaint sayings of Robin Ball. Very soon the two strangers became informed of all the generous treatment which the French girl had experienced at the hands of Tisquantam and his noble daughter, and how the Indian chief had disappeared so suddenly, made prisoner, as was supposed, by white men; at which last piece of information Rob Ball broke out into a malediction against Captain Pierre Dacot.

"It was that villain who did the deed!" cried the Englishman. "Oh that I had his skull here to crack like a coconut with a good quarter-staff! Pray heaven we meet some time."

Robin Ball knew not that the Creole's brigantine was, at this very time, nearing the coasts of America, and that a foe man keener for revenge than himself was waiting in prophetic anticipation of meeting the Creole murderer.

Several days passed, and Marie, whose health was nearly restored, and her spirits manifestly improved by intercourse with the admiring St. Elmo, who made no secret of his love for her, was able to wander forth, well clad with Monoma's beaver-mantle, for the air began now to grow chilly in the mornings and evenings, though the midday glowed with all the intensity of Indian summer's heat. But as the French girl's frame regained its buoyancy, her mind dwelt constantly upon her brother, who, she knew, was but a half-day's journey from the islet, but whose condition, whether happy or miserable, in health or sickness, was quite unknown to her. To behold her beloved Louis and the Abbe once more was now the constant desire of her heart, and Monoma at length proposed to set out for the Narragansett town, and, if possible, arrange a rendezvous where the captive brother might meet his sister, mourned as dead, but in reality so near to him. Robin Ball, who, clad in skins, and decorated with wampum, the gift of Monoma, presented quite an aboriginal appearance,
was to accompany the Indian girl as far as the borders of Massasoit's village, while St. Elmo would remain near the one to whom his every prayer was devoted. But scarcely had this arrangement been made when a new incident changed the plans of all.

Monoma had arrayed herself in huntress-garb, and her faithful squire, Rob Ball, was admiringly regarding her; while Marie, pale but beautiful, stood near them, leaning against St. Elmo, whose arm supported her fair head. Without the hut, a blue haze, the smoky vail of the Indian summer atmosphere, was tinted with sunrise hues, and around the little islet had fallen piles of brown leaves, the first tribute of autumn to the winds which were soon to strip her garments away, and leave her naked, waiting for the wintry grave. As yet, however, the forests were beautiful, and on this particular morning, the usual chilliness was not noticeable, but, on the contrary, a close and sultry atmosphere hung over the land and water, as if a violent tempest were at hand. On this day Monoma and Robin were to set forth for the Narragansett hunting-grounds.

But, as the small group stood in the wigwam, a step was suddenly heard without, and a tall figure darkened the entrance. St. Elmo and the sailor grasped their weapons, but Monoma uttered a cry of surprise and joy, and the next moment was clasped to the bosom of her father, Tisquantam. At the same moment, a tall form, clad in European garb, appeared upon the threshold.

"Where is she? My child!" exclaimed the voice of the new-comer, as he gazed wildly around, and then advanced into the lodge. Tisquantam, supporting the form of his Monoma, pointed silently toward Marie—but already the French maiden had been caught to the bosom of her sire.

"Marie! my beloved! image of my angel-wife! do I again behold thee? Oh, joy, joy! I thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for this crowning mercy!"

Marie, bewildered and almost fainting, yet still sensible of the dear kindred of that voice which called her daughter, clung around the neck of Sieur Luzerne, while a torrent of tears blinded her beautiful eyes. St. Elmo and Robin Ball gazed in wonder at the scene.
But all was soon explained—all tears dried, and every throb, save that of happiness, calmed to rest in the loving breast of the reunited ones. There, amid the quiet of the little islet, and the shadowy forest, while the morning sun struggled upward through the mists, each thrilling story of the past was related; glad voices mingled in the utterance of future hopes, till at length, as morn approached, Monoma suddenly rose, and cried:

"Let us go to your brother, dear Marie. He must share our happiness?"

"The noble boy! to him indeed must we hasten!" cried the Sieur de Luzerne. "At once let us set out."

Tisquantam rose and left the wigwam, but only to repair to the sea-shore, whence he speedily returned, accompanied by his British captain, and a well-armed company of mariners. These were soon marshaled, with St. Elmo and Robin Ball at their head, and then the whole party set forth from the islet and took their way toward the Narragansett village.
CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLAZING STAR.

The morning which followed the strange nuptials of Louis and Sameeda on the moonlighted sea-shore, the princess mingled as usual among the groups of youths and maidens who joined in spirit and converse before the lodge of Massasoit, where gathered the old men and children of the tribe. But Sameeda gave little thought to light word or gayety. Her heart was like a rose filled with rain; and often during the day tears would fill her eyes, as she murmured, half unconsciously, her lover's name.

Once a dark cloud covered her spirit, for she beheld Sakanto enter her father's lodge, and feared lest the watchful eye of the medicine-man should read her secret. But the Indian's eyes, as he passed, were fixed upon the ground, and when he again came forth, he greeted the princess smilingly, and spoke a pleasant word, unusual to his silent mood. So Sameeda grew cheerful again, and turned away, to think of her cherished Louis.

A hunt had been appointed for the day, and Massasoit, Sakanto, and the young white brave, were to follow the same trail. Together they pursued the flying deer, driving their arrows into his reeking breast—together they chanted the loud hunting-song that called the squaws of the tribe to bear the slain quarry to the lodges—and together, when the sports were over, they returned to the village, and sat down to smoke the evening calumet.

But when the general feasting was over, and the light of burning pine-knots began to gleam from one and another of the huts, Louis directed his steps to the sea-shore to meet his beloved Sameeda. One day more were they to tarry among the red-men, and then, through the unknown wilderness, shape their course for the homes of distant white men. Louis
hastened toward the lonely trysting-place, but had advanced
not far ere he met the priest Claude, who grasped his hand
and whispered hurriedly:
"Son Louis! I dread there is danger abroad."
"What fear you, Abbe Claude?"
"My son! the craft of the savage is beyond our scrutiny.
Tell me why yon lodge of Massasoit is illuminated, and why
those grim warriors stand like sentinels around the door?"
"'Tis but a feast, good Father Claude—a banquet of the
royal chiefs, to which we, as captives, can not be bidden.
Sakanto spoke this day of it to Massasoit as we followed the
hunting-path together."
"Ah! Sakanto! I fear that dark savage!" said the old
man. "He hideth deep cunning in his busy brain. But why,
my son, hath not Sameeda quitted her sire's lodge to meet us,
as she promised, by the seaside?"
"Let us hasten thither, Abbe Claude! Doubtless Sameeda
there awaits our tardy coming. There together, father, we
will invoke Heaven's blessing on our purpose, and take coun-
sel, so that the morrow's noon shall behold us far on our
southern way, where the settlements of our race can protect
us against all the power of Sakanto or Massasoit."
"But, my son, hear me! The princess has not yet left the
king her father's lodge. I watched it during the twilight, and
beheld her figure pass within—and there, also, Louis, was the
dark medicine-man!"
"I will go thither, then," cried the young man. "I will
demand to behold my wife!" But the good Abbe checked
his rash footsteps.
"Stay! it were death for either of us to enter the king's
lodge unbidden. But look! a warrior leaves the lodge! He
comes toward us!"

As the priest spoke, a plumed chief emerged from the wig-
wam of Massasoit, and advanced toward the spot where the
two pale-faces stood. Passing suddenly before them, he
delivered his message in a measured voice:
"Massasoit bids his white brothers to the banquet!"
Then, wheeling slowly, he walked away in grave silence.
"We must follow," cried Louis. "It is but one of their
rude festivals. We have naught to fear, and there shall I
behold Sameeda!"
"Heaven grant that no evil is in store for us!" answered the priest, shaking his white locks.

And, treading in the footprints of their plumed conductor, the two captives entered the presence of the sachem Massasoit. The lodge was redly illumined by a score of pine torches, which flashed their flaring light upon the dusky chiefs assembled around the seat where sat their savage king at the head of the lodge, glittering in wampum and war-paint. Sakanto stood beside him, and on either side of the wigwam a line of Narragansett braves smoked their pipes in solemn gravity. Near her father stood the Princess Sameeda, holding in her hand a rude drinking-vessel. Her eye brightened as it marked her lover's entrance, and the goblet trembled in her grasp. Sakanto and Massasoit exchanged looks, and the Abbe Claude fancied that some hidden meaning lurked in their regards.

"Let the white chiefs sit," said the Indian king, and then dropped his eyes to the ground. Silence then reigned throughout the lodge, every warrior fixing his keen gaze upon Sakanto.

"Let the white father smoke the pipe of peace!" said the medicine-man, and gave his calumet into the hands of Abbe Claude.

The priest trembled, for he noted an expression in the cunning Indian's face that boded some hidden design, and he saw likewise that no pipe was extended to his young country man. At once the thought smote his mind that some treachery was intended toward Louis, and he turned pale, as he placed to his lips the pipe of Sakanto. But, aware that all eyes were upon him, he recovered himself, and, breathing an inward prayer, looked calmly around upon the dusky groups that lined the wigwam.

Massasoit raised his head, and beckoned his daughter toward him.

"Let the heart of Sakanto the wise be made glad!" said the sachem. "Let Sakanto drink of the draught which the child of Massasoit has prepared for her sagamore husband!"

Sameeda's cheek flushed, and Louis, as he looked upon her fancied that a tear glittered in the eyes of his beloved; nevertheless, the maiden knelt and presented the cup, which she
held to the medicine-man's lips. Louis clenched his fingers tightly together, and half muttered an impatient word, as he beheld this action on the part of his betrothed wife. Sakanto received the cup, and swallowed a deep draught of the liquor which it contained. Then, returning the goblet to Sameeda, he said, gravely:

"Let the daughter of Massasoit bear her father's cup to the young white brave. It is Sakanto's greeting."

Louis rose to his feet, and Sameeda's eyes now glistened with pleasure, for the transfer of drinking-vessels was accounted a mark of high honor at an Indian feast. She approached her young husband, and knelt gracefully before him.

"Drink!" she murmured.

"Hold, my son! drink not!" gasped the old priest, pressing the youth's arm.

Sakanto scowled.

"My father, there is naught to fear! He has himself drank of this cup."

from Louis, as he lifted the goblet to his lips.

But Sameeda's face suddenly changed its clear expression, for she had caught a glance at Sakanto's countenance, and beheld it lit with a demoniac triumph as he watched his rival. A sudden inspiration seemed to flash through the brain of the princess, and ere a drop of the liquor which half filled the goblet had reached the lips of Louis, her hand was extended, and plucked away the cup.

Sakanto sprung to his feet, and all the braves arose, while the white men gazed with appalled looks on the darkening countenances around them.

"Sameeda!" cried the sachem Massasoit, in a harsh tone.

The princess made no answer. She half reversed the goblet, and permitted its contents to escape slowly. Then, holding it forth in the glare of the torchlight, the brave girl pointed to its bottom, where glittered a couple of white bones.

"Does Sakanto give his brother to drink of the adder's poison?" she said, calmly. "Has the white brave a charmed life, that he shall fear not the serpent's tooth?"

And, as the light flashed upon the cup, Abbe Claude and Louis saw that the white bones at its bottom were the venomous fangs of a "attlesnake."
The dark cheek of Massasoit suddenly paled, and his firm lip quivered like that of a woman. He had arisen from his throne, and now stood beside Sakanto, who, with a fiendish smile wreathing his lip, and a fierce glare in his eyes, regarded the young white captives. The medicine-man was furious at the failure of his attempt to poison his rival; for it was he who, in the moment of his quaffing the first draught from the goblet, had conveyed into it the serpent’s teeth.

"Poison!" cried Abbe Claude, and dashed the calumet which he held upon the ground.

"Poison!" murmured Louis, his eyes resting upon the princess. "By thee—by thee, Sameeda?"

A terrible pain darted through the youth’s brain, and his blood rushed coldly to his heart as he, for an instant, suspected that his wife had been privy to the plot against his life. Sameeda divined his thought, and an unutterable woe sent the blood back to her heart in a chilling, sickening flood. She tottered forward, and, losing memory of all save her husband, cast her arms about his neck.

"Sameeda is innocent!" she cried; "Sameeda is the wife of Louis! Sameeda is faithful!"

"I believe thee, my sister—my bride!"

He clasped her to his heart, forgetful of Sakanto or danger. He gazed into her loving eyes, and, pressing his lips to her brow, drew her closely to him till their two hearts mingled in quick pulsations.

"Come with me! Away, my husband! Sameeda will go to the white man’s lodges. Come!"

Alas! the senses of the princess wandered, and, breathing a long, shivering sigh, she sunk insensible upon her husband’s breast. Louis knelt on the ground, supporting the form of his wife, while Abbe Claude cried out to the braves, who, with Massasoit, were now crowding near:

"Back! ye have murdered her! Back, or Heaven’s vengeance will assuredly come upon all this tribe!"

"The warriors paused, for the white sage spoke as if inspired. But Sakanto laughed, and advanced to meet his rival. At this moment a great noise, as of bending trees, was heard without, and a great clap of thunder suddenly reverberated through the heavens."
The torches flared brightly upon the scene within the wigwam. Massasoit leaned upon his war-club, as if feeble, for the sudden fainting of his child smote the sachem's heart. The warriors, grouped around, gazed upon the medicine-man, who alone seemed unmoved. Abbe Claude kneeled beside Louis, who was supporting his Indian bride, endeavoring to recall her to consciousness.

Again the terrific thunder sounded without, accompanied by quick flashes of lightning, beneath which the torch-glare paled. Abbe Claude began to pray aloud, uplifting his arms to Heaven.

The Indians, as they listened to the thunder, and beheld the vivid lightning, and heard the low voice of Abbe Claude invoking the Great Spirit's protection, felt a superstitious awe steal over their minds—all save Sakanto, who threw back his plumed head and laughed scornfully.

"Why does the white sagamore waste his breath? Sakanto will not harm the old man, but he will have vengeance upon the young pale-face who would rob him of Sameeda. Is it not so, Massasoit?" he asked, appealing to the king.

Massasoit groaned, and bowed his head.

"Thus will Sakanto punish all his enemies!" cried the medicine-man, emboldened by the king's assent.

"The Great Spirit will not permit the wicked to triumph!" answered the Abbe Claude, using the Indian-tongue, while he rose gravely to his feet. Meantime, the lightning continually flashed into the lodge, gleaming on the red-men's forms, and sizzling like fire on the priest's white forehead. "The Great Spirit will avenge the blood shed by his red children. He will utterly destroy the tribes, and give their hunting-grounds to those who live not like wild beasts, and betray not the innocent."

Massasoit shuddered at the white father's words, but Sakanto laughed, brandishing his war-club.

"The red-men are as the sands of the sea-shore in number!" cried the arrogant medicine-man; "the Great Spirit himself can not destroy us, for we are too many! Let the white prophet be silent. He speaks lies!"

"Though ye were countless as the grains of dust upon the mountains, yet hath the Great Spirit ways to destroy ye always that ye know not of!"
"The white liar shall die!" cried Sakanto, furious at the bold words of the priest.

A succession of loud whoops were now heard without the wigwam. Immediately a warrior rushed into the circle, with every mark of astonishment and fear upon his countenance. Behind him followed Tisquontam, attired in the full costume of a chieftain, and leading by the hand his daughter Monoma. At their backs came the Sieur Luzerne, Robin Ball, and the young merchant-captain, while several stalwart warriors, heavily armed, appeared at the lodge-door.

Massasoit, as he beheld the strangers, preceded by the well-known Tisquontam, was struck with the fear that the Iroquois had become a traitor, and was now bringing the pale-faces to avenge the fate of the emigrants. The sachem, nevertheless, hesitated not to make a gallant show of resistance. He sprang to his feet, and, with a single glance, summoned every red warrior to his side, and then, fixing his eyes upon Tisquontam, said calmly:

"Has the Iroquois taken up the hatchet? Is he now upon the war-path?"

"We are friends," returned Tisquontam quickly. "The pale-faced chiefs come to the lodge of Massasoit to smoke the pipe of peace."

"Ugh!" said the Indian, relieved of his apprehension.

But Sakanto's ominous voice was now heard:

"The pale-faces are liars!" he cried, savagely, and a low response ran around the groups of savages.

"They are friends to the Narragansetts!" answered Tisquontam. "They wish to bury the hatchet. This chief of many winters has come to the lodge of Massasoit to seek his lost son, who is a captive, and who now stands by the daughter of the red chief."

Saying this, Tisquontam pointed to Louis, who, with Sameeda clinging to his bosom, looked wonderingly around.

The princess had recovered from her swoon, and her gaze tremulously followed that of her lover. At this moment a low cry was heard at the door, and the maiden Marie, who had been left for better security in charge of St. Elmo, without the entrance of the wigwam, darted past the Iroquois, and sunk upon the breast of Louis, who opened his arms to receive her.
This new interruption caused silence for a moment in the lodge, which was broken by Sakanto.

"What does the white squaw among warriors?" he cried.

"Is the Narragansett sachem a dog, that his lodge should not be respected?"

"Let Sakanto listen and be wise," answered the Iroquois.

"The white bird hath found her mate. It is the brother of her heart, and this is the father of the captives, who seeks his lost children!" And Tisquantam led the Sieur Luzerne toward Massasoit, whose noble features expressed a quick interest in the event.

But Sakanto, divining in a moment that the generous nature of the Indian king was moved at the words of Tisquantam, now frowned upon the Iroquois, and then addressing the warriors, exclaimed, angrily:

"May the curse of Hobbomocko rest upon the Narragansett who heeds the words of an Iroquois! May the curse devour all who listen to the cunning words of a pale-face! Sakanto will save himself!"

Uttering these words, the medicine-man sprang forward from the circle of warriors, and grasping suddenly the hair of Louis, who, folded in his sister's embrace, and impeded likewise by the clinging arms of Sameeda, could offer no resistance, dragged the young man violently to the ground, and lifted his hatchet for a deadly stroke. All the demoniac spirit of the wicked Indian gleamed in his eyes, and assuredly it seemed that at the very moment when sister and father were at his side, the youth's hour had come. Massasoit grasped his club, and Tisquantam and Sieur Luzerne sought to rush forward, but the medicine-man triumphantly regarded them, conscious that he could deal his murderous blow ere their feet might advance a step toward him. But a power mightier than Sakanto was now abroad, whose fearful presence was suddenly attested. The first sound of the hurricane was rising on the shore, sweeping the high plain on which the Narragansett village was situated; and, even as the medicine-man poised his hatchet for the blow, the appalling roar of the storm was heard without. The light roof of Massasoit's wigwam was uplifted by the blast, and its thatched fragments swept away like the dry leaves of a tree in the autumnal gale.
Then, as all eyes turned toward the sky, a terrific chorus of wild cries was heard from beyond the lodge, mingled with the howl of the wind, which had swept onward in its destructive career.

But it was not the cries of horror and fear from the Narragansetts without, nor the fierce sound of the hurricane's approach, that caused every red-man's eye to remain fixed, and made the bold brow of Sakanto to blanch, while the tomahawk trembled in his nerveless grasp. It was a spectacle of ominous character that appalled them.

A glorious yet terrible phenomenon was presented to the shrinking gaze of the Narragansetts. Across the western skies, from horizon to zenith, stretched the blazing length of a comet. Its fiery glare streamed down into the roofless lodge. There it hung, an awful phantom in the lurid heavens, menacing ruin and death to the world. With one accord Massasoit and his terrified Indians rushed from the lodge, forgetful of all save the immediate horror of the sight above. Sakanto released his hold of Louis and staggered after the king.

All the people of the village had now crowded before the sachem's wigwam; affrighted groups of warriors, women, old men and children. A dismal wail went up from all, for each feared an individual fate, presaged by the dread master of the skies.

Some threw themselves prostrate upon the earth, hiding their faces in the grass; some leaped and ran wildly about; others, with bloodless cheeks and gasping breath, clung to one another, gazing, spell-bound, upon the object of their fear.

"Save us, oh Sakanto!" cried Massasoit, as the medicine-man followed him to the door. "Let the Great Spirit's wrath be averted!"

And all the Narragansett people echoed the words of their sachem:

"Save us, oh Sakanto!"

The medicine-man seized his bow, and fixed an arrow in its string. Then, winding around the shaft a wampum amulet, which he took from his breast, and yelling a wild incantation, he shot upward, toward the star of fire. The Indians awaited the result in superstitious awe, but no effect appeared to follow their sagamore's action.
Massasoit cast himself upon the sward, rolling his eyes anxiously around upon the faces of his cowering braves. At this instant Abbe Claude advanced from the lodge, and almost instinctively the invocations of the multitude addressed him, for they knew that the white prophet's wisdom was great, and that he discoursed of the moon and stars. Sakanto himself made way for the priest, though he ceased not to mutter his own pow-wows and mysterious incantations.

But the blazing star did not recede—its light streaming balefully over forest, plain and waters. Abbe Claude paused in the midst of the red warriors at the spot where Massasoit had sunk to the ground, and, standing beside the king, gazed with reverence upon the awful manifestation of his Maker's handiwork in the far-off deeps of space.

But when the good father beheld the medicine-man affix another arrow to his bow, in order to repeat his useless magic, he could no longer remain silent.

"Forbear, ignorant and presumptuous!" he cried. "Tempt not Him who made yon star, to hurl it upon His rebellious creatures! Behold in yonder sign the token of Manitou's wrath against your blood-guiltiness. Lo! the words which I spoke so lately are now made sure by the power of the Great Spirit. Pestilence, and war, and desolation shall come upon ye! Your land shall be possessed by the strangers, and ye shall be scattered before them as the dry leaves are blown before the winds. Tremble, and repent!"

With these words, Abbe Claude passed beyond the groups of shuddering Narragansetts, and joined his young countryman, Louis, who, with Sameeda and Marie still clinging to him, had left the wigwam, and now stood at some distance, surrounded by Tisquantam and his friends. Then arose from the tribe a spontaneous cry, which had scarcely subsided ere Massasoit began solemnly to chant the death-song; for the sachem felt that Manitou had spoken by the white sagamore's mouth.

And as that monotonous death-chant arose from all the warriors and old men, Tisquantam, the Iroquois, led the way for his friends, from the Narragansett village, their path illumined by the blazing star that shone luridly through the murky air. Once Sameeda looked back, to gaze upon her
father, but the voice of Louis whispered in her ears, and she hurried on at his side.

Well, indeed, was it that the Iroquois hurried away his companions, and that, ere another night, the reunited friends and relatives were safely embarked on board the galloon, far away from land. For the comet had been the forerunner of the hurricane and earthquake, and the next evening occurred that fearful convulsion of nature which, as we have related, hurried the Creole, Captain Pierre, to the doom that he afterward met at the hands of Mattakan. And ere many moons passed away, the words of Abbe Claude became yet more fearfully verified. Pestilence came upon the Indian land, and of the great Narragansett nation the twentieth man alone survived. Sakanto fell one of the first victims to the terrible plague, which had doubtless been communicated to the savages by some of the articles plundered from the emigrant-ship. Be that as it may, however, it is certain that, afterward, when the Plymouth settlers were first encountered by Samoset and other savages, they learned how their coming had been heralded by a blazing star, regarded by the Indians as an omen of war and pestilence. The pestilence which smote the red tribes was the small-pox.

Massasoit lived on as sachem among his reduced tribe, till long after the coming of the Pilgrim Fathers; but his daughter, the wild bride of the stranger, dwelt with her husband in the distant French settlements of Canada, and slept at last by his side near the great waters of Niagara. There, too, tarried St. Elmo, espoused to Marie, with Monoma, who had learned to love Robin Ball, and under whose sway the rough sailor became gentle as a lamb. Tisquantam himself chose to remain near the seaside, though yearly, at the Moon of Falling Leaves, he visited his child and her pale-faced friends. And when, at length, the English settlers made their homes on the Narragansett shores, no red-man proved more faithful to their interests than did the once-kidnapped Iroquois.

THE END.
MADGE WYLDE:

THE

YOUNG MAN'S WARD

CHAPTER I.

PARADISE SQUARE.

We lived in Paradise Square—Nan Briggs and I. Everybody knows where that is now, thanks to the kind offices and good works of the men who, several years ago, took their charity into its degraded precincts.

But at the time of which I write, few ever ventured into those gloomy haunts, except the utterly degraded, the starving and altogether wretched, who had been dragged lower and lower into vice and infamy, and finally landed in Paradise Square. I am not about to enter into any description of its appearance, or of its miserable inhabitants—God knows I have not any desire to call up more memories of that time than are absolutely needful to my story.

It is enough to know that when fate flung me there, the "Old Brewery" flourished as in its most iniquitous days—riot and murder walked openly there—hunger and crime fought for dominion over the lost souls gathered within it, and there were no good angels to fight upon the other side.

In the darkest corner, and in one of the most miserable rooms of all the dark dens in the struggling row of decayed houses, dwelt old Nan Briggs and I.

She was not my mother—thank heaven for that! She had no claim upon me nor I on her. My mother died in her room, and Nan had kept me with her from that time; perhaps to further ends of her own—possibly from one of those undefined impulses of humanity which sometimes actuate the most hardened and degraded.
Who I am, I never really knew—I never shall. When drink had made Nan good-natured, she used to tell me that my mother was a "real lady;" but want and misery, perhaps sin, I cannot tell, had brought her down to Paradise Square to die. There she did die, and old Nan kept her for the sake of a few valuables—a gold cross and ring, a broken ornament or two, which still remained to her—relics of a time gone by, of which, during her last hours, she raved brokenly, but without throwing any light upon her history.

I can remember when she died. I remember many things she taught me, although I was but a little child. During her illness I learned to read out of an old book that appertained to Nan, who pronounced "larnin' a fine thing," and prophesied that one day I should be a great lady.

My poor mother died at last, though, in her cross humors, Nan used to tell her it took her a great while, and they buried her—where I do not know—ask the city council where paupers are put. My mother found rest at length, and whatever her sins may have been, I have no fear to leave her in the hands of Him "whose judgment is not as the judgment of men."

For a year after her death—at least I think it must have been about that time, although I had no means or knowledge of keeping count—I swept the street-crossings. All day I wielded my broom on busy old Broadway, watching the splendid carriages go by, and the magnificently dressed ladies—who never would see me, however urgent I might be—saunter past; peering in at the great windows of the shops; sharpening my hunger by staring at all manner of delicacies in the confectioners' casements; forgetting my chilled limbs by marveling at the beautiful sights on every side, or trotting up and down the pavement to keep the blood from freezing in my shrunken veins.

When night came, I carried home to Nan my day's earnings. Sometimes they consisted only of a few pennies; but occasionally a tiny bit of silver gleamed out among the coin, and when the old woman saw that, she would clutch it with a terrible specter of a laugh, praising me as a bright, honest girl. Sometimes I was so unfortunate as to receive nothing, or my little store would be wrested from me by some sister
sweeper, stronger and wickeder than I, and under such circumstances Nan used to beat me; but I do not remember that I cared much for it—indeed, the most brutal treatment would have been preferable to the loathsome caresses she occasionally bestowed upon me in her fits of maudlin intoxication.

She was terribly filthy; so, I suppose, was I; but I thought very little about those things. One duty Nan would insist upon, but it was because it was for her own benefit. My hair was very long and singularly black; she made me smooth it carefully every morning with an old brush she had by some means become possessed of, and which had once evidently been devoted to household purposes, and leave the tresses to stream down my shoulders, hanging far below my waist in a waveless, heavy mass. I believe Nan and I occasionally battled over that interesting ceremony; for my superabundant locks were a source of great annoyance to me, inasmuch as certain other young Bohemians were accustomed to pull them unmercifully, and the newsboys had an aggravating way of shouting, “There goes wild Madge,” whenever I passed with my black hair streaming out in the wind. But my singular appearance gained me many extra coppers, as Nan well knew—and Nan was very acute where her interests were concerned—therefore I was not permitted in any way to change it.

So I swept the crossings day after day, while my long hair grew longer, and I waxed thin and tall, till I must have been twelve years old, or somewhere about that age. I do not suppose that I was any better than the degraded children around me; but I recollect that no fear of a beating would induce me to tell a lie or commit a theft, though Nan often warned me that if I did not learn “to prig” I might expect a terrible punishment.

I had nothing to do with the little imps of my own age; I hated them, and they returned the sentiment with interest, taking their revenge by shouting names as I passed, flinging mud at me, and assailing me in every way that their miserable fancies could suggest; but sometimes old Nan would sally out from some unexpected corner where she had lain in wait, and scatter my foes to the right and left, giving me a final cuff as she drove me into the house, by way of teaching me to avoid quarrels in future.
After all, I have to thank old Nan—in her way she cared for me as well as she was able. She was hardly human, either in mind or body—a mass of ignorance and uncleanness—but I do believe that somewhere in her anatomy she had once possessed certain womanly impulses, dwarfed, crushed, and altogether blighted during her long, sinful life.

But a change awaited me in the midst of that want and wretchedness, though I suppose I had no warning of its approach—it is people of a higher grade than street-sweepers who can afford or understand the luxury of presentiments. But a change was at hand, and this was the way in which it came to me:

I was one morning standing at the corner of Broadway and one of the cross-streets, watching the busy crowd that swept heedlessly past like the varied shapes of a phantasmagoria, when a young man reined his horse up to the curbstone where I stood, and, dismounting, flung the bridle to a ragged boy and entered a shop near. I stood looking at the noble animal as he champed his bit impatiently, tossed his proud head, and scattered the specks of foam over the torn coat of the urchin who held him. Several moments passed, and I, careless of everything else in my delight at the impatient movements and restless spirit of the horse, remained motionless on the curbstone until his rider again appeared.

He hurried by, of course, without noticing me; but my eyes fastened themselves upon his face with an interest and degree of observation which would have impressed those features upon my memory for years—even in that depth of ignorance in which all my faculties were locked, I had a wild admiration for every thing beautiful that crossed my path.

He was still a mere youth; but his frame was so slender and lithe, his face so full of pride and boyish grace, his garments so tasteful and rich, that if I had ever heard of kings, I should immediately have decided that he must be one.

The chill spring wind swept through my thin garments, blowing my hair about my face; but I was unmindful of the cold, and stood watching him as he took the bridle from the boy’s hand, and flung him a piece of silver as his reward.

He laid his hand upon the glossy neck of the horse, put one foot into the stirrup, and was just giving a vigorous
spring which should place him in his seat, when a loaded omnibus drew up suddenly in front. The horse started, gave a quick plunge, and would have thrown the youth under his feet had I not sprung forward and caught the bridle in my hand, holding it firmly in spite of the animal’s struggles, until the rider could extricate himself.

I was unconscious that I had done any thing worthy of praise, and was greatly surprised at the encomiums which all around bestowed upon the act. I heeded no one else, however, when he turned toward me with his quick, flashing glance.

“My brave girl!” he exclaimed, his haughty face softening into a smile so bright and beautiful that it seemed to bring all the charm of early boyhood back to his features; but he was very pale, and his right arm hung motionless at his side. “Here is some money,” he continued, in a fainter tone; “take it; I can’t stop, for I find that I have sprained my wrist—had it not been for you I might have been killed outright.”

“I don’t want the money,” I replied, quite grieved that he should have offered it to me. “Old Nan can’t beat me for not having taken it, because she won’t know I could have earned so much.”

For the first time he really looked at me, and with a glance of astonishment either at my singular appearance, or my unexpected refusal of the money.

I must have been a strange-looking child. My complexion was dark, sallow from unwholesome food and ill health; my eyes of a deep blue, appearing unnaturally large from the attenuation of my features, and the contrast with my long, black hair that floated loose over my neck and tattered cloak.

“Who is old Nan?” he asked, suddenly.

The question surprised me! Every body in our alley knew Nan Briggs, and most people feared her. It never occurred to me that the rest of the world could be ignorant of her existence.

“You don’t know Nan?” I said wonderingly; “why, I have lived with her for ever so long.”

“Very possible,” he replied, with a light laugh, “but I never had the honor of hearing her name before. Is she your mother?”
I shook my head, and the tears came into my eyes; I never could think of my lost parent without crying.

"My mother was a lady," I said, indignantly, for I had always prided myself upon that fact of which Nan had informed me, and held myself better than my fellow-beggars in consequence—"but she died a great while ago."

"Have you any friends?"

"I've nobody but old Nan; she whips me sometimes—but I don't mind that—she says it's good for children."

He muttered something to himself, and his countenance changed.

"I cannot stay now," he said. "Come here to-morrow, you little wild Indian—if I am not here, come again."

He attempted to mount his horse, but grew very white, and leaned against a lamp-post for support.

"Halloa, Amory!" exclaimed a young man several years older, halting opposite; "what the deuce is to pay here?"

"I have hurt my wrist confoundedly," he replied. "Suppose you ride my horse home and I will get into an omnibus; I feel very weak."

His friend complied, and I had a consciousness, by the way, that the youth turned from me as if he did not wish the other to observe that he had been conversing with me. I did not marvel theret—I do not now—I have learned that it requires great courage to brave the world's sneer!

"Remember what I told you, children," he said, turning toward me again after the horse and its rider had disappeared. "You are an odd figure, I must say—how comes such a looking bird with those feathers?"

He hailed an omnibus, and, with a parting glance, as if to remind me of his command, entered it and was driven rapidly from my sight.
CHAPTER II.

A GREAT CHANGE.

No more, that day, did I sweep the crossings. I walked down the crowded thoroughfare completely oblivious to everything around. Several times I brushed against ladies, who pulled their rich garments away with harsh words, as if there had been fear of contagion in my very touch. At last I sat down upon the stone steps which lead to St. Paul’s stately church, and the afternoon had worn away before I stirred.

What my thoughts were I cannot tell—a strange jumble, doubtless; I know I often had such as perplexed me sorely.

I went home that night with no money; and Nan’s good humor was not increased when she learned what a sum I might have earned; I was, of course, too wise to have told her, but she heard the circumstance from an old ragman who, unseen by me, had witnessed the whole proceeding. It is very probable that I might have had another beating to record, had not her anger been appeased by my telling her that I was to meet the gentleman on the following day.

I was only dispatched to bed without having received my accustomed crust; but I soon forgot hunger and cold in recalling the wonderful event of the day, and looking eagerly forward to the morrow.

I had no project—no idea of what might happen, as a less ignorant child would have had; to me, even the thought of again seeing and speaking with any human being so elegant and marvelous as that youth, was dream enough.

Famine and cold had often kept me awake, but never so long as did those vague fancies which followed me into my dreams, and lent them a beauty they had never known before—as far removed from the dull misery of my existence as would have been some wonderful Eastern tale.
The next morning I was stationed on the corner long before the appointed hour; but I waited in vain—the stranger did not appear. I was going away quite overcome with grief, when some one touched my arm.

"What do you want?" I asked, sullenly.

"Do you live with old Nan?" questioned the voice.

I turned quickly and saw an elderly man in a livery—I learned afterward it was so called—standing beside me.

"Yes, I live with her," I replied; "and I caught the gentleman’s horse," I added, for it occurred to my mind that he had been sent in search of me.

"You’re the very one I want then," he continued; "Master Easton couldn’t come out, so he must needs send me, and a nice errand it is, I don’t think! You are just to follow me, you young blackamoor—at a respectful distance, mind, though, for I don’t care about being seen in this sort of company."

Without a word I obeyed him, careless of his rudeness, following in his footsteps a long distance up Broadway, until he went down the basement-steps of a large, magnificent house. He bade me stay in the hall, and went up stairs.

In a few moments he returned and again ordered me to follow him. I ascended the stairs, passed through a broad hall, which looked more grand than my vague ideas of heaven, mounted another staircase, and entered a room in the upper story. I paid no attention to its splendor, for before me, on a low couch, lay the young stranger.

"So, here you are!" he exclaimed, throwing down a book he had been reading. "Well, we must make a change in your appearance before any one else sees you. Rollins," he continued to the man, "have somebody find her a dress. Tell them to wash her and make her tidy; then ask my aunt to come here."

The man bowed respectfully, darted a look of disgust at my appearance, took me out and consigned me to the hands of a wondering and indignant housemaid.

In an hour I was led back to that magnificent room neatly dressed, my face clean, my hair smooth and shining, but still falling in heavy masses about my waist. I shrunk back at the threshold, for a lady was sitting there, and near her stood a proud-looking girl, who surveyed me with unqualified disdain.
The young gentleman bade me advance, and his voice reassured me.

The lady regarded me for an instant through her glass, then exclaimed:

"I don't wonder you were struck, Easton; upon my word, I believe she's a gipsey. What is your name, little girl?"

"Madge Wylde," I answered, unawed by her manner, for I was not timid after the first moment of surprise.

"A very fit name," she said. "Would you like to live with me, and learn to read and sew?"

"And wait on me," put in the girl; "you said she should, mamma."

"Yes, yes, my dear," returned the lady quickly, for the youth on the sofa made a hasty movement; "that can be easily settled hereafter. Would you like to live here?" she added to me.

"If old Nan is willing," I replied; "but if you don't pay her, she will get me away from you. Don't let her do that—oh, don't!"

"You need not be afraid," said the boy. "Be a good girl, and try to learn everything you are bid, and old Nan shall never have you."

He whispered a few words to the lady, who replied aloud:

"You are such a willful creature—however, have your own way! Indeed, I dare say we shall find the little thing quite useful. Louise," she continued to the girl, "arrange your cousin's cushions; he is not comfortable. I am grateful, Easton, that you escaped with a sprain and a slight lameness."

"We have to thank that little sprite for it," he said, smiling at me.

Quick as she had spoken, and before the lifeless-looking girl could obey her mother's command, I sprang forward and settled the pillows in a more comfortable position.

"I think you will find her sufficiently forward," was Miss Louise's comment; but her speech received no response, and there was something in her cousin's eyes that checked any further display of temper.

"You must excuse Louise's petulance," said the lady, after an instant, catching his glance; "she does so love to do everything for you herself—she is even jealous of me—I never saw any one so tender-hearted."
"I am very grateful to her," he replied carelessly, and changing his position with a yawn. "How tiresome it is to be shut up in the house—this morning has seemed like a week!"

"But this child"—said the lady, as if suddenly returning to a consciousness of my presence. "Rollins must go with her to her home, pay the horrid creature she has lived with her price, and get her away. We leave town so soon that she can obtain no clue to our whereabouts, if she repents."

"I should not think she would be likely to do that," added the young girl.

The cousin glanced at her again.

"She looks like one of Murillo's pictures," he said; "her head is exquisitely shaped."

The girl darted a spiteful glance at me, and laughed outright, but her mother interposed between the two.

"She had better go back at once, had she not, Easton?"

"I think so, madam. I must tell Rollins to learn everything he can about her."

"Oh, I've no doubt you will hear some wonderful romance," rejoined Louise; "perhaps she is an enchanted princess."

"She looks like one," replied her cousin coolly; "such an out-of-the-way face—really it is quite refreshing to see something so picturesque and original."

The lady rose and rung the bell, as if anxious to put an end to the conversation. The man who had conducted me to the house appeared in answer to her summons, and was ordered to go with me to my old home for the purpose of bargaining with old Nan concerning my departure.

"Don't leave the child," said the youth. "Pay the old hag whatever she asks, so that there may be no more trouble about it."

The man promised implicit obedience, and took me down stairs again to the housemaid, who put on me a pretty bonnet and shawl, and then we set forth.

Old Nan had no objection to parting with me, provided she was paid her price. Indeed, she generously gave me my mother's cross, a moment after demanding to be paid its full value, patted my head while she vowed that I might thank her and the bringing-up she had given me for my good fortune, and allowed me to depart.
Nan and I met no more. From that day my destiny took unto itself new paths, spreading out in a far different direction —whether for happiness or misery the future only could tell.

I returned to that stately mansion and its haughty occupants, almost stupefied by the suddenness and magnitude of the change which had come over me. Of course, I did not speculate as an older person would have done; but I was full of strange, wild thoughts, and among others would come recollections of my mother's death, and the dismal room where her life went out, intruding themselves upon me in the rich chamber where I sat, like beggars entering a festal hall.

I was startled at the grandeur around me; I thought there were many Madge Wyldes beside me as the mirrors reflected my image. The soft carpets seemed never meant to be trodden—every thing was so gorgeous and beautiful that I could not believe it real. But, young as I was, and dolefully ignorant, too, something told me that Louise was watching my amazement with scornful pleasure, and I carefully repressed it.
CHAPTER III.
MY NEW HOME.

Three days after, we left the city, and for the first time in my life I enjoyed the delight of riding in a carriage. I went in the vehicle with Mrs. Amory, her daughter and nephew, although at first the lady had been at a loss where to put me. It was Easton's decision that settled the matter, as it appeared to decide every thing in which he chose to interest himself.

"You do not mean her to associate with the servants. She is to be brought up a companion for Louise—a sort of usefully useless ornament to your boudoir; therefore keep her where she may learn good manners—though they seem natural enough to her."

So I went in the carriage with them. I can look back upon no season of such keen enjoyment as that in which I then reveled. I had never been in the country before, and our way led along that most majestic river of our New World, every step revealing some unexpected beauty and marvel, filling my eyes with tears and my heart with emotions painful from their very sweetness, until I leaned back in my seat sick, and faint with excitement.

I knew that we were going to Mrs. Amory's country-seat, where she intended to pass at least a portion of the summer, and my poor, undeveloped soul panted with joy at the thought of spending whole months among the green trees and beautiful flowers. I was not noticed a great deal, though, when, several times, I clasped my hands and uttered some ejaculation of astonishment or admiration at the varied scenes presented to my gaze, Easton would look smilingly at me, and the languid lady, long past admiring any thing, would say:

"Is not her enthusiasm delicious? so out of the way and piquant!"

Miss Louise occasionally indulged in a few words of con-
tempt, or a little sneering laugh; but somehow her cousin always checked her rapid insolence or merriment, and I was allowed to indulge my excited feelings in any way I saw fit.

We rode all day; then the young lady chose to fancy herself ill, and we were obliged to spend the night at a little town whose name I do not remember. The next morning Amory proposed to his aunt that we should pursue our journey in the steamboat that touched there, and she at once consented.

I shall never forget my emotions as we drove down to the landing and went on board of the boat. Since then I have seen noble ships of every nation upon the broad ocean—have looked on all that is grand or lovely in our country—all that is famed or wonderful in the old world—but nothing ever awakened such feelings as I experienced when I felt myself gliding smoothly over the waters in that graceful boat.

Miss Louise graciously gave me her bag and several books to hold, while, at her mother's request, her cousin offered her his arm for a promenade on deck. Mrs. Amory retired to the cabin, and I was left to gaze in silence on the beautiful views which every moment opened in new loveliness before us.

How I longed to stand upon the summits of the mountains rising so blue and distinct in the distance—to let myself gently down among the foam-crested waters and float softly along after the white-winged birds skimming about us like shadows. Heaven appeared very near those lofty peaks; and all my life I had had such wild fancies of going thither in search of my lost mother.

The boat swept rapidly on, and in a few moments we reached the landing where we were to leave it. We again entered the carriage, passed swiftly through the little village and along the smooth road, until I saw the jutting wings and lofty chimneys of a large house upon our right hand.

It proved to be our place of destination; for, quitting the highway, we passed through the great iron gates, up a winding drive, bordered on either side with tall trees that interlaced their branches overhead, sometimes losing sight of the house and river altogether; then, upon reaching a sudden rise of ground, the gray roof would loom up again, and the bright
waters dance in the sunlight, while my heart leaped at the sight of them.

The house stood upon an eminence, built of dark-gray stone, with spreading wings and broad verandas, perfectly covered with fragrant vines just bursting into bloom. A smooth, broad lawn swept from the steps down to the beginning of the avenue; on the right hand was an immense flower garden, while at the left and back a fine old wood, stately with primeval pines and hemlocks, spread down toward the river.

I could catch glimpses of the waters from the veranda, sweeping away in a succession of beautiful windings until a sudden curve and jutting cliff shut the last gleam from view, miles and miles above.

The interior of the dwelling was in keeping with its surroundings. A great hall divided it in the center, widening in the middle to an arched room, where a sparkling fountain threw up its spray, and fell with a sweet, ringing sound into a marble basin below. Glass doors, at the further end, gave egress to a lawn corresponding with the one in front, giving beautiful glimpses into the old woods, while near the entrance of the hall a vast marble pile rose in fanciful windings—I could hardly believe it to be a staircase.

There were many spacious apartments, crowded with all the luxuries that wealth could provide or a refined fancy suggest. Pictures lined the walls; beautiful statues, from which I shrank as if they had been spirits, were grouped around; and wherever the eye turned, it fell upon objects of almost fairy-like loveliness. My course of life soon became settled. I was regarded half as a pet, treated kindly, provided with pretty garments, taught such things as it was necessary I should learn, together with a few showy accomplishments; yet made all the while to feel that between me and my benefactor there was an immense gulf, over which I could never cross.

A portion of each day was spent in Mrs. Amory's dressing-room, sometimes following the bent of my own inclinations, looking at books of engravings, or playing, childlike, as my fancy suggested; at others, subject to the caprice of Louise, who was at one moment kind and good-natured, the next so
irritable and exacting that I could do nothing to please her.

She was completely spoiled by her mother's indulgence; accustomed to the gratification of every caprice, however extravagant and ridiculous it might be, so that it was not perhaps altogether her fault that she was growing proud, haughty, and vain; for, under the best and most consistent government, she would always have been a weak, frivolous character.

Easton Amory remained several weeks at Woodbrook, then he left us quite unexpectedly. From him I always received kindness and attention; although, after a time, he ceased noticing me much in his aunt's presence, as it was evidently unpleasant to her.

But very often I encountered him in the grounds; then he would sit down by me, and talk in his reckless, dashing way, apparently not regarding me as a child; and, indeed, though ignorant, and younger than Louise, I was, in many things, her superior—I felt it even then.

The governess, who, I learned, had been on a visit to her family, now returned, and she gave me lessons daily, when those of Louise were over; as she was a kind woman, and devoted herself assiduously to my improvement, I made a progress that was perfectly astonishing; and was soon quite the equal of Louise in all such studies as it was considered proper for me to pursue.

I was passionately fond of pictures, and, whenever I could steal into the gallery, where a fine collection hung, I spent hours in gazing upon them, weeping often, and talking to them as if they could understand my love and admiration.

I had received no instruction in drawing, but I used to sit for hours with a pencil and paper, making sketches, which, though rude and ill-formed, showed more than an ordinary degree of talent for one so young.

I was sitting in a window-seat, in the upper hall, one day, busily occupied with some marvelous production, when Easton chanced to pass.

"What on earth are you about?" he asked.

Had it been any one else who made the demand, I should have hidden the sheet; but much as I loved him, I did not dare, for I was a perfect slave to his wishes; so I replied, faintly:
"Nothing at all."

"Nothing at all," he replied; "you certainly have a very industrious way of working at nothing. Let me see what you are at—nonsense, child, don't be afraid!"

He took the paper from me with a manner he had even in the slightest act, which clearly showed how entirely he had been accustomed to have every one around submit to his least wish.

He looked at the drawing for a moment without speaking; claimed others which lay in my lap; glanced at those in the same unusual silence; while I sat watching him with anxious eyes, as if sentence of life or death hung upon his lips.

"Who taught you?" he asked, at length; "Miss Western, I suppose."

"Nobody taught me," I replied; "I only do them because I like to, oh, so much."

"Whew!" he exclaimed.

"Don't take them away from me," I said, "please don't—it doesn't do any harm, you know."

"I should think not, indeed—why you are a little live genius—I suppose you know what that is."

"Of course I do—I was reading about one the other day."

"And you are taking pattern after him?"

"I don't know what you mean—please give me my picture, Easton, I want to finish it before somebody calls me away to do something else."

At this moment Mrs. Amory came up stairs. I made a movement to seize and hide my drawing, but Easton held it above my reach.

"Aunt," he said, "look at this."

She took the sketches with her usual stately deliberation, looked at them for a moment, and said, complacently:

"Louise really draws very well; she has immense talent in every thing she undertakes. Did she give you these, Madge?"

"Louise!" exclaimed Easton, almost contemptuously.

"Excuse me, ma'am, but she could not draw so well to save her soul."

"Who did them then?" she asked, in a tone which betrayed her rising displeasure. "They exhibit talent, to be sure, but Miss Western couldn't have drawn these crude things."
"There sits the artist," replied Easton, pointing to me, laughing a little bit, with a certain degree of exultation in his tone.

Mrs. Amory gave me an angry glance, while the color shot into her pale cheeks.

"Who gave you lessons?" she asked.

"No one, madam," I answered. "Please don't be angry—indeed, I didn't mean any harm."

She gave me the drawings without a word, and turned away, but Easton did not follow.

"My friend," said she, looking back, with one of her sweetest smiles, "I thought you promised to make some calls with Louise and me—have you forgotten?"

"By no means—I am quite ready. But we must have Miss Western teach this young sprite; she certainly exhibits great talent."

"Very well, it shall be attended to; but just now—"

"Ah, here is Miss Western," pursued Easton, heedless of his aunt's impatience, as the governess came down from the school-room. "Look at these drawings," he continued, placing them in her hand; "you must take great pains with her—perhaps we have found an artist."

"Do you wish me to give Madge lessons in drawing, madam?" asked the governess, turning toward Mrs. Amory, with her accustomed composure.

"Of course, of course," replied Easton, before his aunt could speak; "that is what I am saying."

Mrs. Amory looked excessively annoyed; but there was something in Easton's face which she did not choose to contradict.

"I have no objections," she said, coldly. "Madge, I do not like your choice of a seat; please remove yourself to the school-room—or no, you may go to my chamber, and wind the silk that lies on the table."

As Easton Amory handed his aunt down stairs, I heard him laugh in a tantalizing way, and she replied to it in a low, quick voice; but I did not catch the words. I knew there was something amiss, although I hardly understood what, for Miss Western was regarding me with the scolding look she often bestowed upon my face.
"Oh, Miss Western," I exclaimed, impetuously, "isn't it nice! I want to begin right away—this very moment."

"You have the silk to wind first."

"That won't take any time at all, you know, and I want to begin so bad."

"Bring the skeins into the school-room," she replied, kindly, "as soon as you have wound them. I will give you a first lesson."

"Oh, I am so glad! Let me kiss you, Miss Western, let me kiss you right off."

The governess bent down to receive my caress, and, standing up an instant, with her hand lightly placed on my head, she continued:

"Do not forget to be grateful to the kind friends among whom you have fallen—let it be your study to please them—and above all, thank God heartily for his goodness."

"I do," was my reply; "I pray for Easton and all of them every night."

"Mr. Easton," suggested the governess, gently.

"No," returned I sturdy, "he gave me leave to call him only the other day."

"When you are a little older you will learn that it is not proper," she said.

"But I like it best."

"I think Mrs. Amory would not like it," she replied, "and you would be sorry to displease her."

I did not understand at all why it could offend Mrs. Amory, but I was too busy with my proposed studies to think much about the matter.

After that I received instruction daily; and, before many months, Miss Western predicted wonderful things for me.
CHAPTER IV.
THE YOUNG STRANGER.

EASTON AMORY left Woodbrook soon after that little scene; and as, during several weeks following, the house was crowded with company, I was allowed to wander about at my pleasure.

I received lessons regularly from Miss Western, but Louise could hardly be induced to look at a book. Young as she was, a love for every species of dissipation was the strongest feeling in her nature. Her soul was not more than half-formed; such faculties as she possessed would never be more than partially developed, but she loved flattery and excitement, and was never in good humor unless her mother permitted her to be dressed and among the visitors.

I was, of course, sent for but seldom. Occasionally, Louise would take it into her wise head to use her embroidery-frame, and would have me at hand to sort and wind silks; but that was from a desire to make me feel my dependence. I knew it would have pleased her had I revolted, and been coerced into obedience; so never, by word or look, did I betray how, child though I was, such servitude galled my proud spirit.

At other times, after my lessons were over, I devoted several hours to drawing; then Miss Western would insist upon my leaving it; so I would take a book—choosing those fullest of pictures—wander off into the depths of the woods, and, seeking some favorite thicket, lie and lose myself in that delightful companionship, while the summer light flickered through the branches of the old trees, danced merrily upon the greensward, or lingered, like a blessing, upon my forehead, that ached from the strangeness and intensity of thoughts which I had no power to comprehend.

One day I had nearly reached the boundaries of the estate; for, on that side, Mrs. Amory's lands terminated with the woods. I had been annoyed by one of Louise's displays of temper, and, as soon as I could release myself, had hurried off into that lonely retreat.
I threw aside my bonnet, let my hair stream once more after its old untidy fashion, which was no longer permitted, and raced wildly up and down, scaring the rabbits from their retreat, and chasing the butterflies as they glanced past. I tired myself fairly out at length, and lay down upon the grass to rest, idly twisting my hair round and round my fingers, after a habit I had, and lazily watching the sunbeams kiss the tree-tops.

At last, a step sounded faintly on the green turf; but I did not look up, supposing it to be one of the men employed about the place.

"Really," said a voice I did not know, "I wonder if the grove is haunted? This is the first time in years that I have set my foot here, and I didn’t expect to be treated to the sight of a wood-nymph."

I sprung to my feet at once, and stood looking at the speaker in astonishment, but without any fear.

He was a youth, apparently about the age of Easton Amory, but unlike him in every respect. He was rather pale than fair, with large, gray eyes, a mouth that spoke mingled sweetness and determination, and soft, wavy, brown hair, of that peculiar golden hue so seldom seen, but which is so beautiful. I have seen such hair but once since; then it adorned the forehead of genius. The face was not handsome until he smiled; then it lit up so brightly, and his great eyes were so soft and varied in their expression, that it lent his features something nobler than mere beauty.

"You need not look at me with so much wonder," he said, "nor be at all afraid."

"Afraid!" I repeated, with a considerable show of contempt in my tone; "why should I be?"

He laughed a little, in subdued sort, and stooped to pat a beautiful black and tan dog, that lay at his feet, panting with the fatigue of a sharp run. From his manner I suppose he thought me older than I really was, for I was tall and slender, and my hair a woman might have envied.

"I thought at first you were my cousin Louise," he continued; "but when I saw you running like a deer, I knew you could not be; she is altogether too languid and fine for such exertion."
"Your cousin Louise!" I returned, staring at him in new astonishment. "How comes she to be your cousin?"

"Very easily; but did you never hear me spoken of?" he continued, with much earnestness. "Indeed, I am astonished at my aunt's neglect. I wish she could see me here this moment—what a way she would be in!"

"Who are you?" I asked, abruptly, quite losing sight of the principles of courtesy, which Miss Western so diligently instilled into my mind, in my wonder at his sudden appearance and singular words.

"You speak like the lady of the manor," said he, laughing at the air I had unconsciously assumed; then, taking off his cap, he made me a low bow, and added: "Be it known to you, worshipful maiden, that I am your unworthy servant, Walter Stuart."

"And you are Louise's cousin?"

"I have that honor; and add thereto that of being nephew to her serene mother, whom I conclude you are visiting."

"No," I replied, not caring how quickly any one learned my real position; "I live with her—she took me away from old Nan Briggs, and I have been here ever since."

The smile faded from his lip, and a graver expression stole over his face; somehow, young as he was, it seemed more natural to it than the merry look it had worn a moment before.

"Better have left you with old Nan!" he muttered. "How came she to find you?"

"I saved Easton from falling off his horse, so he persuaded his aunt to take me," I said.

"Hum!" was his doubtful rejoinder. "I remember hearing that my delectable cousin had met with an accident."

"Is he your cousin, too?" I asked.

"We have the happiness to hold that relationship to each other," he replied. "Do you think him handsome?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes; much handsomer than you," I replied, angrily, so irritated by his tone that I grew hot and red.

"We won't quarrel about looks, Miss—what shall I call you?"

"My name is Madge Wylde."
“A very appropriate one! They did not give you the name also, I conclude.”

“Certainly not. I suppose I may have a name as well as other people.”

“I should be sorry to prevent you,” he replied, with the same mock respect, which left me undecided whether to be vexed or to laugh. I sensibly decided upon the latter, and as he joined in my mirth, we soon became excellent friends, falling into a long and interesting conversation upon a variety of topics.

“Do you live near here?” I asked, at length.

“The next place to this; those are our grounds upon the other side of the wall.”

“Why do you never visit your aunt?” I questioned, boldly.

“It does seem strange that I should live so near such charming relatives, and never see them,” he returned, in his old bantering tone.

“Why do you?” I persisted.

“Because I don’t wish to,” he answered, bluntly; “nor would they thank me for my visit, if I made one. Indeed, I suppose if Mrs. Amory could see me here this moment, she would order the dogs set upon me.”

“What have you done?” I asked, looking suspiciously at him.

“So it follows that the fault must be mine, does it?” he asked.

“What was it?” I persisted, with all the earnestness of my age.

“Nothing at all; I have not exchanged a word with any of them since I was a little child.”

“Then you can’t have any quarrel with them,” I argued.

“I am afraid you are not very worldly wise, Miss Madge,” he said, smiling. “I can not explain the affair to you, although you do demand it in such an imperious way. Mrs. Amory and we have not been friends for years. Unless you wish to have your ears soundly boxed, I would not advise you to mention my name.”

The conversation passed to other themes, and, as was natural at my age, very soon became as confidential as possible.

“Do you come here often?” he asked.
"Almost every day, when it is pleasant. I like to be in the woods, don't you?"

"Indeed, I do. I fairly live in our part of this old forest. Come with me, and I will show you my work. We must often have been neighbors without being aware of it."

I followed him to the low wall that separated the grounds, and sprung over after him, before he could make a movement to assist me.

"Upon my word," he said, "you can jump like a deer."

"Louise says it isn't ladylike," I said, blushing a little, for I was a sensitive child, in spite of my wild spirits.

"Never mind her; it would be a good thing for her to run about a little, and get some color in her wax-doll face."

"She says that it is aristocratic to be pale."

"With all my heart; and she shall be as aristocratic as she likes, only do not let her make you so."

"She is not likely to try it," I replied. "But where is your favorite place?"

"Very near here. Come this way."

We took a winding path through the woods, and soon came to a rustic summer-house, covered with blossoming vines and overhung by the great trees.

"What a pretty place," I said.

He conducted me into the arbor. There were low seats covered with moss—a fantastic table of the same rustic manufacture as the summer-house—books and papers were scattered about, all making up the most charming retreat possible to imagine.

"Do you like it?" he asked.

"Oh, it is beautiful! There is nothing like this in our woods. I wish there was—such a pretty place to sit and read."

"I hope you will come here very often, then, and bring your books," he answered.

"Oh, may I?"

"Of course you may, you little fairy."

"Then I will. You will see me almost every pleasant day."

"Very well; I am sure that I can not see you too often."

"And you live so near here?" I asked.

"Yes; you can see the house through the trees."
"But why don't you ever come to visit your aunt?"
"Because we are deadly enemies."
"How can that be?" I said, wonderingly. "Relatives are never enemies."
"Are they not?" he returned, laughing scornfully. "I think they are very seldom any thing else."
"But it isn't right," I expostulated.
"Nor is it my fault, little Madge. But don't talk about them; I never wish even to think of their names. I would not have set foot in those grounds, but Brownie, my dog here, ran away, and I heard her moaning so piteously that I thought she must be hurt, and came after her without thinking where I was."
"What a pretty dog she is," I said. "I found one last week, a nice little thing, and Mrs. Amory told me that I might keep it, but Louise pretended that she was afraid of the poor doggie, and screamed so every time it came near her, that they made me send it away."
"Horrid little wretch!" he murmured. "Never mind, Madge; you shall come here and play with Brownie whenever you please; see, she has taken a fancy to you already, and Brownie seldom does to strangers. She pays you a high compliment."

The little creature had leaped into my lap, and, after licking my hands for a time, curled herself comfortably up, and went fast to sleep.

"And you come here often?" I inquired.

"Oh, yes; I study here; you will always find me when the weather is fine. Do you like picture-books, Madge?"

I was insane about them, and when he put a volume of colored engravings in my hand, the measure of my delight was full. He talked very kindly to me, evinced an interest in my childish conversation, and explained the pictures to me, until I came to the conclusion that he must be very learned indeed—almost as wise as Easton; of course, no one could quite equal him in my mind.

We stayed there until late in the afternoon. I had entirely forgotten that I might be wanted in the house.

"I must go home, now," I said, when I remembered how long I had been gone. "Miss Western will scold me if I don't."
"Who is she?"
"The governess, you know."
"I did not; is she nice?"
"Oh, very nice; I love her so much."
"Well, if she is kind to you, all right."
"I will lay Brownie on the moss," I said; "she will sleep there as nicely as possible. Good-by, now, Walter Stuart; what a pretty name you have got."
"Thank you, Madge; good-by. I shall expect you very soon again."
"May I come to-morrow?"
"The sooner the better. If I am busy, you can amuse yourself with a book."
"Oh, I won't disturb you; I'll be as still as a mouse."
"So be it! To-morrow then, little fairy."
"Yes, I'll come to-morrow," and away I bounded, quite delighted with my new friend.
CHAPTER V.

MIDSUMMER HAPPINESS.

Several days passed without my again seeing Walter Stuart, for I was kept so busy in the house that I found no time for my accustomed rambles in the woods. Louise detained me, constantly waiting upon her—she had a slight illness, which she magnified, as she always did her ailments, into sickness, and I was kept near to gratify her whims.

I think Louise disliked me because I so far surpassed her in natural quickness, and, like all mean natures, she never omitted an opportunity of gratifying her malicious disposition.

Among other trials, I was doomed to complete a piece of worsted-work that she had begun—a many-colored dog, holding a basket of flowers in his mouth, of hues and shapes that would have astonished Flora could she have seen them. The girl took delight in watching me and finding fault with my progress, forcing me to pick out the stitches a dozen times in succession, though, on each separate trial, they had been set exactly as she directed.

Passionate and fiery I was, but I had early learned that nothing vexed Louise so much as to see me perfectly unmoved by her taunts; so I heeded her ill-humor not at all, singing gayly at my work, and looking quite happy and unconcerned, though, all the while, I was ready to spring out of the window with restlessness and impatience.

Her blue eyes would fairly blaze, and her delicate complexion grow purple with passion, and several times she struck me with her whole force, calling me by every insulting name that her mean imagination could suggest.

So the weeks passed, and the beautiful midsummer came on. Woodbrook put on all its beauties, and to me the place was like Paradise.

I missed Easton exceedingly, and his absence was a source
of great grief to me; but I never mentioned his name, though
night after night I lay in bed crying with a sort of vague un-
rest; and whenever I could gain access to the picture-gallery
unperceived, spending hours before his portrait—talking to it,
asking counsel of it, calling it my best, my only friend.

When the clustering vines were most fragrant, the flower-
gardens in their richest beauty, the depths of the great wood
greenest and most lovely, Mrs. Amory was seized with a sud-
den fever to depart. I heard her speak of a trip to Saratoga,
and learned from Miss Western what and where it was, watch-
ing with silent wonder the preparations that went on, and
marveling how she could tear herself from that beautiful spot.

Louise was to accompany her, and I feared I should be
compelled to go; but certain that the ill-natured girl would
force me to act contrary to my desires, I occasionally whis-
pered in her ear of the happiness she would enjoy, and left
her to infer, if she pleased, that I envied her anticipated plea-
ure. So Louise decided that I should remain where I was,
although, once or twice, Mrs. Amory spoke of taking me.

"I won't have her!" said her daughter; "indeed I won't! Peo-
ple will be asking if she is any relation of mine—though,
to be sure, we might dress her in a Turkish costume, and they
would take her for a mulatto—she is black enough, in all con-
science!"

I made no reply, although I was furious. I did not hate
the miserable creature; I felt too strongly her immeasurable
inferiority, and despised her taunts as much as the weak spirit
that instigated them.

So they went away, and Miss Western went to visit her
relatives—I was alone, with the exception of the servants.
But Mrs. Armory saw fit to impose certain restrictions upon
me; she had never quite forgotten her annoyance about the
drawings. She decided, properly enough, that I must be
taught to sew, and the housekeeper was instructed, during cer-
tain hours of each day, to induct me into the mysteries of
needlework.

I was perfectly happy during the month that followed. I
attended to my sewing every morning, and the rest of the day
was at my own disposal; I could read, study, and, better than
all, draw as constantly as I saw fit. I know that I improved
very rapidly; and I was so anxious that Easton should be pleased with my success when he returned.

During those weeks I frequently saw Walter Stuart. When I sought my old haunt in the woods, he would come to the division wall that separated Woodbrook from his home, and call my name. I always gladly obeyed his invitation to visit the summer-house, for I liked him, although I should no more have thought of comparing him with Easton Amory than earth with heaven. He was kind, gentle, pleasant; but, in my mind, Easton was something so superior to any other human being, that it would have been sacrilege to my faith to have compared the two.

"I'll wager my head that Mademoiselle Louise set you at that work," said he, as we sat, one day, in the arbor—he with a book, from which he had been reading to me, and I occupied in embroidering a handkerchief.

"You are quite mistaken," I replied, haughtily; "I am doing it because I wish to; it is for Miss Western."

He laughed mischievously at my irritation, flung his book aside, and began playfully teasing the little dog that, as usual, lay at his feet.

"When is Easton Amory coming back?" was his next question.

"Not at all this summer, Miss Western told me. He will return to college in the fall."

"So shall I, Miss Madge. I don't think he will be hurt with the preparation he makes; he is off on a yachting-exursion with a party of Southerners."

"I should imagine," I replied, "that he would need very little preparation to do any thing he wished."

Walter Stuart smiled—his old, pained smile. I went on with my work, and he looked at me for a long time, then turned away, drawing a deep breath.

"Poor Madge!" he murmured, pityingly. "Poor little Madge!"

"Don't!" I said, while the tears rose to my eyes; "my mother used to say that—it makes me cry."

He stroked my hair softly, as a brother might have done, and his voice took its sweetest tone as he said:

"I wish you knew my mother; I wish you lived with her"
"Where is she?" I inquired.

"Gone to visit a sick relative; she left, unexpectedly, the day after I first saw you. I would not go up, for I had my studies to look after; so I am alone in my castle, monarch of all I survey."

"You must be very rich," I said, "if you own this place; and the house, though not so large as ours, is quite as handsome."

A quick flush shot over his face—his eyes flashed, then grew misty. He rose from the ground, and took two or three impatient turns across the shorn turf in front of the summer-house.

"Some time," he said, at length, coming back to my side, "I will tell you a long story; you are too young now to hear it."

"Is it a very sad one?" I asked.

"I do not know; rather sad for me, on some accounts, yet my mother says that, in the end, the very means employed to thwart my destiny may work me much good."

"I don't see how."

"That is because you do not know the story. But I must not stay here any longer, Madge. I do not suppose I shall come again for a great while. I am going away."

"Where?" I asked, somewhat sorry, yet not much grieved, except that he spoke mournfully.

"I have business away. Shall you miss me, Madge?"

"I don't know," I replied, slowly. "Now some people I don't miss at all, and others I hate to have leave me. Yes, I shall miss you."

"Whom don't you miss?"

"Louise, for one."

"No wonder; the little plague! But now for those you dread to have leave you—it appears I am not of the number."

Easton Amory's name was on my lips, but somehow I could not bear to utter it. There was a feeling in my heart which made me loath to repeat its accents, though I often whispered them to myself.

"Do you mean Amory?" asked Walter, while his lips compressed slightly with their look of resolution. "You need not speak," he continued, abruptly, almost harshly; "those eyes of yours are such tell-tales, they save you the trouble. Good-by, Madge—I am going now."
“Oh, stop! stop!” I exclaimed, as he hurried off, for I felt
that he was angry, although I did not comprehend the reason;
“don’t go so—don’t!”
He turned at my words, and came close to my side.
“What is it, Madge?”
“You are not vexed with me? Don’t go away angry.
Indeed, I shall miss you very much.”
He stooped and smoothed my hair, in his gentle, caressing
way.
“As much as Easton?” he asked.
I would not tell a lie, and I told him “No.” He was not
angry, not vexed, only sorrowful. He looked at me in the
way that always brought tears to my eyes.
“Poor Madge!” he sighed; “poor little Madge!”
He looked wistfully at my forehead, in a manner which,
had I been older, would have told me that he longed to press
a kiss there; but he made no movement to do so.
“Yes, I am sorry you are going,” I said, glancing forward
to the loneliness of the weeks that lay before me. “I wish
people never would go away—it’s very stupid of them, I am
sure.”
He laughed a little, then repeated, more sorrowfully than
before:
“Poor Madge!”
His hand lingered, for a moment, upon my hair, his eyes
looked with an earnest meaning into my own, then, before I
could move or find words to speak from the tide of emotions
that choked me, he was gone, and I sat within the vine-
wreathed arbor sorrowful and alone.
I was very sad for several days. I think I cried many
times, though it would have gone hard with me if I had been
forced to declare wherefore, because I myself did not know.
I thought of Easton Amory, and yearned to see him. I
would have gladly gone out into the world in search of him,
just as, years before, I longed, to go up to heaven and find
my lost mother.
About that time, romances and poetry began to have a
new charm for me—I lived and reveled in the glorious imagin-
ings which they depicted. I idled no longer in the real world
—I formed for myself a beautiful realm, peopled with the
beings of my own fancy, and dwelt there blest in their companionship.

So I lived and dreamed, sometimes sorrowful, sometimes glad—equally unable to assign a reason for either emotion.

In a few weeks Mrs. Amory and her daughter returned, and, for a time, the household resumed its old ways.

It was now autumn; for, after leaving the watering-place, they had spent sometime in traveling. I was growing old enough to discover that Mrs. Amory needed constant change and excitement. She became restless and dissatisfied deprived of those mental stimulants, to which she had so long been accustomed that she could no more have supported existence without their aid than an opium-eater deprived of his baleful, but exhilarating drugs.

Miss Western had also returned, kind and attentive as ever. She expressed her surprise and satisfaction at the improvement I had made, but I do not think Louise shared at all in the latter feeling. She considered it necessary to administer sundry lectures upon the folly of a beggar being reared as I was, and quoted a certain proverb concerning their equestrian tendencies when placed on horseback; but I despised her more than ever.

"You look as much like a Hindoo as you always did," was nearly her first salutation. "Are you sure you haven't some outlandish idols hid away that you worship in delightful secrecy?"

"Yes, I have, but you will never see them," I replied, filled still with my romance and poetry.

"I wouldn't advise you to be impertinent," she said, sharply.

"I only answered your question," I replied.

"You have no business to do that unless you are ordered.

If you look at me like that I'll tell mamma."

"I am sorry if my looks don't please you."

"I shouldn't think they would please anybody," she said, with a sneer.

"They do though," I retorted, pertly.

She had sense enough to know that I referred to Easton, and his frequently expressed admiration of my appearance.

"Leave this room!" she exclaimed, furiously. "If you come here again to-day I'll box your ears."

"
I retired triumphant and exulting, as any other girl of my age would have done, in my victory.

Mrs. Amory waited anxiously for the time to return to the city; she was weary of the country; its repose bored her; and I used to look at her in undisguised astonishment, as she exclaimed against the dullness of every thing and every body around; I would have asked no greater happiness than never to have left that beautiful place which she valued only as conducing to her position and importance.

I had, even at that age, a keen perception of the beautiful —strong artistic and poetic tastes, which, if rightly developed, would be to me a source of great benefit. Miss Western saw all that, and, unlike many others in her position, she was willing to bend her whole powers to the task of developing my faculties.

Her father had been an artist of no mean reputation; she inherited much of his talent, and had received from him thorough and honest principles in regard to art, which she made the basis of her teachings.

But I will linger no longer over these unimportant periods in my history; I only wish to seize and present the features, though it was necessary that I should dwell somewhat upon this season.
CHAPTER VI.

LOUISE AND I.

We were settled in New York.

I was now thirteen, and Louise over fourteen; but in appearance I was her elder, as in all mental acquirements and natural talents I was her superior.

She had a slight, willowy figure, such as American girls often possess, very graceful and elegant, but lacking strength and vigor, and her movements were always languid and indolent. She had light, almost flaxen hair, delicate and finely cut features, but lacking character, and when she was not animated they had a peevish expression which detracted from their loveliness.

As for myself, I do not know if I was handsome—I think not. I was tall and slender, my step springy and elastic; the crimson of health mantled in my cheeks, and I certainly had magnificent eyes and hair; my mouth was never good—it expressed too much resolution, even self-will, to be agreeable in its expression.

We were as unlike in character as in personal appearance; in fact, Louise had very little, while I was only too independent and self-reliant. She was willful, irritable and false. She really had not sufficient energy to be very active even in her aversions, else I should have suffered much more than I did from her tyranny and dislike.

The most skillful masters were provided for her, but she benefited little by their instructions. She had a few showy accomplishments—she danced beautifully—played well, and sung in a sweet soprano voice that lacked expression as much as her face. She had no taste for books; even novels did not please her, unless they were the most vapid and unmeaning records of fashionable life.

As for me, the love of books was one of the strongest pas-
sions—I can use no other word—in my whole nature. Miss Weston's watchfulness prevented my reading works that would have irretrievably injured my mind. I can not be sufficiently grateful to her for that and all the other kindesses which she bestowed upon me during her residence in the family.

The house was constantly filled with company, for Mrs. Amory was one of the queens of the fashionable world. Still young, she had lost nothing of the beauty for which, from her earliest girlhood, she had been celebrated, and her manners possessed a fascination which I never saw equaled except by one other—that was her nephew, Easton Amory.

In appearance, the two resembled each other, and there must have been many similar points in their characters—the same unyielding will, strong passions; all hidden under the charm of that delightful manner, but gaining new force from their very concealment.

I was always in Mrs. Amory's boudoir of a morning; it pleased her that I should sit there dressed in a somewhat fanciful costume, engaged with her netting silks, while she received her guests.

People used to stare at me a great deal, and praise my singular beauty—that always enraged me. Mrs. Amory was sufficiently kind to me—it was her way. She treated me just as she might have done a pet animal—regarded me in the same light that she did the ornaments purchased to decorate her room.

When she found that I possessed good elocutionary powers, she acquired a habit of making me read her to sleep on a rainy Sunday, or after the fatigues of a ball. Many a time have I been called out of bed at four o'clock in the morning, because she had just come home restless and weary, and fancied that the sound of my voice would soothe her. She meant no cruelty by such conduct; it never occurred to her that I could have any will but her own—any feelings but such as she graciously saw fit to permit me to indulge.

A love of admiration was a great weakness in her nature, strong and passionate as it was, and I, always enthusiastic, could not conceal how superhumanly grand and beautiful I considered her. I verily believe that my innocently uttered
flatteries made her more kindly disposed toward me than she would otherwise have been. Very often, when dressed to go out, she would make some excuse for summoning me to her presence, that she might please herself with my artless admiration.

"A really poetic and artistic taste this child possesses," she said to Miss Western, as if in apology for her own weakness; "she certainly has a remarkable eye for color. After a while I must have her design all my costumes—I can judge of their effect so nicely."

A fine use, truly, to have devoted any artistic power I possessed, most assuredly; but it never would have occurred to Mrs. Amory that it could have been better employed than in gratifying her caprices, and I would gladly have done that, or any thing else, to have given her pleasure, for I was very, very grateful to her.

So the winter passed—flew I should say—for verily it had wings!

My life went on smoothly enough, but Louise fretted and rebelled. She longed to be out in the world—the amusements and pursuits proper for her age afforded her no satisfaction. She was in the drawing-rooms a great deal—always exquisitely dressed, and of course greatly petted and admired by her mother's guests.

I think Mrs. Amory perfectly worshiped her. She was the only person, except Easton, whose will had any influence over her. I can not fancy Louise capable of having felt affection for any one but herself. She was often impertinent and ungrateful to her mother. I never heard her speak carelessly, or even look dissent to a wish, that I did not marvel how it was possible when her own, own parent had desired it. Louise would doubtless have laughed at my fancies had I expressed them; there was no such sentiment as reverence in her nature, and, indeed, her mother had so fondled and humored her, that it was to be expected she would have grown as selfish and ungovernable as she proved herself in every act of her life.

I can not write much about that season; no one event stands out in sufficiently prominent relief to make its record interesting.
I did not see Easton Amory, although he was several times expected in town; but, upon each occasion, he sent some excuse instead of coming himself.

He was at college, I knew, and so was Walter Stuart; although, of course, I never heard the name of the latter mentioned. Once I astonished Miss Western quite out of her proprieties, and almost out of her senses, by abruptly making him a topic of conversation as we sat in the school-room one evening while Louise was gone to some fancy ball, given for young persons of her age.

"Does Walter Stuart never visit his aunt?" I asked, looking up from the drawing upon which I was engaged.

Miss Western's book dropped from her hand, and she sat regarding me with an expression of horror and astonishment which convulsed me with internal laughter.

"What did you say?" she exclaimed.

I very coolly repeated the question, while she stared at me more wonderingly than before.

"Is there any thing so remarkable in it?" I asked, at length, somewhat vexed by her manner. "I am sure it is a very natural question to ask, as I never see him here, and know him to be her nephew."

"Miss Madge Wylde," returned the governess, leaning back in her chair, and recovering her wits and breath, "will you have the goodness to tell me where you gained that information?"

"From himself, to be sure," I replied, greatly amused by the commotion I had excited.

"Are you a witch?" asked the governess, laying down her book; "you certainly appear to learn every thing by intuition."

"I don't know how that may be—Easton often told me that I was one; but this morning, Miss Louise informed me that she thought it was my mother who had attained that honor."

Miss Western smiled a little—she was too precise for anything further, but in spite of her decorum and wisdom, she enjoyed any sly hit at other people's follies.

"How do you happen to know Mr. Stuart?" she inquired "tell me at once."
"I have no wish to make a secret of it. I met him in the park at Woodbrooke—he was after his dog, and we had a long talk. I saw him several times, and I like him very well, although not so well as Easton."

"My dear child," returned that kind friend, "Mrs. Amory would be very angry if she knew of this; it must never occur again."

"It was not my fault, Miss Western; besides, how was I to know it was wrong to speak with him?"

"I am not blaming you, only giving you advice as to the future."

"Why does she dislike him?" I asked.

"Circumstances have separated the two families forever, and Mrs. Amory allows no communication between her household and that of Mrs. Stuart. You must respect that command, or you will forfeit her protection at once."

"What parted them?" I demanded, sharply. "I have always wondered what the reason could have been."

"I can not enter into details; indeed, I am not thoroughly acquainted with them, and if I were, it would not be proper to relate them to any one. But remember what I have told you! I shall not mention this conversation to Mrs. Amory, though I shall feel compelled to inform her if I know of your seeing Mr. Stuart again."

"Very well, ma'am, I will remember," was my answer, and there the matter dropped. I returned to my half-finished drawing, and Miss Western again took up her book.

But while I worked, my brains were puzzling themselves, as they had so often done, for a solution to the mystery, though with no more success than usual; and before long Miss Western sent me to bed to dream out the affair at my leisure.

As, about that time, I had taken to composing verses and stories, between a poem that was in my head, and the wonderful mystery, it was long before I fell asleep.
CHAPTER VII.

WALTER STUART.

SPRING came again. I had been a year in my new home. Replete with interest and improvement had that year been to me. Who, to have seen me then, well clad, as much advanced in my studies as most girls of my age, would have recognized me as the street-sweeper of Broadway!

Mrs. Amory's amiable daughter occasionally reminded me of my former existence—dragging its revolting memories into the pleasantness of my new life; but otherwise, there was nothing to recall the darkness of that season.

To my extreme delight, we returned to Woodbrook in the latter part of May. When the carriage rolled along the broad avenue, I fairly clapped my hands and uttered an exclamation of pleasure. Louise curled her lip, but Mrs. Amory looked at me with good-humored contempt—she liked such exhibitions—they were tributes to her might and wealth. I mentally determined that she should never again witness a similar one.

We had only been a few weeks at Woodbrook when an urgent summons called Mrs. Amory back to town, and Louise accompanied her. I knew there was some business connected with their affairs, for I heard Mrs. Amory say so, and likewise that they were to meet Easton in the city.

That latter fact accounted for the petted doll's taking the journey too! How I longed to accompany them; but I think Louise fancied that such was the case, for I was left behind.

When the carriage disappeared from view, I hurried into the woods, and, flinging myself upon the ground, gave way to a passion of tears. But I had one hope left—Easton might accompany them home. So I awaited their return with what patience I could, but was doomed to still deeper disappoint
ment. At the expiration of a week, Mrs. Amory and Louise came, but Easton was not with them. Mrs. Amory looked tired and troubled—something had evidently gone wrong with her, for she appeared quite unlike herself.

A few days after, however, her banker came up to Woodbrook, and was closeted with her for several hours. After that interview, she recovered her spirits and customary manner. The only clue I had to the matter was when Miss Louise danced into my room the next morning, exhibiting a goodly supply of gold and bank notes.

"Look here," she said. "I am going to visit the Livingston girls very soon, and this is to spend as I think proper. Mamma has been miserably cross for a week past—the idea, rich as she is, of being plagued about money! But I know that she and Easton both were, for their affairs are all united, and they quarreled horribly. Heigh-ho!" she continued, throwing herself upon my bed, and flinging the pillows at my favorite cat, "when I marry my cousin, I will set all those trifles right."

She marry Easton! I stooped, under pretense of caressing my poor kitten, but in reality to conceal my face, where a mingling of passion and grief were struggling for mastery.

I made no reply, nor did Louise volunteer any further information concerning either matter.

Louise went to make her visit, and Mrs. Amory accompanied her, full of life, and as magnificently beautiful as ever. I was left behind that time also—Louise was fearful that I might desire and enjoy the visit. Her delusion was a great relief to me. There was nothing I so much dreaded as being forced away from that beautiful spot to the homes of the insolent and great.

The summer passed much as the other had done. I saw Walter Stuart once, but it was no fault of mine. I did not inform Miss Western of this fact.

I had gone down to the river, and sat idly upon the shore, listening to the ripple of the waters, and watching the white sails as they floated slowly past like great birds drifting down the current. I was humming, in a rich but uncultivated voice, a song that I had caught from Louise, when I was startled by hearing another voice take up the refrain, and, raising my eyes, I saw Walter Stuart standing before me.
"I am so glad to see you," he said, holding out his hand with his beautiful, frank smile. "I have been here a week, and, as I leave to-morrow, I was afraid I should have to go without catching a single glimpse of you."

I quite forgot Miss Western's prohibition in the pleasure of seeing him, though I must confess to having experienced an instant's disappointment, for when I heard the voice, a thought that it might be Easton had flashed across my mind.

"You have grown very much," he said. "You will soon be a young lady, Madge—what then?"

"What then?" I repeated. "I don't know what you mean."

"What are you going to do—what are you going to be?"

"Do—be!" I murmured.

The words struck a chill to my heart; they had never before occurred to me. Now, I was bewildered by the suddenness with which they forced themselves upon my mind.

"Don't look so troubled," Stuart said, kindly; "perhaps it was not wise in me to rouse such thoughts in that little head at present—we will forget them."

"No, no!" I interrupted, eagerly. "Let me think—let me think! You can not tell how strangely the words sound to me."

"But I can," he answered, with a sort of impatience, "for I have pondered them long and deeply in my mind. I likewise, Madge, have to be and to do! I am almost a man now, and my decision must soon be made."

"But rich people do nothing," I said. "Mrs. Amory never works, nor Louise, nor Easton."

Stuart stamped restlessly upon some bits of seaweed on the sand.

"Why did you speak of them, Madge," he answered; "do not make me feel bitter and bad hearted to-day. I am not rich. The hour that sees me of age will leave me a beggar, and my poor mother also."

"But you have a great house."

"On my twenty-third birth day we leave it forever, to seek a home where we can best find one. I am very poor, Madge, but richer, nevertheless, than my proud relatives. I have an unsullied conscience, and the love of a mother who is almost an angel."
"Easton is not proud," I said, with a rising of my old impatience, "if you mean him—he is kind and good."

Walter Stuart clenched his hands with sudden passion; his eyes flashed and his lips compressed; but the storm vanished as speedily as it had threatened.

"The last time I saw you, Madge," he said, "I promised that when you were older I would tell you a true story—the time has not yet come, but it soon will! In the mean while, do not let us talk of Easton Amory."

"I must not talk to you at all," I said, suddenly recollecting my governess' commands.

"What do you mean?"

"I was forbidden to speak to you again. I had forgotten all about it in my surprise at seeing you."

My bonnet was off. Walter Stuart stooped, and with the selfsame movement of old, stroked my hair, which was braided smoothly back from my face, repeating—

"Poor Madge, poor little Madge!"

We did not speak again for several moments, and his face grew soft and mournful with thoughts which I could not understand.

"Why do you always call me poor Madge?" I asked.

"Does it offend you?"

"No, not that, but everybody else is always telling me how fortunate I am, how happy I ought to be."

"And are you?"

"Yes, almost always very happy. Are you happy, Walter Stuart?"

"Oh, never mind, Madge; that is a difficult question for any human being to answer."

"I don't see why—"

"You are very young yet, Madge—young, and so innocent. God keep you always the same, little one! But let us say good-by now. When we meet again, each will be older—perhaps wiser."

"Shall you not come soon to visit your mother?"

"She will not be here—she goes with me. She would never have come near the place but for her promise."

"What promise?"

"No matter now. As I said, I shall have a story for you hereafter—time only can tell whether it will interest you."
"Now you puzzle me again," I said; "I can not tell at all what you mean, Walter Stuart."

"You need not know now," he answered, slowly; "time, I suppose, will teach you that, as it must many a thing that I would gladly keep from your knowledge forever. Good-by, Madge, you will not forget me."

"Indeed, I will not. I am sorry you are so gloomy. Good-by, Walter."

"Good-by, little Madge—good-by."

He looked as if there were something he wished to say, but would not, gazing into my eyes as if trying to read my very soul, while his lips moved involuntarily with thoughts that he did not utter.

Suddenly, he turned so as to have a view of the tall chimneys and pointed roofs of Woodbrook, that showed themselves through the trees, and a great change passed over his face. He lifted a hard, stern front, and walked proudly away; as if that old house were some bitter enemy in whose presence he would exhibit neither fear nor pain; but his last look to me was one of kindness. The last words I heard him utter were—

"Poor Madge—poor little Madge!"
CHAPTER VIII.
THE SECOND MEETING.

I had been two years in that house before I again saw Easton Amory. I was almost fifteen then, so much changed from the ragged child he had seen in Broadway, that it would have been difficult for any one to have recognized me as the same.

We were at Woodbrook; his aunt had been expecting him for several weeks, but he so often disappointed her when she looked for his coming, and I myself had so many times wept till I was quite ill with the grief of not seeing him, that I had not, on that occasion, allowed myself to expect him so eagerly—at least, I thought such was the case; probably if he had failed to arrive, I should have shed as many tears as before, although I considered such exhibitions very childish, out of the wisdom which I believed myself to have attained.

He came at last.

I watched from the top of the stairs the meeting between him and his relatives; saw how tall, manly, and proud he had grown; and when they all entered Mrs. Amory's sitting-room, to converse unrestrainedly, I hurried out of the house, weeping passionately over my loneliness.

After all, his coming had brought me to tears—bitter, burning tears. I was shut out from every one—I had no friends, no companions; I could not even approach him whom I worshiped as something high above all other human beings—the one who had saved me from misery and want.

At last I dried my tears, and wandered into the flower-garden, where it was my great delight to walk. The gardener had good-naturedly given me a flower-bed of my own, which I worked with the utmost diligence, and watched my blossoms unfold with all the ecstasy which only a lover of nature can experience.
While I stood there, Easton Amory came down the steps of the terrace, smoking his cigar. My first impulse was to hide myself; much as I had longed to see him, I felt a sudden fear for which I could not account.

He walked leisurely into the garden, and evidently did not recognize me until he had approached quite near to the place where I stood. He looked at me sharply, then the expression changed to one of astonishment, while I remained trembling, unable either to speak or run away.

"Is it possible that you are Madge?" he exclaimed.

I could only look up with a sudden burst of tears; my heart was so full of mingled emotions that they could express themselves in no other way.

He hurried to me and shook my hand eagerly, talking rapidly all the while.

"Why, you little gipsy, you have grown handsome as a picture! How tall you are! and, Phidias! what eyes and hair! Can't you speak, you wild Madge? Aren't you at all glad to see me?"

Oh, so glad, so glad!" I exclaimed, between my sobs.

"You can't think—O Easton! Easton!"

"Well, don't cry then; that is a strange way to show your joy," and his merry laugh enabled me a little to restrain my feelings.

"I know it is very foolish," I said; "but I couldn't help crying—I thought of so many things."

"Of what, you silly puss?"

"All your goodness to me—how you took me away from that dreadful place, and—"

"There, there, don't think of it!" he said, patting my hand kindly.

"I can't help it; I must, you know."

"But I do not like it! After all, it is I who have to be grateful; you know you saved my life."

I dried my eyes at that proud, exultant thought; it was the one act of my life which made me a heroine in my own view of the case.

"How your eyes shine, Madge! Why, what a rosy-cheeked gipsy you have grown!"

Then I laughed quite gayly, for my spirits were always as
easily excited by kindness as they were depressed by a cold look.

"And how do you get on?" he asked.

"So well," I answered. "Miss Western says I learn very fast—and oh, Easton, she has taught me to draw. I work and study as hard as I can."

"That is right; and so you are to be a painter?"

"No, no, I am not such a baby as that. But don't you remember it was you said I had so much talent for drawing? You saw my little sketches—"

"Perhaps so," he said, doubtfully.

"Oh, have you forgotten that?" I exclaimed, with a pang of disappointment.

"No, no, of course not; I only wanted to vex you a little. I remember it very well."

"I am glad you did not forget—very glad."

"You must show me some specimens of your work. What does my aunt say to them?"

"I never showed her any—she would not care for them, you know; she sees so many real pictures."

"And Louise?"

"Oh, she never likes any thing I do. I always put my drawings out of sight when I hear her coming."

"Indeed! then I suppose she is as amiable as ever?"

I did not answer. I was an honorable girl, and would not speak ill of my benefactress' daughter, although I was quite old enough to see clearly her shallowness, her meanness, want of truth and talent.

"You don't say any thing," pursued Easton; "well, I perfectly understand without."

"She was very anxious to see you," I replied, wishing to say something in her favor; "only the other day I heard her wondering if you would never come."

"Many thanks for her solicitude," he said, with a sneer. "I am sorry that I can not return the compliment; nor does seeing at all change the opinion I had formed before."

In my heart I was glad that he did not like her, and yet I pitied her; it seemed a terrible thing to be out of favor with Easton, and I thought how miserable she would be if she could have heard his words.
“How long since you have been here?” I said, my thoughts going back to the time that had elapsed since I first saw him. It seemed like looking down upon another life to review the existence which I had left so far behind.

“Have you wanted to see me also?” he asked.

“Very much; surely, Easton, you can not think me so ungrateful.”

“Now don’t use that word,” he interrupted, with one of his quick changes of humor; “I hate it worse than any other in the English language. If I had to feel grateful to any one, I should want to tear his heart out, and I don’t wish you to hate me, Madge."

“There is not much danger.”

“I think not,” he said, with his proud smile; “I think not.”

“Shall you stay all summer here?” I inquired.

“That depends—I do not know how long,” he replied, absently, then added, “No, not the whole summer, of course, but for several weeks, if I find it pleasant. Shall you like having me here, my gipsy princess?”

“I shall be so happy!” I exclaimed, with my usual passionate abruptness.

“But Louise will torment your life out if I even look at you,” he said, with a laugh.

“I shall not mind her; if you speak pleasantly she can not do any thing to annoy me.”

He gave me a quick, searching look.

“How old are you, Madge?” he asked.

“I shall soon be fifteen,” I replied.

“You look full that,” he answered; “and you are very handsome, Madge—has any one told you so?”

“No; I thought Louise was handsome; I didn’t think I could be with this brown face.”

“Why, you are as bewitching as only a brunette can be,” he returned; “that brilliant skin and rich color are worth twenty times as much as Louise’s baby face; but don’t always drag her into the conversation. I have to see enough of her, goodness knows; I want to forget her when she is out of my sight.”

At that moment Louise appeared upon the steps of the terrace, and looked around as if searching for some one.
"She wants you," I whispered.
"Deuce take her! I hope she will not see me! Is there no place to hide?"

But, as he spoke, Louise's eyes fell upon the spot where we were standing.
"Madge!" she called, sharply; "Madge!"
"What do you want of her?" asked Easton, before I could speak.
"I want her to come into the house," she replied.
"And I want her to stay here," he said coolly, puffing out a volume of smoke.
"Madge!" exclaimed Louise, fairly stamping her foot, "if you don't come here this moment, I'll go and tell mamma!"
"I am coming," I answered, and moved forward.
"Don't go," whispered Easton; what do you care for her mother. I will see that you get into no trouble."
"Please let me go," I said, pleadingly; "I ought to obey, you know."
"Not for long," I heard him mutter; "not for long."
He looked at me eagerly, and with an expression which I did not comprehend.
"Madge Wyldc!" called Louise, "I ask you once more if you are coming?"
"Yes—yes," I said, hurrying on.
"There is no such great haste," Easton said, following me. When we reached the foot of the terrace, he added, "Well, Louise, is the end of the world at hand? You called out as if nothing of less importance could be the matter."
"I wanted Madge," returned Louise, angrily; "she is never at hand when she is needed."
"What do you wish?" I asked.
"Don't speak until you are told!" she exclaimed; "you grow more impertinent every day."
I colored violently, and Easton laughed in a way that aggravated her anger.
"What is wrong now?" he asked. "Dear me, Louise, don't bite your lips so—it is said to be a sign of ill-temper."
"Go up stairs, Madge!" she exclaimed, evidently annoyed that I should be a witness to Easton's raillery.
"Oh, nonsense," returned he; "let her stay here."
"She is to go into the house, I say! and another time, miss, don't let me catch you in the garden—you have no business whatever there."

"Oh ho, that is the head and front of her offending, is it?" said Easton; "oh, poor Louise!"

She was ready to cry with passion, and I said:

"Mrs. Amory gave me leave to go there whenever I liked."

She darted a furious look at me, and wheeled round; her arm struck a vase, placed upon the balustrade; it had not been properly set in its place, and it tottered—was falling directly upon her head, when I darted forward, pushed her aside, and received the blow upon my arm.

I staggered back from the violence of the shock, and Easton caught me, or I should have fallen.

"Run for some water, Louise!" he called; "good heavens, she has fainted!"

I shook my head to show that I was not insensible, but felt too sick and weak to open my eyes.

"Can't you stir, Louise?" he repeated.

"I feel very faint," she said; "I am so frightened."

"You are a fool," I heard him mutter.

He helped me to a seat, and I opened my eyes. He ran into the house and brought a glass of water, which he forced me to drink.

"Are you better?" he asked, anxiously.

"Much; I am not hurt I think."

Louise was just preparing for the hysterics customary with her upon every possible occasion, when Mrs. Amory appeared.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Louise, my darling, are you hurt?"

"Not in the least," replied Easton; "she must needs tumble a stone vase on to her head, but Madge knocked it away. The child's arm must be broken."

It pained me excessively now, and was already badly swollen. Mrs. Amory came toward me and touched it.

"It is only sprained," she said; "Madge, you are a brave girl. Louise, come and thank her."

"For what? I think if you would see if I am hurt, instead of making a goose of her, it would be as well. I am as sick and faint as possible."
“Easton, please assist your cousin,” said Mrs. Amory, 
“while I take Madge to the housekeeper and have her arm 
bathed.”

“She is too weak to walk,” he said.
I saw Mrs. Amory’s angry look.

“I can walk,” I said; “indeed, I am not much hurt.”

“You are a very courageous child,” she began, warmly, but 
checked herself at Louise’s movement of anger; she was evi-
dently divided between her feeling of kindness toward me and 
her fear of some outburst upon her daughter’s part.

“Come,” she said, “you must have something put on your 
armp, Madge.”

Easton followed me.

“Stay with your cousin,” said his aunt; “I will return in 
a moment.”

“Excuse me,” he replied; “I have some feelings of 
humanity. I choose to know if she is injured.”

“I wish she had been killed!” exclaimed Louise. Springing 
from her seat, she swept into the hall, and up the stairs.

“Louise is so nervous,” said Mrs. Amory; “she will be 
oblige to Madge when she has time to think the matter 
over.”

“Do you think so?” he asked, coolly.

“Come, Madge,” she said, impatiently; “come with me.”

She took me to the housekeeper, and my arm was dressed.

“You had better go to bed at once,” Mrs. Amory said; “I 
will see that you have a cup of tea.”

“Oh, let her sit up,” Easton urged.

She made me a sign which I understood, and I went at 
one up to the school-room, where Miss Western condoled 
with me upon my accident, and I chafed with anger and 
impatience.

“You perhaps saved Miss Louise’s life,” said the governess. 

“She said she wished I had been killed,” I replied.

Miss Western exclaimed incredulously:

“Why, Madge!”

“She did! I would kill myself if I had so mean a dis-
position as hers.”

“Hush! hush!” she said, reprovingly. “You must not 
talk in that way. Is your arm better?”
"A little; but it aches badly yet."

"You and I will have a cup of tea," she said; "then you shall lie down on the sofa, and I will read to you."

"You are very good," I answered, the tears rising to my eyes, but my pride gave me strength to keep them back.

It was a long time before my arm got well; I do not think Louise ever forgave me for the service I rendered her.

I suffered a great deal during that visit of Easton's—a season to which I had looked forward with so much anxiety. But I seldom saw him; when I did, it was but for a few moments, and he would have only time to give me a look or a word.

When the day came for him to depart, I was determined to bid him good-by; I was too young to think there was any impropriety in the act. I took my way through the park to the lodge-gates, and waited there until the carriage drove down.

He looked out and saw me, ordered the driver to stop, and sprung from his seat.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "I hunted the house over to find you, and came to the conclusion that Louise must have shut you up."

I shook my head and smiled faintly through my tears.

"Did you come here to bid me good-by, gipsy?"

"Yes," I replied; "I could not let you go without seeing you."

"You are a little angel," he said, kissing my forehead. "By the time I see you again, you will be grown a young lady." He bent nearer and whispered, "Mind you love me as well then as now!"

For the first time some undefined thought made my heart beat rapidly.

"Good-by now, Madge," he said, kissing me again; "good-by, you black-eyed beauty."

"When will you come again?" I asked.

"I shall see you this winter," he answered; "remember, it will be only you that I shall care a straw for seeing."

He bade me farewell once more, sprung into the carriage, and was driven rapidly away. I stood watching until a turn in the road hid the vehicle from view, then I wept my tears dry, and walked slowly toward the house.
I met Louise in the avenue, and she demanded, with her usual imperiousness:

"Where have you been, Madge Wylde?"

"I went to bid Easton good-by," I replied, boldly.

"You are an insolent, good-for-nothing little wretch!" she exclaimed, raising her hand as if to strike me.

"That is the arm the vase fell on," I replied, quietly; "you can hurt it if you wish."

She dropped her hand, and walked away without a word. Perhaps even her dull nature felt a little shame at her own harshness and cruelty.

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CHAPTER IX.

A MAIDEN DREAM.

I did not see Easton Amory until about two years after that time—two long, long years—for he did not keep his promise; some quarrel with his aunt separated them for a season.

I was sitting alone in Mrs. Amory's dressing-room one morning, busily occupied with my needlework, when I heard her voice in the hall, addressing a servant:

"Tell Miss Louise that her cousin, Mr. Amory, is in the library."

My heart gave one bound and then stood still; the muslin dropped from my fingers, and I sat cold and rigid, as if the words had transformed me to stone. I caught the reflection of my face in a mirror opposite—my cheeks were very pale, and my eyes restless and anxious as those of a wild animal seeking to break from its imprisonment.

I heard Louise descend the stairs with her usual listless step; I saw the flutter of her silken garments through the half-open door, and I grew sick with the whirl of passion and emotion which the sight of her roused in my mind.

For the first time I comprehended my own feelings—I was blind no longer—that revelation suddenly dawned upon me,
and my heart thrilled to its new sensations like an amaryllis bursting suddenly into bloom.

I knew that I loved Easton Amory with all the intensity of a strong nature, all the fervor of a will, despotic and timeless as that of a tiger in an Eastern jungle.

If he loved me I did not then think; I could only listen to the voice sounding in my heart, loud and clear, like triumphal music, rousing a host of beautiful visions that came trooping up like a troop of golden sunbeams at summer’s call.

How I got through that day I can not tell. I recollect that when Mrs. Amory entered the apartment, hours after, I sat there so white and silent, that even she observed it, and asked me if I were ill. She bade me lay aside my work and go out to walk, giving me several small commissions to execute.

I dressed myself and went forth into the cold, wintry air that blew refreshingly upon my forehead, restoring me to strength and life. I walked far down Broadway—past the crossing where I had long before met my fate—hurrying on, anxious to feel that I was really awake.

It was quite dark when I returned, and as I went up stairs, Louise opened the door of her chamber and called me in.

“How do I look?” she demanded, anxiously.

I could conscientiously give an answer that pleased her, for I had never seen her appear so lovely.

She was nearly eighteen now, and had, that season, been introduced into society, although somewhat against her mother’s wishes, for her health was not good; but Louise’s persuasions, fretfulness, and determination to be ill unless allowed to have her own way, prevailed over Mrs. Amory’s judgment.

She was already a great belle, owing to her beauty and her reputation as an heiress. She was quite in her element now, going out every night to a succession of gay balls, living only upon excitement, and already as listless and jaded as a woman of forty when the stimulant was for an hour withdrawn.

Her maid had just finished dressing her, and she stood before me flushed and smiling, with a consciousness of her own charms.
Her dress of India muslin, starred and spotted with gold, was extremely becoming to her delicate complexion, and the pearls twined among her light ringlets added to the effect.

"We are going to the opera, and from there to Mrs. Addison's ball," she said, in explanation of her early toilet. "Easton is here, so we shall be very gay for some time."

I left the room as quickly as possible, although she had various trifling duties for me to perform before she would release me.

I have seldom felt so excited as on that night. There was a fever in my veins, lighting my eyes, crimsoning my cheeks, and leaving me without a moment's rest. Miss Western had been dismissed months before, as her services were no longer required; so I had not a single friend to whom I could go for counsel or sympathy. Poor, dear old governess! We never met after her departure for Europe, but I am glad to know that she married well, and in a house of her own found happiness enough to compensate for the trials of her earlier life.

I was alone with my wild fancies, and I paced up and down the long gallery for nearly an hour, without even stopping to lay aside my bonnet.

I heard the door of Louise's chamber open at last, and shrunk into my chamber to avoid meeting her. I waited until the dinner was over; heard Louise ascend the stairs to prepare for going out; and, when she had gone down stairs, I stole into the hall once more.

I listened to catch a tone of Easton's voice, but did not hear it, though Louise's laugh rung up to the landing where I stood, as they passed through the hall below on their way to the carriage.

There was a mist before my eyes so that I could distinguish nothing; once I clasped my hands over them with a quick fear that I was going blind, and before I removed them I heard the outer door close behind the gay party.

I returned to my room and began dressing myself as if for a party. I braided my long hair in a thousand tiny plaits, wound it about my head with knots of crimson flowers, and put on a rich silk dress of the same hue, relieved by bars of white—a recent gift from Mrs. Amory. When I was dressed
I looked in the mirror, and knew that I was beautiful. Never had the consciousness been so strong upon me as then. I was glad—not from any feeling of gratified vanity, but a fierce, exulting joy, for which I had no name.

I went down to the gorgeous drawing-rooms, where the subdued light of the chandeliers lent new richness to the surrounding objects, and flung myself carelessly on a couch.

I must have rested there for hours—my excitement had passed away, leaving me in a sweet, delicious dream, which I had no power to break. A clock in the lower rooms struck ten—at the same moment I heard a key turn in the street door—it opened—there was a step in the hall to which my pulses kept time—the drawing-room door was flung ajar, and Easton Amory entered.

The immense apartments were divided by an arch, supported by marble pillars, back from which swept the folds of a velvet curtain. I was in the shadow of the drapery, lying there perfectly helpless, while that eager step crossed the soft carpet, which gave back no echo under the tread.

He was somewhat changed since we parted; taller, more manly, with a short, black moustache, lending a prouder curve to his mouth and a brighter light to his eyes. He stepped as if born to command—to me he was the incarnation of all that was glorious, almost divine.

He did not see me—he turned to go out. I could not speak—my senses seemed deserting me—I gave a cry, which had been a vain effort to pronounce his name, and almost lost consciousness.

When I came to myself I was clasped tightly to Easton Amory's bosom; his heart throbbed full against my own, his kisses were hot upon my forehead and lips—their fervor had recalled me to life.

I lay very still, my breath coming in quick sighs, while he murmured over me words sweeter in my ear than the tones of an angel.

"Look up," he whispered, in that voice whose melody I never heard equaled, and which thrilled like fire through my veins. "Speak to me, my darling, my bird!"

He raised my head upon his shoulder, and looked with his bewildering eyes far down the depths of my enthralled soul.
I could not stir—there was something in his glance which had a magnetic influence over me, and left me powerless in his embrace as a charmed bird.

"Have you waited for me?" he asked; "have you wished for my coming?"

Again his lips pressed mine—it seemed as if that caress unlocked my tongue, I did not attempt to free myself; I was too happy, lying there; but I answered eagerly:

"Waited! I thought I should never see you again—never! Why did you not come before?"

"I could not, Madge; it was impossible! Do not blame me; I, too, have longed and pined for this meeting. I hoped to see you this morning, but could not ask; so I stole away from that tiresome party, and hurried here without any one's knowing it, certain that I should find my darling. Say, are you happy now?"

"So happy, oh, so happy!"

I spoke only the truth—and in the innocence of my soul there was no thought which could make me fear to acknowledge it.

For some time I could not talk much; but at length my thoughts came back more collectedly, and even I, careless and impulsive as I was, had a feeling that I should not be sitting thus alone with any one.

We walked slowly up and down those great rooms—Easton’s arm encircling my waist—and conversed of many things—every thing that had happened to me during our long separation—my hopes and fears—all that had now settled into a delicious happiness beyond the power of words to express.

"Are they kind to you?" Easton asked at length.

"Yes," I said, "Mrs. Amory is very kind; as for Louise, I never pay any attention to her humors."

"The fool," muttered he; "the little painted doll; does she dare to treat you badly?"

"Not badly; but she is very capricious, and will be only a spoiled child all her days."

"Her life is not of as much worth as the least of your smiles," returned Easton, vehemently; "I perfectly detest the creature; I wish—"
He added something in a lower tone, which I did not understand.

That was a blessed evening to me, although my brain was in such a whirl that I could not taste half its happiness. I was like a sick man who has a cooling draught offered him, and spills it in his eagerness to seize the refreshing beverage!

Easton asked to see some of my paintings; and I led him to one that Mrs. Amory had placed in the parlor, only a few days before—I learned, afterward, as the work of Louise.

It was a forest scene—the original sketch had been taken at Woodbrook, and it was the most ambitious effort I had attempted.

"Did you do that?" he asked.

"Certainly—why not?"

"Only to-day Louise told me they bought it at a sale—mean, little thing!"

"Oh, it is no matter," I said. Indeed, it seemed of very little consequence to me then.

"You have done wonders," he returned; "who taught you?"

"Miss Western, while she staid; since then I have watched Louise's masters while they were doing her pictures."

"You will be a great woman yet," he said, laughingly, "and look down on us all."

"Do you think the day near at hand?" I asked, laughing in turn at his jest.

"She is anxious for it," he continued; "she wants the whole world at her feet, to be petted and caressed by every body."

"No, no," I replied quickly; I only care for—"

"For what?" he asked, when I hesitated. "Speak—speak! I hate unfinished sentences."

"For your approval," I replied; and the answer seemed to please him.

At that moment a carriage rolled along the pavement and stopped before the house. It was very late; we had forgotten the passing hours.

"My aunt!" said Easton. "I must go; if they saw me here they would make you suffer for it."
He clasped me again in a passionate embrace, and then crossed the parlors, threw open one of the windows, stepped into the balcony, and leaped lightly down.

"Good-night, Juliet!" I heard him whisper, as he ran along the garden path.

I went up stairs, and was in my chamber before the sleepy servant had opened the door to them. I had taken off my dress and put on a plainer one, when Mrs. Amory's maid came to my chamber—her mistress desired me to come at once and read to her.

Mrs. Amory was thoroughly out of humor. I knew very well the cause—it was owing to Easton's having deserted them so unceremoniously at the opera, and not appearing at the ball during the whole evening. I amused myself with imagining what her feelings would have been could she have known that he had spent the intervening hours with me.

I had to read to her for a long time; but she fell asleep at last, and I stole away to my chamber, to reflect upon my own exceeding happiness.

The dawn struggled up into the sky, and found me still sitting there—dreaming—dreaming!

I did not see Easton the next day, although he called; but I heard his step, his voice—it was something! During the following weeks he was there daily, although he no longer made his home at the house.

Mrs. Amory gave a grand ball—the last of the season—for Lent was near at hand. I sat in my chamber listening to the music as it floated up on the perfumed air, mingled with the tread of the dancers, and the gay laughter of the young and thoughtless. I had no wish to join them; I felt no bitterness or resentment at being shut out from such pleasures, as if I had been a creature of another mould from those dainty, fortune-favored girls, not one of whom was superior either in mind or appearance. There was no craving in my soul for the universal admiration which Louise desired—had it been placed within my reach, the excitement upon which she existed would soon have palled my spirit. I longed for something nobler, higher—for sympathy, appreciation, and for love—my heart panted and burned for that.
They who have always had kind friends to lavish affection upon them, understand little the intensity with which a lonely, passionate creature, such as I was, snatched at any glimpse of love offered. I had no thought but for him whom I loved—into whose eyes I had looked, until the rest of the world had passed from my sight, so that wherever I turned I could see only his image.

The next day I was sitting with Mrs. Amory in her dressing-room, trying to amuse her with a novel, when Easton entered the apartment.

I must have grown very pale, but Mrs. Amory did not observe it, and he greeted me kindly enough, but as if I had been a child. I was displeased, nay, grieved. I felt that, had I been in his place, I should not have been unwilling to betray my affection. I should have had too much jealous pride to have hesitated even an instant. But I did not blame him—oh no, I could not have done that.

I longed to talk with him, but that was impossible; and there I sat in silence over some work I had taken up, while he conversed gayly with his aunt and cousin, no one heeding me any more than if I had been a stick or a stone.

I left the room and went to my chamber, but I could not be quiet while I knew that he was in the house. I went down stairs into the library, and while I stood there Easton entered the room, giving me the welcome that my heart coveted.

"Be happy," he whispered; "you will see me at Woodbrook this summer."

There was no time to add any thing further. He left the house, but I returned to my duties quiet and at ease.

"Madge!" called Louise, as I entered the dressing-room, "pick these out for me, I can't!" She threw a tangled mass of embroidery silks toward me as she spoke. "Oh, Madge, where is my smelling-bottle? I am sure you had it! I do wish you would let my things alone and be less disagreeable. Oh, here is the thing—well, no matter! How mamma's work-box looks. I thought you prided yourself on your neatness. I should be ashamed of it if I were you."

That was the usual style of the beauty's conversation to
me, but I never paid the least attention, so we got on after a fashion.

Spring came at last, and we went to Woodbrook. Mrs. Amory was strangely quiet, and appeared much troubled. Once, during the journey, she began speaking of her affairs, but Louise would not listen.

"Now don't bore me, mamma! Can't you borrow money if you haven't it? You must have, though."

"Borrow!" returned Mrs. Amory, with a bitter laugh.

"How much do you suppose I owe?"

"I neither know nor care. We live at a fearful expense, to be sure; but one must live! Ask Easton to help you."

The young lady sunk back and composed herself to slumber, while her mother looked so anxious and wretched that I pitied her, but, of course, did not venture to speak; for, although she liked me, Mrs. Amory never, in the slightest degree, admitted me into her confidence.
CHAPTER X.

THE PROMISED HISTORY.

We had been at Woodbrook nearly two weeks when Easton Amory arrived. He looked thin and pale, and his aunt was fearful that he had been unwell.

He denied there having been any thing the matter with him, and seemed annoyed at her solicitude, whereat Louise laughed in her irritating way. He gave her one of his fiery looks—

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh nothing, of course."

"Such is frequently the case," he replied, with a sneer, but his action affected her not at all.

"Young men noted for their steady habits are apt to be ill at a moment's warning," returned she.

Easton's dark cheek flushed slightly, but Louise left the room before he could give utterance to the sharp reply I saw flashing in his eyes.

"You must excuse Louise," said Mrs. Amory; "she is far from well; then, too, she has other causes for irritation—I do not wonder much at it."

She gave Easton a significant and even angry look, the meaning of which I did not at all comprehend; but he only replied, indifferently:

"Oh, that is it, eh?—I wish I had a book to read till luncheon—since I have not I think I will go to the stables and see the horses."

He flashed a glance at me which I understood quickly enough. It bade me meet him in the grounds, but I found it impossible to comply with his demand.

Mrs. Amory was pacing the room with quick, uneven steps, after a habit she had when disturbed in her mind. She caught my eyes fixed upon her, but evinced no anger
Perhaps even she, distant and proud as she was, felt glad of the sympathy which my face must have expressed if it was any index to my heart.

She threw herself upon a sofa with a faint sigh, sweeping her hand across her forehead as if trying to dispel the thoughts that troubled her.

"Read to me," she said; "this dull place will kill me! I must have company in the house or I shall go mad." Then she muttered to herself: "After next week everything will be settled."

I did not understand what she meant—it was not until long afterward that the entire significance of her words was revealed to me. Anxious as I was to go out, of course there was nothing for it but to sit patiently down and do as I was bidden.

I read to her for several hours, but I could no more have told a single line in the book than if I had been puzzling over Sanscrit. After a time Easton looked into the room, and finding me thus engaged, came in to listen; but Mrs. Amory soon found an excuse for dismissing him, and sent him to Louise.

The next day, their man of business came up, and there was a long, stormy discussion in the library. I heard the sound of angry voices as I passed through the hall—those of Mrs. Amory and Easton in fierce recrimination.

I went up to Louise's chamber; she was fast asleep on her bed; so, certain that I should not be missed, I hurried off to my old haunt—the glen in the furthest part of the woods—as I had not been able to visit it since my return.

I was dreaming, after my old fashion, under the trees—reflecting upon my own great happiness, but never asking myself how it was all to end. Strange that the thought never occurred to me. I looked fixedly at the sunlight, and so dazzled my eyes that I could not see the gloom gathering in the distance.

I was now seventeen; my birth-day had passed several weeks before, and though still a mere girl in years, my heart had gained the maturity of womanhood.

I sat on the turf watching the clouds through the branches of the great trees, my heart throbbing gleefully as the song of
a bird, without a thought beyond the brightness of my dream.

"Madge!" called a voice I knew very well, though it awoke no echoes in my soul; "Madge!"

I turned my head without speaking, and saw Walter Stuart leaning on the wall, beckoning me to approach.

I had not seen him for a long, long time, but he was much less altered than I. He was taller; his form had gained more breadth and force; but there was the same sunny gleam upon his brown hair, the same kindly expression to his face.

I was very glad to see him, and, at his summons, went quickly forward to greet him. We stood there for a long time, talking of every thing that connected our little past, when I remembered the revelations he had often promised to make, the thought of which had long haunted me. There was so much I wished to know, and his story might contain the information I desired.

When I made my request, he gazed at me for a little while in silence, and his features changed as they always did when he looked full into my eyes.

"You are a woman now," he said, slowly.

"Yes; and surely I may hear the story you promised to tell me, oh, so long ago."

"You have not forgotten my words then?"

"Certainly not; I have often thought of them, and puzzled myself to find their meaning."

"Who is at Woodbrook?" he asked.

"No one but the family, and—and—Mrs. Amory's nephew."

I could not pronounce the name—my eyes fell under his, and I felt my cheeks grow hot.

"I understand," he said, in the sad tone his voice so frequently assumed; "I understand! I see that you are still little Madge, poor little Madge!"

Those words carried me back to our last parting—how far back in the past it looked! I had lived so much in that time, gone so far away from the old childishness that had gladdened my spirits then, unconscious of the spell which lay on my heart, and which had since awakened in its might.

I fancied Walter Stuart understood my thoughts—he was
very quick of comprehension. He shrouded his eyes for an instant with his hand, and when he removed it, a great light had gone out of his face—it looked gloomy as water when the sun has ceased to shine.

"Come here," I said, "and sit down by me; I want to talk."

I know that he forgot where we were, or, in that mood, no persuasion could have induced him to enter those grounds; but at my bidding he sprung over the wall and seated himself by my side.

"Now tell me that story," I urged. "I am so anxious to hear it."

"Very soon I will; I want to ask you a few questions first. Are you happy? Answer me that."

"Very happy!"

The tone, the expression of my face, must have been their own evidence of my sincerity.

"And what have you been doing all these years since we parted?" he questioned.

"Very little; nothing worth repeating, or that I could put in words; my life has been always quiet."

"So much the better, so much the better."

"And you," I asked; "you are not still in college?"

"On no; I graduated more than two years ago. Since that time I have been at work, Madge, and the greater portion of it, very hard at work."

"Have you been long here?"

"We came yesterday, my mother and I—for the last time."

"For the last time?" I repeated.

"Yes, Madge; to-morrow will be my twenty-third birthday—then we leave this place forever."

"I can not understand you at all; you puzzle me as much as you did when I was a child."

"It is very easy to understand, nevertheless."

"Then do explain—I hate mysteries—please clear up this one of yours, for it seems there is a mystery."

"Before I say a word," he returned, "make me a promise!"

"If I can keep it—"

"Promise not to be angry with me because my story happens to be unlike that you have heard from others."
"I have never heard any thing—you do not think Mrs. Amory would talk to me?"

"Very well—do not be offended."

"I never was angry with you," I replied; "certainly I shall not begin now when we are parting for a long, long time."

"Yes," he said, "I suppose so—it must be so! Oh Madge," he continued, with more fervor than I had ever heard him speak, "there is so much I would wish to say, but dare not—you would not like to listen! Well, well, time will settle every thing!"

He broke off abruptly, and when he spoke again he had recovered the calmness which so became him, giving such an idea of self-trust and repose that it lent me strength to be in his presence.

"You have often asked me how I could be poor and live in such a beautiful place—I will tell you. This was our house until I became twenty-three. It might be mine for life if I would submit to certain conditions—but I would die first."

"What conditions?"

"Madge, years ago, when Easton Amory and I were very young—too young to have much recollection of the events of the time, and Louise only a cross baby—we lived together at Woodbrook, all alike dependent upon the caprices of a cross, peevish grandfather. The husbands of my mother and Mrs. Amory had been half brothers.

"His fortune was to be equally divided among us, he said, and he treated us all as if such was to be the case. The estate was immense, and he had much other property beside, so there was naturally a prospect of great wealth in store.

"My dear, kind mother seldom thought of the future; but Mrs. Amory used to wish daily for the old man's death—she often expressed that desire, though to him she was all kindness and attention, but she is so made up of falsehood and deceit that she is incapable of a noble thought.

"My mother and she were never very friendly—there had been trouble between them in their girlish days, and neither had forgotten it. They were civil enough, but they kept away
from each other, each possessing a suite of apartments at different sides of the house.

"One day there came a stranger to Woodbrook—a man still young, but with a look of sorrow and resignation. I was a little child, it is true, but I never shall forget the impression his appearance made upon me.

"Easton and I were in the great hall when he entered. My grandfather was confined to his bed—he was always ailing; but I remember distinctly that it was my mother for whom the gentleman inquired. However, it was not my mother, but Mrs. Amory, who obeyed the summons."

"I was sitting at the foot of the stairs when she came down, splendidly dressed, but so pale that I remarked it—trembling violently, and clutching at the banisters for support. Her lips moved as she passed, but uttered no sound, and she walked on into the reception-room, leaving me quite frightened at her appearance and manner."
CHAPTER XI.

THE STORY CONTINUED.

WALTER STUART paused for a moment, but I motioned him to proceed, and he went on with his narrative.

"It might have been half an hour after, when I was roused by a quick step on the stairs, and my mother appeared, whiter than the muslin robe she wore—her lips compressed, her hands clasped like one in mortal agony. I did not dare speak to her; she sped by me like a specter. Her woman—a faithful, devoted creature—stood watching her from the landing. My mother paused in the hall, and called in a strange voice:

"Did you say in there, Mariette; did you say in there?

"There was a sound from the reception-room—the door opened and the stranger appeared.

"'Isabel, Isabel!' he cried.

"My mother turned, tottered, and would have fallen if he had not caught her in his arms and carried her into the room he had just left.

"I saw nothing further, for the door closed, and though I shrieked and stamped, no attention was paid to me until the maid came down and tried to pacify me, but I pushed her off, screaming:

"'They will kill mamma; they will kill mamma.'

"Half an hour might have passed, when the door opened again, and then Mrs. Amory came out. I never saw so terrible a sight as she presented. Her black hair had fallen loose, and her face was so convulsed with passion that she looked like a fiend. The gentleman stood in the doorway supporting my mother, whose eyes were shut although she was not insensible. I could see by the convulsive movements that shook her frame every time Mrs. Amory gave way to a new burst of wrath.
"'You shall rue this hour, Isabel Stuart!' she exclaimed, bitterly, and your whole life long shall you repent it.'

"She swept up the broad stair-case, and my mother drew herself from the stranger's support with a low cry. While they stood trying to recover themselves, my mother's maid came down.

"'Madam,' she said, 'your father commands this gentleman to leave his house.'

"A few whispered words passed between the three, then the stranger went out of the door, and my mother sunk almost lifeless upon a low seat in the hall. Another servant appeared and said:

"'Your father wishes you, madam.'

"She rose, shivering with a sudden chill, and went up stairs, for the first time in her life heedless of my calls and entreaties that she would speak to me.

"After that, I have no distinct recollection. All was confusion—voices talking loudly—my grandfather raving like a madman—Mrs. Amory exultant and fiendish, and my poor mother pale, silent and despairing.

"The next day, my mother took me into the sick man's room; he hardly noticed me, saying to her—

"'Isabel, I will never again see your face; but promise me, for my dead wife's sake, that you will live at the Hermitage until your boy is of age—until he is twenty-three years old—twenty-three, remember!'

"He was so urgent that she consented; she did not understand his full meaning.

"We left the house, my mother and I, and went to a village several miles away, and accompanied only by the servant.

"Two days after, there came tidings of my grandfather's death.

"We went back for the last time to Woodbrook.

"Mrs. Amory did not speak or look at my mother. After the funeral, we all assembled in the great drawing-room, and the will was read. Of course I did not then pay attention or understand its contents—but I have learned their import well enough since.

"To make my story plain, I must go back to my mother's girlhood. She and my aunt had been the beautiful but pen-
niless wards of Mr. Amory, although the two were no relation
to each other. He had two sons and a step-son; beside
those a nephew, who spent much time at the house.
“Both my mother and Louise Gillett loved the latter, but he
loved my mother.
“I do not know what arts she employed, but Louise made
trouble between the two, parted them, and had him expelled
from his uncle’s house; for where she hated she was an
enchantress. She married George Amory for his fortune, and my
mother became the wife of Walter Stuart from gratitude for
his attachment, and she knew that her lover had left her for-
ever, believing her guilty of treachery and wrong.
“The elder brother married, but both he and his wife died
soon after their child was born, so he was brought up in his
grandfather’s house; that boy was Easton Amory. Soon
after my birth my father died, and my mother went to live with
her father-in-law; and after the death of her husband, Mrs.
Amory came there also.
“It appears that my mother and her former suitor discov-
ered the falsehood imposed upon them, and he returned—that
was the occasion of the visit of which I have just spoken. I
do not know all that happened—my mother never could bear
to give me the full details. But I know that Mrs. Amory so
far forgot her pride as to throw herself at his feet, and declare
her love for him; he rejected her with contempt. It was that
slight which rendered her so furious.
“When she left my mother and him together, she went to
my grandfather with more falsehoods, and inflamed his mind
to such a degree—for he was horribly passionate, childish and
easily influenced—that he vowed my mother should promise
never to marry his nephew—should ask Mrs. Amory’s forgive-
ness or leave his house forever.
“She did not hesitate. It appears that afterward he re-
pented somewhat; for, as I said, he made her promise, in case
she was again left alone, to live at the Hermitage until I was
twenty-three.
“The will was opened and read. Mrs. Amory and Easton
shared the fortune on one condition, which you shall hear
presently. My mother and I were left beggars, although he
mentioned his express desire that she should keep her promi-

ise and live at the Hermitage, adding a hope that if she did not marry again, her sister-in-law would share with her the property, but making no stipulation which would be at all binding. The idea of any one’s trusting to the generosity of an Amory!

“We went away—although a child, I was glad to escape from those gloomy walls and the presence of Mrs. Amory, who sat staring at us with her fiery eyes that were eager still for vengeance.”

“Not many months after that time my mother married the lover of her girlish days; all Mrs. Amory’s arts had failed at length—they were united.”

“There followed for my poor mother a few months of such happiness as she had never known, for her husband was one of the noblest and best of men. I know I loved him from the first, and had he been my own father he could not have treated me with more kindness and affection.”

“They were not rich, but wealth could have added little to the happiness of hearts like theirs. It must have been a blessed, holy dream to my mother after all the anguish she had endured, but it was as short-lived as are most visions so heavenly in their glow.”

“My step-father was obliged to go to New York upon important business in the height of summer. Only three days after his departure, my mother was summoned—he had been seized with cholera and there was little hope. She reached the place in time to see him die, to catch his last word of tenderness, and then the glory of her life was quenched in a night so terrible that the dawn would never break again.”

“He died in her arms, murmuring blessings on her and her child, and once more my mother was a widow—once more we stood helpless and forsaken in the world.”

“My mother was heart-broken, but her gentle firmness did not forsake her. She saw what was to be done, and never faltered. She had an annuity of a few hundreds which had been left her by her second husband, and upon that she could exist. We lived upon that pittance—Mariette still clinging to us, and we making our home at the Hermitage. When I entered college, my mother sold some valuable jewels to defray my expenses. I did not know it at the time or I should not have permitted the sacrifice—I was wrong to use that word, my mother never considered it such.”
"To-morrow I shall be twenty-three. This place we have so long called home must fall into the hands of our enemies, to be squandered as the rest of their fortune has been. I am glad to leave it; I have never breathed freely within its precincts."

He paused for breath, but I did not speak. I had not interrupted him by a word during his recital, which may appear dull as I have narrated it, but which was rendered very interesting by his manner and energetic speech.

"Are you tired, Madge?" he asked.

"Tired, no! Oh, Walter, your poor mother—that wicked, wicked woman!"

"Now, Madge, for the present! There are certain things you ought to know, although I run the risk of offending you."

"Go on," I said, hastily; "go on."

"There was once a poor girl," he continued, in his soft, pleading voice, "taken by a wealthy family, reared amid luxury, rendered unfit for contact with the ordinary world, yet with no means provided to preserve her after happiness—treated only as a pretty puppet, to be flung aside the instant she offended or wearied."

"Go on!" I muttered, for he had paused again. There was a choking in my throat, a wild whirl in my brain; I could only repeat my command—"Go on."

"There was a young man—handsome, gifted, fascinating—whom she had known a boy. He was interested in this girl, and by his careless kindness, won perhaps more than her gratitude."

"This is wrong, it is cruel," I cried, feeling the angry blood mount to my face.

"At times one must be cruel in order to be kind," he answered, gravely. "This noble girl had no friend honest enough to tell her the truth.

"Utterly selfish had he been from his earliest youth. His recklessness led to his expulsion from college—he was a gambler and a spendthrift. Although still young, he had wasted almost the whole of a princely fortune. Should not one interested in that young girl warn her? Madge, that man is Easton Amory!"
He had spoken so rapidly that I had found no time to interrupt him—indeed, passion so choked me that for a few instants I had not the power to speak. At last I broke out: 

"You have lied—you are a base, false coward!"

"I have spoken the truth, Madge; oh, be warned in time!"

"I will not hear a word more; leave me instantly!"

"I tell you, Madge, by the terms of his grandfather's will he is forced to marry his cousin Louise, or both forfeit the estate—at least what there is left of it."

"There is not a word of truth in your whole story," I exclaimed. "I would not believe you though you took a thousand oaths! Leave this place, sir—go at once!"

"Whom have we here?" called out an angry voice.

Before I could speak, Easton Amory ran down the slope and stood beside me. Walter Stuart rose, pale but very calm.

"My worshipful cousin, as I live!" exclaimed Easton. "Trespasser! I'll have you driven away like a dog if you come here again."

"Beat him, Easton," I exclaimed, quite beside myself with rage; "kill him—any thing! He has told lies—lies of you, so good, so kind!"

Amory turned toward him with a furious gesture, but Walter Stuart waved him back with a calm smile.

"We will not quarrel," he said, quietly; "you know that I have spoken only the truth. For that poor girl's sake I have watched you; I know you thoroughly; I have warned her; if she will not heed me, God help her, I can do nothing more."

Amory sprung toward him with a curse. Stuart kept his ground firmly, but I stepped between.

"No quarrel," I sobbed, for now I was weeping convulsively; "you must not quarrel."

"We shall not," replied Walter. "Easton Amory, I am leaving this place forever; but before I go, deny, if you can, that you have deceived this poor child. You are obliged to marry your cousin; you dare not deny it."

I looked up with sudden desperation.

"Say that it is not so," I groaned; "if you would not kill me, say that it is not true."
"He can not!" returned Stuart; "he dare not! Remember what I have said—farewell."

He sprung over the wall, but cast back one parting glance. "Poor Madge," I heard him murmur; "poor little Madge!"

I sat down upon the ground, weak and faint now that the excitement was past, and weeping such bitter tears as had never before fallen from my eyes.

Easton's embrace recalled me to myself; he entreated me to be calm—to forget it all.

"Is it true?" I asked; "is it true—only tell me."

"Such was the will," he replied; "but I have no intention of complying with it; I would be a beggar first! Did you think I could give you up, Madge?"

"No, no! I knew you could not be so cruel."

"I fairly hate Louise; you know that I love you better than the whole world, better than life itself."

"You would not deceive me; you would not—"

"Do you believe the lies of that wretch?" he interrupted, sternly. "Have you no faith in me—can you not trust me—is your love less than mine?"

"No, no, Easton! I would not believe an angel who spoke against you. I have nothing but you in all the world; no one else cares for me—you saved me from a life of misery. Is not my life yours?—do with it what you will."

"My brave, my beautiful Madge!"

The tears I shed then were sweet and soothing; they were shed upon his bosom. While I lay clasped to his breast, there was a quick step upon the grass; we turned, and there—her face so distorted with rage that she looked like an evil spirit suddenly roused from a darker world to confront us, clenching her hands while her eyes fairly blazed like sheet-lightning—stood Mrs. Amory.

We both started back—there was something fairly appalling in her look; one who had never seen her except with the smiling face she wore to the world, would never have recognized the beautiful woman in the livid, breathless fury who had so unexpectedly broken in upon our wild happiness.
CHAPTER XII.

THE PARTING.

I HAVE no distinct recollection of the occurrences of the next few moments. I remained perfectly helpless, listening to the terrible language uttered by my companions, as they stood reckless, mad, yet alike in their passion.

I was not at all afraid, only weak, and at length I struggled up from the ground where I had sunk. Mrs. Amory seized me by the arm, and shook it violently, leaving the mark of her fingers upon the flesh for days after.

"Devil!" she shrieked rather than spoke. "Little nameless, homeless wretch! Is this the reward of my kindness—this the gratitude I receive for all that I have done? But you shall be flung out into the world to starve—die—what you will! Start now—here you shall not stay!"

"Stop, madam, are you mad?" exclaimed Easton, pushing her roughly away. "Take care! you know that you have in me a will equal to your own. If you send that girl from here, I go too, and you and your daughter will see me no more."

She was silent for a little while; but Easton could always subdue her. She gnawed her lip with impotent fury, made a violent effort to recover herself, and then spoke more quietly:

"What is to be done? Certainly things can not go on at this rate; I will not permit it! Is my daughter to be insulted before her very face for that upstart—that beggar?"

"Be careful!" he hissed from between his teeth. "Be careful!"

"You may be fearless, Easton Amory, so am I. There must be a settlement between us. Thanks to your reckless life, we are almost ruined."

"Thank yourself," he retorted; "your gambling debts will more than cover the estate that comes to us to-morrow; besides, it is already disposed of."
She grew very pale, and began to tremble.

"You do not mean it," she said; "you have not dared to do it."

"Not dared! Do you know me no better than that? There is nothing I fear."

"You may the law," she returned with angry vehemence.

"Let me see you call it to your assistance," and he laughed insultingly. "It is you who would not dare. I tell you, you and your daughter may be the beggars instead of this girl; insult her again at your peril!"

If a look could have killed, Easton Amory would never have moved from that spot where he stood; but, bold as she was, Mrs. Amory cared for her own interests. After that first burst of rage, her selfishness restored her calmness.

"Let that girl go away," she said; "you and I must talk without a witness."

"Oh, you feel that," he replied, laughing again; "you feel that, do you?"

Mrs. Amory clenched her hands until the cords stood out upon her wrists stiff and rigid, but she did not answer him.

"Go to the house, Madge," she said to me, in a choked voice; "and as you value your life, keep silence."

"Yes, go, Madge," Easton added when I paused, and at his bidding I left them.

Of course I never learned what passed during that interview; it must have been a terrible one.

I returned to the house, walking slowly and tottering like one stunned by a blow. I had no strength left. The reaction of that excitement, almost frenzy, was so fearful that I was weak as if I had just risen from a sick bed.

"Are you ill?" the housekeeper asked, as I met her in the hall; but I hurried on without a word, and I heard her whisper to a housemaid:

"I believe my soul that girl is crazy!"

"She was always queer," was the reply; but I went on without appearing to have heard their impertinent words.

In the quiet of my chamber I sat down and tried to think, but my head was dizzy and a deathly sickness unstrung every nerve. I must have remained there for several hours; no one disturbed me—apparently no one remembered my existence.
At last I went out into the hall—the confinement of my chamber seemed choking me. It was dark, but the lamps were not lighted; the whole house appeared to be in confusion; I could not tell whether it was really so or only my troubled imagination.

As I stood in the hall, Louise came out of her room, beautifully dressed as she always was of an evening. She went by me without speaking, humming a low tune. A moment after, she returned.

"Mamma wishes you to go to your room," she said; "and you are to stay there until she chooses to call you; be good enough to remember that."

I obeyed without a word of reply; I would not sufficiently gratify her petty malice to utter a syllable of expostulation. She darted a look of hatred at me, muttering:

"I will find some means of bringing down your pride before we are much older, or my name is not Louise Amory!"

I laughed, as scornfully and sneeringly as I could. The sound of that bitter merriment enraged Louise almost beyond endurance.

"Little mulatto!" she hissed, "I would like to take you South and sell you for a slave; and I will, too. I believe you are a negro—I do, indeed!"

I laughed again, entered my room, and deliberately closed the door in her face, leaving her to her own reflections. I heard her fairly stamp her foot with passion and mutter further threats as she walked away through the darkness, but I had no time to spend in considering her anger.

I saw no one for many hours. I had eaten nothing since morning, but I felt no hunger—a morsel of food would have suffocated me.

I sat with my hands clasped over my knee, waiting, listening, feeling that something was about to happen—longing to have the blow fall, that I might know the worst and prepare myself to meet it.

There I sat, hearing only the monotonous ticking of a clock in the hall, till the measured sound almost drove me out of my senses; it sounded like a human voice mocking my agony. I longed to rouse myself to give a cry that would bring the whole household around me, for my brain grew so disordered
that I seemed to see dim shapes starting up amid the gloom—
fierce, angry faces mowing and jeering at me as they passed.
I heard a voice in the gallery that I believe would have
roused me from the delirium of a fever. It was only a whis-
per, but to me it sounded loud and distinct.

"Here I am, Easton, here I am!" I exclaimed, opening the
door with all speed. He came toward me, embraced me
hurriedly, and said:

'I leave here instantly—start to-morrow morning for Eu-
rope; when I return every thing will be well."

"Going!" I repeated, "going!" stunned by the suddenness
of this last and greatest blow.

"I shall not be absent long; believe me, Madge, it is better
so; only have patience—only wait."

At that moment Louise's voice sounded in the lower hall.
Easton gave me one kiss, and hurried away; then I stood in
the gloom utterly bereft and alone.

"Going! going!" my lips kept mechanically repeating,
until it seemed to me that another voice took up the com-
plaint and mimicked the distress of my own.

The wind surged up with a low wail from the depths of
the forest as the hours wore on, and I sat in my chamber
keeping a terrible vigil. There was a leaden weight on heart
and brain, pressing closer and closer until there came a
paroxysm of pain so violent that my overwrought nerves
could bear no more; there was a sensation through my whole
body as if life itself were forsaking me—then I remember
nothing further.

When I returned to consciousness I was lying upon the
floor, and the cheerful morning light shone in at the windows.
I could not stir, and I saw that, my dress and the carpet
around me were wet with blood. I tried to think, to wonder
what could be the matter, but I was incapable even of that
slight mental effort, and again I fainted.

When I came to myself, I was still alone, weak as before,
but free from pain. I knew then that I had broken a blood-
vessel, but I did not feel afraid—something told me it had
saved my life.

I suppose my absence at last attracted attention, for about
midday Mrs. Amory's maid opened the door; but with one
look of horror toward the place where I lay, ran out screaming:

"She is dead! she is dead!"

Her cries brought the whole household to my chamber—even Mrs. Amory came. They raised me and laid me on the bed. Common humanity, or at least the presence of those around, compelled the woman to send for a physician, although I do not imagine that she cared particularly whether my life was saved or not.

The doctor came, applied such remedies as were necessary, and ordered that I should have the most perfect repose. The rupture was an unimportant one, he said, caused by some intense mental excitement.

They washed the blood from my face, changed my clothes, and left me alone; for that I was grateful.

Mrs. Amory came close to my bed before she went out, and whispered:

"Madge, you have been an ungrateful, wicked girl, but I shall not send you away if you promise never to mention what happened yesterday."

With those words she left me, but the pardon she so curtly accorded was contradicted by the flash in her eyes. I knew that it was only fear of Easton which had induced her to treat me so leniently.

I had determined to remain there no longer. As soon as I was able, I would leave the house forever. That thought was strong in my soul. I cared little where I went or what became of me; my only wish was to get away from every sight or sound of the past—to leave behind those who only recalled my desolation and added to the pain of the miserable destiny forced upon me. I had no hope left, no strength; I would gladly have turned upon my pillow and died, but that could not be.

I did not attempt to solace myself with the thought of again meeting Easton Amory; something told me that we were parted forever. My love seemed to increase with the death-like agony I endured. I believed nothing they had spoken against him—either his lying cousin or his false-hearted aunt.

I lay in bed for many days, suffering nothing, but dreadfully
weak. At length, one afternoon, I was able to leave my chamber. I went out into the hall; my steps were trembling and uncertain, but my strong will would not yield—it overmastered the flesh and gave me power to do that which I had wished.

I went to the picture-gallery. Easton's portrait hung there.

I can give no account of the hour I passed in that room. Even now I dare not brush away the ashes that have gathered over the grave of that time, and look beneath. I will not murmur and complain; let the agony of that season rest between God and the tortured heart which seemed too utterly crushed and broken ever to heal.

I left that gallery as a mourner might leave a tomb—calm enough, quiet and still, neither weeping nor lamenting, but altogether desolate. I closed the door softly, as if I feared that a sound would evoke spirits in the place, and went my way.

I chose to go down stairs, and I went. I did not think of Mrs. Amory's anger; I should not have stopped for that. I felt very calm, but stony and cold, as if my whole being had suddenly changed to ice.

Louise I had not seen since the day of Easton's departure; she never came near me when I was ill. I would not have desired her presence; but many a night had I watched by her bed, listening to her childish complaints, tending and caring for her, only to be chidden and blamed for my pains.
CHAPTER XIII.

TEMPEST AND SHIPWRECK.

I stood in the lower hall, near the entrance to the library, the door of which was ajar. I heard Mrs. Amory's voice in sharp, eager questionings, and that of Mr. Thornton, her man of business, in measured response.

I do not know why I remained. Their conversation had no interest for me, and I would have scorned the meanness of playing the listener, but I caught Easton's name—that name which was always sounding in my ear, and it had a spell that chained me to the spot.

"There must have been knavery somewhere," exclaimed Mrs. Amory, passionately, "and it shall be my business to find out where it lies."

"Very near your own door," replied the lawyer firmly. "The course of mad extravagance you have been running during the last fourteen years would have beggared a prince, and, since his boyhood, your nephew has even surpassed you in his recklessness. I have warned and expostulated, but in vain."

"I did not comprehend," she muttered.

"Only a fortnight ago," pursued Mr. Thornton, "I was obliged to raise forty thousand dollars for you, by disposing of stock at a great loss. You know better than myself where it all went."

"It is your business to supply the money, mine to dispose of it as I see fit," she replied, with her old haughtiness.

"Possibly, madam; but when the supplies are no longer forthcoming, who are you to blame but yourself? Your nephew's debts amount to an incredible sum. When he became of age, he was forced, in a measure, to satisfy his creditors."

"I know nothing about those things," she replied, impa-
tiently; "I can’t be bored with such talk. Get me the money I require without further contention. I have heard nothing but excuses and complaints during the last three years."

"Madam," answered Mr. Thornton, almost solemnly, "to save my soul I could not raise you a dollar."

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed, with a sudden passion, which was a mingling of anger and fright.

"I mean,"—and even that callous man of business was so moved that his voice trembled a little—"I mean that you are ruined!"

I saw Mrs. Amory fall back in her chair—she had not fainted—but she was incapable of speech, as that fearful truth for the first time forced itself upon her mind.

"I have faithfully performed my trust," continued Mr. Thornton, "but my efforts were unavailing. You have flung away an immense fortune—you and Easton Amory. You have rendered your names a by-word for extravagance. Now that every thing is lost, now that the ruin I pointed out long since as close at your door has come upon you, do not blame me for your own folly and sin."

He turned to leave the room, but that proud woman, utterly humbled, besought him to remain, wringing her hands and moaning piteously.

"Is there no help—none? There must be something left! Why not sell the Hermitage—it is ours now."

"You forget—your nephew has disposed of it—some compact between yourselves."

She motioned him to cease, while a spasm of pain contracted her forehead.

"Is there nothing, nothing?"

"A few thousands, madam, may be saved from the wreck, but to you it will seem absolute beggary. I can not advise you—I have so often done it in vain. This house and all it contains must go. Your town house has long been covered with mortgages—a fortune gone by those speculations in which you and your nephew engaged against all advice—you see to what you must look forward."

Mrs. Amory gave a groan. I never saw such suffering and despair upon any face as there was on hers.

"Believe me, madam," he said, "I would not appear
unnecessarily harsh, but you have so often of late insinuated things against my honor, that I am bound to clear myself. You can examine the accounts—they are all open to you; study them and be satisfied."

She made no reply; did not appear conscious that he had addressed her; but those white lips muttered:

"My daughter, my poor daughter!"

"She will have something when she comes of age. You remember by her grandfather's will there are twenty thousand dollars left her."

"Can't we use it now?" she asked, eagerly, seizing the first desperate hope.

"Impossible! No one can touch it until she is twenty-one. It would only be a drop in the ocean now. By that time she may have grown wiser and better able to appreciate money than she is at present."

"Then there is no hope—"

"None!"

"There must be some way—put things off—we shall contrive—"

"Every resource has been exhausted! Madam, I must repeat it—you are ruined."

He turned for the second time to go, and she did not attempt to detain him. He passed me without a word, nor did I notice him; I was wholly occupied in watching Mrs. Amory. She sat there so pale, so frightfully still, that I was afraid her reason would give way.

I went into the room, fell on my knees by her, took her cold hand in mine, and besought her not to despair.

She looked at me with a sort of smile.

"Go," she said, "leave me as all the rest will. I can do nothing for you now—I am a beggar. The whole world will know it soon."

I did not speak; she seemed rather talking to herself than addressing me.

"Beggared, and by my own madness! As for that boy, I could curse him, but I dare not! He must come back—yes, that will be best."

She paused, for the first time appearing to remember that I was present.
"Why are you here?" she asked, angrily. "I don't want you—go away! I will not have you exulting at my misery."

I was weeping unrestrainedly, and as she felt the tears fall hot upon her hands, she looked at them and me with a wild, incredulous wonder.

"Why don't you go?" she continued, in an altered voice; "I can help you no longer—I have no home—no friends."

"Neither had I," was my answer, "until God sent you. Mrs. Amory, I owe every thing to your kindness; oh, don't think I forget it! While I have two hands, and strength or life left, I will work for you. Hear what I say—try to understand me—I will never desert you—I will work for you always."

She was so crushed that my words softened her at once. She laid her hand on my head, and for the first time wept freely.

"I did not think there was so much goodness in any human being," she said.

"I belong to you," I replied; "I am only doing my duty."

"But what are we to do?" she moaned, as the terrible truth recurred to her. "Who will tell Louise?"

"I will, madam."

"My poor, poor child! Where can we go—what can we do?"

"I will settle every thing," I replied; "only lie down and rest while I go and speak with Mr. Thornton."

At length I persuaded her to go to her room, gave her some quieting drops I knew she had been in the habit of taking, and went away to find Mr. Thornton. We had a long conversation, and, when it was concluded, he said:

"You are a true woman! Go on and do not fear—God will help you!"

That was new language to me; nobody but the clergyman had ever talked in that way! I had little time to reflect upon these words, yet they came constantly back in the midst of my trials, and gave me new courage when I faltered.

During the following week I was busier than ever before in my life. I had Mrs. Amory to sustain, Louise to look after—for when she heard the tidings, she went into nervous spasms, and was really ill. I went several times to the city, saw Mr.
Thornton, arranged, with his assistance, an abode for the present, removed thither such valuables as I might, and at last all was ready.

There were many executions in the house, and magnificent as every thing was, the lawyer assured me it would be a mere nothing toward satisfying the creditors.

I was not confused by the suddenness with which all this had come upon me—I was firmer than ever before. New faculties seemed to rouse themselves in my nature—energies of which I had had no perception—strength, nerve, power to manage—all that was necessary in such a time.

Mrs. Amory could offer no counsel—did not wish to be consulted—she left every thing to me; and the most pitiabie thing of all was to see that proud woman so utterly prostrated, leaning so wholly upon the girl she had considered as little better than the dust beneath her feet.

When all was over, there remained to Mrs. Amory an income of a few hundred dollars, but to her it appeared the most absolute poverty.

The day before that appointed for the sale, we all left Woodbrook forever.

It was now midsummer, and Mr. Thornton and I decided that it would be better for them to remain in the country until autumn; after that, it was necessary for the furtherance of my plans that we should reside in New York.

It would be useless to enter into the details of the few following weeks. We were established in a little house within a few hours' ride of the city. The dwelling was of the plainest description; yet, to many, it would doubtless have seemed a comfortable home; but to those petted, enervated creatures it was revoltingly miserable; and even I had become so enfeebled by luxury and idleness, that the privations were often hard to bear.

I had made arrangements for taking rooms in the city on the first of September. Mr. Thornton had promised to obtain for me a class in drawing. Upon that, and my skill in needlework, we must in a great measure rely, since Mrs. Amory's little pittance would not be sufficient for our wants.

I knew that Louise would be of no assistance. She neither could nor would teach, or lift her hands to do any thing useful,
She would do nothing but rail at her mother and Easton, varying her programme by unlimited condemnation of every thing I said or did.

Mrs. Amory was at length seized with a nervous fever, and there was no one to take care of her but me, as Louise declared herself ill also, remained in her room, and did not even see her mother. I had to prepare and carry up her meals to her—so she bade me—commanding me as if I had been a servant. Mrs. Amory pined, and not unnaturally, for luxuries which to her had become absolute necessities—but where to obtain them!

I did the best I could, and there the matter had to rest—no, it did not do that, for I was forced to listen to ceaseless complaints from both.

I know that Mrs. Amory wrote many times to Easton, but I concluded that the letters never reached him, as they remained unanswered; and I was certain that he would not refuse to assist them out of what he had left, if he knew the strait into which they had fallen.

The weeks wore on, and autumn came. We removed to the city about the middle of September. The rooms Mr. Thornton had found for us were in a small house, on a retired but respectable street. My helpless charges pronounced it a vile den, and on the first night sobbed themselves to sleep. I thought of Paradise Square, and was grateful for the roof which sheltered us, and which, with other inmates, might have been made a comfortable home.

I found my pupils awaiting me; and the income I received was reasonably good. I performed the household duties, and procured a little girl to wait upon Mrs. Amory. Louise lay in bed from one day's end to another, fretting, and reading trashy novels; but I never attempted to find any fault with her.

I worked hard, growing thin and pale; but I did not heed that. All day long I was engaged with my classes. Before I went out I prepared their breakfast, and cooked their dinner when I returned; and all the evening I plied my needle—often working until daylight when Mrs. Amory's fancies brought some extra expense upon us.

Mrs. Amory had many beautiful dresses and jewels left, of course—these were gradually disposed of. It was hard
to bear with Louise; she abused me constantly, as if I had been the cause of her ruin. I never replied to her taunts—my contempt for her really gave way to pity for her folly and helplessness. She seemed to hate me worse than ever, now that they were, in a manner, dependent upon me, and I never went in her sight without receiving a volley of ill-natured speeches. Mrs. Amory never was harsh to me, but she would sit and look at me so hopelessly, asking if I meant her to starve or beg, that it was quite as bad to get along with her.

The winter came, and of course our expenses increased. Truth to say, I had undertaken a great deal. But I did not falter—not once did I feel a regret or an inclination to retract from my resolve to take care of them. I worked day and night—painted—sewed—made fancy articles—wrote sketches—did every thing, any thing, by which I could eke out our little income.

Louise might have turned some of her accomplishments to use, but she would not. Once Mrs. Amory did knit a purse, but she vowed it would kill her to think of selling and receiving money for it, although it had always been a favorite amusement with her. Louise teazed for all manner of useless things, and, whenever it was possible, her doting mother would gratify her, and I never complained.

We lived in this way for a year, but, alas, growing poorer constantly. Easton did not return, and many times Mrs. Amory would exclaim passionately against his neglect.

I knew well he would never marry Louise, and I exulted in the thought—I had not been human else. They had driven him away from me, but they had lost him likewise. I did not allow my thoughts to dwell upon him; had I done so, I should have sunk down helpless and despairing.

I worked, worked, seeing no hope in the future, looking at those two growing daily more helpless, and wondering how much longer my strength would serve to their support. I was not as strong nor as able to labor as when the year began. I had not been accustomed to work, and such confinement, such ceaseless toll, is very wearing.

I did the washing and ironing, added to all the rest, for the girl was kept constantly occupied by Mrs. Amory or Louise, and beside, she was an ill-trained creature, willing enough, but unable to do any thing well.
About this time Mr. Thornton died suddenly. I had lost my only friend! My class dwindled to a small number, and I found it impossible to procure more scholars. I struggled along as best I might, trying to be hopeful and serene, for with the least appearance of gloom upon my part, Mrs. Amory was in despair, and would take to her bed for days.

I am lingering over this portion of my history longer than will be interesting. Let me hasten on.

I said that we had lived there for a year. The winter again came on—a cold, severe one it was.

"There are no coals," said the girl, one morning, as I was preparing to go out, "and the fire is low."

I had not a cent of money. I never could ask Mrs. Amory to dispose of any of her dresses, although she often did it, but never for such things. I stood perplexed and troubled, with a sharper pang of anxiety than ever before.

"Sure, and it's hard for yees, Miss," said the pitying attendant.

These were the first kind words I had heard in months, and the tears came into my eyes.

"Hush, Bridget!" I said; "I can't be pitied! We must do some way."

I bethought me of the gold cross I had worn since I left Nan Briggs. It was like tearing my heart out to part with the sole relic of my dead mother, but there was no alternative. I removed the chain from my neck—kissed it—wept over it—but, in the end, Bridget was sent with it to the pawnbroker's. It was a valuable ornament, and I knew that she could obtain sufficient on it to purchase the coals.

That was the last sacrifice I was called upon to make for those women. I had now to learn what thanks I was to receive for the good I had tried to do them.
CHAPTER XIV.
THE SOLITARY STRUGGLE.

A FEW evenings after the sale of my cross, I returned home weary, dispirited, and with a nervous pain in my head that almost drove me out of my senses.

Bridget met me at the door, exclaiming:
"Great news, miss, ye're all rich again!"

She always chose to consider me as one of Mrs. Amory's family, although Louise frequently told her that I was no better than a servant.

"What do you mean, Bridget?" I asked, stopping in the narrow passage.

"Mane?—what I say, to be sure. A gentleman came in a grand carriage, and they are both gone with him. I have the caird, and we are to folly."

I thought she meant Easton, and grew sick and faint.

"Who was it?" I demanded.

"Sorra one o' me knows."

"Was he young?" I asked, impatiently.

"No, indeed; ould and gray, and cross the top o' that. But glad enough they were—acting like two loonities—the young one singing and dancing like mad, and the ould one not much better."

"Where have they gone?"

"Sure, there's the caird; it'll tell better nor me, perticuler as I don't know."

I took it, and read the address of one of the most fashionable hotels in the city. Under it was scribbled, in Mrs. Amory's hand: "Come at once, my good Madge."

Even then she remembered the distinction between us—prosperity had changed her instantly.

I went to the hotel, accompanied by Bridget, and was shown into a parlor, where Mrs. Amory sat with Louise and
an old gentleman, whom the former introduced as her uncle, Mr. Forrester.

"Well, Madge, we are off to New Orleans," were almost the first words Mrs. Amory spoke; "so make as much haste as you can."

"My niece feels quite obliged to you for your little exertions, Miss Madge," said the old gentleman, pompously.

"But where would she have been but for mamma's charity?" exclaimed Louise.

"True," said Mr. Forrester, taking a pinch of snuff with the air of a marquis of the olden regime; "very true."

"You are to go with us," said Mrs. Amory; "you must never leave me, Madge; when Louise goes I shall be quite alone."

But, to their unbounded astonishment, I refused. I had eaten the bread of independence; although hard to earn, it was sweet to the taste; never again would I live upon the bounty of any human being.

"Not go?" exclaimed Mrs. Amory. "What will you do?"

"Work," I said, with a smile.

"One would think you had had enough of that."

"Why, mamma," said Louise, "it is her nature; she feels most at home in her present situation. Let her alone."

"A strange taste!" ejaculated Mr. Forrester, quite red in the face at my impertinence in refusing their offer; and he withdrew his attention from me altogether, and began talking in a low tone with Louise, while Mrs. Amory continued urging her request.

"You must go, Madge. I expect you always to live with me."

"If I were necessary to your comfort, madam, I would never leave you; but you have recovered position and wealth—you need me no longer."

"But you must have a home."

"My own exertions and industry must provide me one then. I can not longer go through life dependent upon others. It is my duty to work, and I mean to do it."

"But I am accustomed to you, Madge. I need you."

"Oh, madam," I said, bitterly, "there will be many a
negro in your new home more gentle-handed and serviceable than I."

She blushed a little at her own selfishness, and, like many another, took refuge in anger.

"Then you refuse to go?"

"You must excuse me—I can not."

"It is your own fault. Whatever happens, you will have only yourself to blame."

"I should never dream of accusing any other."

"Well, it's very ungrateful, Madge. I shall always think so."

"I am sorry, madam. If the time should ever come that you required me—if you were sick or in trouble, I would come to you gladly."

"Oh, thank you; it is not likely; my troubles, I fancy, are over," and she drew herself up with all her old dignity—"quite over."

She grew more offended as the idea of her new state came clearly to her mind, and she ceased combating my determination.

I was roused to listen to Mr. Forrester's conversation by a remark he made in answer to something Louise had said.

"I believe," he exclaimed, "that in spite of his fine talk and manners, this Easton is a scoundrel."

Neither Louise nor her mother said a word in contradiction; they were careful of their interests; but I turned on him at once.

"It is very gentlemanly, sir, to condemn a man of whom you know nothing. Easton Amory is much more incapable of doing a mean thing than one who would speak of a stranger as you have done."

The old gentleman and Mrs. Amory were stricken dumb at this outburst, but Louise laughed.

"What a champion!" said she. "Easton ought to be grateful! I wish he heard the little gipsy, as he always called you."

"I wish he did hear me," I retorted, "that he might learn to treat his relatives with the contempt they deserve." I grew pale with excitement, as I went on. "If you have no affection in you—if the ties of kindred are of no value in your
eyes, I would conceal the fact! I knew that you were utterly heartless and despicable ridiculous, but I never accused you of such miserable meanness." I had borne much from her, and for once was determined to free my mind. The little viper was thoroughly enraged, but her venom had no effect.

"One would think that you were in love with him, and you are! What impudence, to be sure—as if he would look twice at you."

"I do love him," I replied, fearlessly; "I am not ashamed to own it; and he loves me as much as he despises you. He would sooner marry a beggar than you—"

"Madge, Madge," interrupted Mrs. Amory, "do you not know? have I not told you—"

Louise sprang forward—put her hand over her mother's mouth, and prevented her concluding her sentence.

"If you tell her, I never will speak to you till the day of my death!" she cried. "I do not choose her to know—wait, wait! Well, Miss Paradise," she continued, addressing me by her favorite name, "have you any more delicate avowals to make?"

"None—I will waste no more words upon you. We are parting, doubtless forever, unless you should again become poor; in that case, Louise, return to the outcast, the vagrant, and she will again provide you with a home."

"Stop, Madge," said Mrs. Amory, as I turned to leave the room. "Do not go hastily! Think of what I say—Louise will leave me soon—stay with me. What will become of you here? You can not live! Mercy on us, child, you must be mad to hesitate even for a moment!"

"Madam," I said, respectfully, "I owe you a great deal—I am sorry to appear ungrateful, but I cannot go."

"Not ungrateful, Madge," she replied, perhaps a little touched as she recalled the past year, "not ungrateful, but blind to your own interests. You have been a good girl—I will say that, and worked like a slave. Come with me, Madge!"

Still I said no, no! I would have died a thousand deaths rather than have remained longer with that soulless, mindless girl!

"It is much better as it is," said Mr. Forrester, with stately
reproof; "the young person is above her station; let obstinacy and self-will take their own course."

I did not even by a look show that I had heard his words, but bidding Mrs. Amory farewell, left the apartment, followed by Bridget, who, from the corner where she had ensconced herself, had been a silent but attentive listener during the whole scene.

"Sure, ye did the wise thing, Miss," said she, when we had regained the street; "ye'd better work the fingers off ye than live that way."

I fully agreed with her; any trials or sufferings would be easier to bear than those which must await me in the home they offered.

The next day I went out as usual to my duties, and when I returned, Bridget handed me a note—it was from Louise.

"We leave here this morning; mamma is quite sick, and desired me to send you money to pay the rent and the servant; but I shall do no such thing—if you want it you must humble your pride enough to come after it."

That was a severe blow! We owed a quarter's rent, and poor Bridget had not been paid for months. But I had borne too much to give way now.

I sold the furniture to the best advantage possible—it was little enough I could get, heaven knows—settled the rent and gave up the house. The kind, devoted servant would have refused the money due her, but I insisted upon her receiving it, and then we separated. Truly that parting was a bitter one; I was leaving the last human being who cared whether I lived or died. With such valuables as I still possessed, I betook myself to a little room in a street near by, less decent and cleanly, and in a dark, gloomy tenement-house.

I was alone—forsaken by the whole world, but my courage did not desert me. It was not very long till spring. I thought that if I could struggle on until the warm weather came, I should do much better.

I taught daily and worked as hard as before, but could feel how my strength went from me, though there was no one to observe or care. My pupils took no notice of my appearance; indeed, the greater number appeared to consider me only as a sort of human machine. Their slighted troubled me no more
than Louise's insults had done; I was accustomed to such treatment.

The spring came, bright and beautiful even in those foul, gloomy streets—came and passed, and the hot, enervating mid-summer took its place.

The last of my scholars forsook me. I could obtain no more, and now my only resource was my needle. I found it necessary to go to the shops and procure work, no matter what the kind might be. I painted several little pictures from copies I had made of old paintings in Mrs. Amory's house; but finding it impossible to dispose of them, thought it useless to waste more time or materials.

I tried to bring my old love of writing to my aid. I sent several little stories to different papers. Sometimes they were published; but when I wrote for the pay, the answer usually was that they never gave any thing for first articles.

Before winter came, I was obliged to exchange my habitation for a much poorer one in a still darker, dirtier and more pent-up portion of the city.

I began to think, with utterable loathing, of Nan Briggs and Paradise Square! Was my destiny, after all, to be consummated in that horrible spot where I began to know some thing of life? Rapidly I was being pushed further down, down every day!

My hopefulness was gone—my courage began to grow weak—my soul sickened within me!

I used to sit at the little window, occupied with my work, and look through the miserable streets which I knew led to Paradise Square, and think how soon I should be compelled to tread them. I wondered if Nan Briggs could be living still, and what she would say were I to return to her helpless, starving, and ask her for protection.

Sometimes I laughed at the utterable horror of the thought, then would shudderingly check the hollow sound, fearing that I was already going mad.
CHAPTER XV.

THE SPECTER'S APPROACH.

The winter was upon me, cold, bleak, terrible, and in its train came a gaunt figure, approaching nearer and nearer—it was starvation!

I had no money, and no means by which to procure any. Some time before, I had seen prizes for successful stories offered by some newspaper. I had written and sent one; but since then I had heard nothing concerning it. For weeks I called daily at the office, but always received the same answer: the rewards had not been distributed.

At last the men grew tired of the sight of me—they had always been sufficiently uncivil—and bade me leave my address instead of coming any more; they would write to me if my story was among those that were accepted.

I had some feelings of pride left, and they rose bitterly against the thought of revealing my abode; but what had I to do with pride! After the first moment of hesitation, I wrote my address upon a scrap of paper, and gave it to them. When the men had read it they looked at one another and laughed, but I went away heedless of their sneers.

So I sat in my garret-room and waited, waited—but there was no change for the better. I was ill for some time—not with any actual ailment, but body and mind had become so completely prostrated that for days I could not rise from my bed; there I lay upon that wretched pallet, with no one to care for me, unless it might have been that the angels looked down upon me from a clear spot I could see in the sky, and took note of my sufferings.

I will not describe that garret where I lived! I tried to make it neat; indeed, there was no reason why it should not have been; there was nothing in it but my miserable bed, a single chair, and a broken table propped up against the wall.
While I was too weak to sit up much, there came, one day, a tap at my door, and, without bidding, the landlady entered—a tall, gaunt, hard-featured, bad-looking woman as one could fear to see.

She stared at me for a moment, and I turned my eyes away, too feeble and wretched to care what her errand might be.

"Sick, eh," she grumbled, while her sharp, green eyes wandered to and fro about the room, "and sick folks can't work, and them as can't pay must trot."

"What do you want?" I asked.

"Want, indeed—he! he! how innocent we be to be sure! Why, I want a week's rent—just have the goodness to go to your money-chest and fork it over."

I was speechless! I had but a few pennies in the world, and where to obtain more I did not know.

"Wal," she continued, apparently enjoying my mute distress, "what's the matter—got no stuff, eh?"

"None," I replied, desperately; "I can not pay you this morning—wait until I am better."

"Wait indeed! You don't ketch this child with no such chaff—no indeed! I'll have my money afore I leave this room."

"But I haven't any!"

"That's neither here nor there—you've got what'll answer jest as well."

"What, what?" I asked, eagerly.

"Wal, there's that puctur—'taint worth much, to be sure, but I'll take it; mabby I can get a few shillings for it."

She pointed to a painting I had not disposed of at the pawnbroker's—one of the best copies I had ever made, and worth much more than the paltry sum required to pay her rent. I was too weak to contend with her; she must have it or I should be driven into the streets.

"Take it," I said; "do take it and go."

She watched me for an instant longer with her horrible eyes, gave a low chuckle, and taking up the picture went slowly out of the room, looking back at me to the last with some dreadful thought in her brutal features which I could not understand.
The next day I was able to go out, although still very feeble. I had not a mouthful of food, and something must be obtained. I made a bundle of such decent clothes as still remained to me, and went to the nearest pawnbroker's shop. The amount I received was enough to last me for some time to come. I returned to the old woman, and offered to pay the rent in money if she would give me back my picture.

"No indeed," said she, with a grin, "I ain't so green as all that comes to! That 'ere pictur's mine, honey—just go along about your business, and mind, 'tain't none of it going toward next week's rent, neither!"

It would have been the height of folly to have disputed her determination, and I wisely left her to herself.

I had now food, and my appetite returned. I devoured ravenously the provisions I had bought. The bread was dry and black, the dried fish mouldy and bitter; but never during my past life of luxury had any delicacies tasted so sweet to me as those coarse morsels. When my meal was over, I lay down and slept; I had nothing else to do, and I felt tired after my walk.

But to linger over these details will do no good. If it could serve to render the rich more thoughtful of those around them, I would describe that time with minute fidelity. But the sympathies of the world are not so easily excited; it sees nothing of such misery; it can not be but there is some way for people to find work if they want it, and those who will not labor deserve no food.

So let me hasten on—doubtless there are many who would not credit my story if I revealed the suffering of that season. But let such go down into the alleys and by-ways—look into the loathsome dens reeking with human beings—gaze on the miserable children—the wild-eyed women—the haggard, despairing men, and then say, if they can, that there is no truth in these pages. Let them go in the cold winter and stand on the hearth where no fire burns, where a mother and her helpless babes are couched, and then tell me these things are too horrible for belief.
CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE DEPTHS.

Again I was without money! The last few shillings I possessed went to satisfy that avaricious old woman, and as she left me she shook her head significantly, and pointed toward the street—the foul, loathsome street, where the wretched walked, the haggard, lost and miserable congregated. "You'll have a wide home very soon," she said, with her frightful chuckle, while her green eyes dilated, "a wide home; you needn't pay no rent there—it's free quarters—free quarters."

I had a few trifles left—they must go; food was very sweet, and I began to have dreadful cravings night and day. My constant reflection was of something to eat.

It was strange how little I thought of Louise or Mrs. Amory—they had gone so entirely out of my life that even their memory was faint and indistinct.

Of Easton I would not think—I should have gone mad had I allowed my thoughts to wander toward him. Often, when I lay on my bed, moving to and fro in feverish, broken slumber, which was not rest, his image rose before me palpable and distinct. I would wake with his name on my lips—seeming to feel the clasp of his hand on mine—his kiss warm on my cheek—wake to want and suffering, trying to stifle my cries, and at least die in silence.

At last I grew desperate! Was I not forsaken by every human being? Why should I struggle any longer? Sooner or later I must sink down—down—to the lowest depths of misery—if there was any slough darker than I had yet trod. God would not let me die—he had deserted me likewise.

Then holy recollections would come back—my mother's voice would sound in my ear giving me strength again. I would bear up a little longer; I would not take my own life. Wait—wait; only a few days more—it must end then.
All my thoughts centered upon the means of procuring bread, and of retaining possession of my garret. Every week that old crone stood in my doorway, clutching her bony hands and leering at me with her green eyes—that sight was hardest of all to bear.

"Come agin," she would say; "now ain't ye glad to see me? I'm your only visitor, except the rats; I guess they come to see you often enough; hope they don't eat up your nice victuals! Oh them rats, they're wicked critters! Once they nibbled a dead man's face in this very corner; guess they had better livin' than he had had for some time. Do you ever see him? There's several folks left the place 'cause they said he retruded on 'em—he! he!"

I knew how silly it was, but I could not forget her words. When night came on, and the great lean rats began to play about the garret, I had no strength to scare them away. I could hear them nibbling at the dead man's face. I could hear the eagerness with which they feasted upon the little flesh still clinging to his bones.

I did not dread his appearance; I was near enough crazed to become a believer in ghosts, but I so longed for company that I should not have been afraid had he risen and come to sit beside me. Nothing appeared; there was no sound but the pattering tread of the rats that used to look at me with their hungry eyes as if wondering how long before they should feast upon me as they had on the dead man before.

My old frenzy grew stronger! I would rise from my bed in the middle of the night, and go to my window that I might look down the street that led into Paradise Square. I almost thought I could distinguish the house in which old Nan and I had lived, and I laughed again as I thought how the place would soon be once more my home, only then the street must be my resting-place. Well, the flags were not so stony as human hearts—I could die there.

My valuables were gone; my clothing, with the exception of the dress I wore, and that hung about me in rags; I had no bread left; no tidings of the story I had hoped to get money from, and rent-day again at hand.

I begged for two days' grace. I do not know what moved the wretch, but she granted my prayer.
"No more, mind you, not an hour—not a minute! Pay or tramp—the street is broad—there's money to be made! What a fool you must be to sit here a starvin'! Why, I knows them as would dress you up and give you the best goin', for you was a potty critter when you come here—jist the sort to take, with your red lips and black eyes."

I did not half comprehend her meaning, but enough was plain to make me turn away, shuddering. The woman gave her low chuckle again, and went out, saying:

"Now mind, two days, no more! No doubt there'll a great fortin' come to you afore that time—he! he! The angels is very good, I heerd a preacher say once when I was a little gal, and he talked about a God. Wal, mabby there is one, but he don't live in New York if there is!"

Two days more and I should be houseless—no shelter but the broad sky—no refuge but the streets. I sat down in blind despair. I did not pray—I had no thought of it! The old woman's words seemed true—there was no Providence in that loathsome place.

With it all, I was very hungry. I had a few crusts left, but I did not dare eat them then, as yet I could exist—they must be reserved for sharper pangs. I was forced to put the mouldy crumbs out of sight, they increased my cravings so fiercely.

The first day passed—the night came down. The rats left their hiding-places and played fearlessly about me as I sat on my low stool looking down toward Paradise Square; they glared at me with their sharp eyes as if they were thinking of the banquet they had made upon the dead man; and licked their jaws with their red tongues as if tired of waiting for me to become their prey.

I sat there until the daylight broke. The great city struggled into life. The sunbeams gilded the stately church-tower where they preached of God, and thanked Him that they were not as other men! I did not move out of my seat or turn my eyes away from Paradise Square.

It was a Sunday morning—a calm, glorious day in mid-winter. I heard the church-bells ring solemnly, but the sound came from a distance; there were no temples of worship near. The wretched objects around had no thought of prayer—how should they have had?
The day dragged on. True to her promise, the old woman kept aloof, but the day was almost gone—and then?

A wild voice kept repeating the words in my ear until they sounded like the mocking of a fiend—and then?

The street, the goal, starvation or crime—and then? Hush! The river ran black and deep. I caught the gleam of the waters from my window; under their waters there was rest!

The last black crust was eaten. I could no longer resist the temptation, and my teeth cruunched over it with the same sound as in my dreams I had heard the rats tear at the flesh of the dead man.

There was shouting and riot in the street below. There was a ringing of Sabbath bells in the distance, and the strange mingling of sounds surged up to my garret with appalling distinctness.

The daylight faded; lamps began to gleam afar off; a few stars shot into the sky. The wind rose, sweeping through my narrow room, rustling my thin garments, and moaning sadly in my ear.

Hunger had quickened my faculties to terrible acuteness. I heard a heavy step on the stairs several floors below. I knew what was coming then.

Tramp, tramp, up the rotten staircase—through the dark passages. Tramp, tramp, firm, heavy, unrelenting, till it paused before my room. With a crash the door was flung open, and the old crone stood there, excited by drink and evil passions.

"No money, hey? Out with ye—start, don't stop another minute, or I'll fling you out of the window! Cheating a lone woman after this fashion, you lazy animal—start yourself!"

"Give me a little time," I pleaded; "only have mercy."

"Don't talk to me! There ain't three women in the world would do what I have, but you shall go now. Curse you—out into the streets and do as your betters have done before you; steal, murder, turn your pretty face to account; do any thing you can, but don't think to cheat honest folks."

I fell on my knees before her; I pleaded by every thing that men hold sacred; she did not even understand the words. She seized me by the shoulder and pulled me up; I was powerless in her grasp. She dragged me along the passages and down the stairs, striking and cursing me. The
wretched inmates of the house crowded about their doors and laughed at the sight, while she pulled me down—down, opened the outer door, and pushed me into the street. The heavy bolts closed behind me with a crash, the key turned in the lock, and there I stood!

It had come at last; I was houseless, starving—in the street that led to Paradise Square!

The wind blew sharp, as if each blast had been barbed with icicles; a few flakes of snow fell now and then; the sky was cloudless; the moon and stars shone pitilessly. Nowhere could I turn for help; neither earth nor heaven had mercy; men and angels alike stood aloof. My hair streamed out upon my shoulders; my tattered dress fluttered in the wind—eyes and heart were so wild!

Theré was no fixed purpose in my soul; I was too nearly mad for reflection. Unknowing wherefore, I turned up the dark street, passed into another, and stood in the entrance to Broadway.

Bright and far streamed the luster of a thousand lamps; carriages dashed past; crowds swept by me, none heeding me as they went. I went over and stood upon the other side, passed down a cross-street a little way, and sunk upon the stone steps of the nearest house. How long I sat there I do not know. I felt the wind cutting through my veins, turning my blood to ice. I thought it was the last pang; death must be near me then.

A tall form, shrouded in a cloak, left Broadway and turned down that very street. The step was quick and vigorous; I knew it in an instant. It had been long since I had heard that sound; my brain was almost turned with sickness and want, yet I knew it!

He came on—he was close to me—the folds of his cloak brushed my thin garments. I saw the gleam of those eyes which had so often looked lovingly into mine—the face whose lineaments were so lastingly impressed upon my soul.

I could not utter a syllable, but I flung out my arms in mute appeal. The action attracted his attention; he glanced toward me, threw some money on the pavement, and was passing on. I had no words—my throat was so husky and dry, my tongue clove to my mouth, but he must not leave me
thus. I cried out like one in the agony of death. Again he paused—looked at me—drew near—bent over me—and then, through all the change, he knew my face.

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed. "Madge, is it you?"
"How came you here?" he cried. "Can't you speak? My God, she is freezing! I will get a carriage, Madge.
He led me to the corner, hailed a carriage that was passing, and when it stopped assisted me in, sprung after me, gave some direction to the driver, and away we sped.
He asked me no questions. I could not have answered them; I could only lie back in the seat, feeling life slowly returning, from the warmth of that fur-lined cloak.
We stopped at last; he helped me out and led me up the steps of the house. He opened the door with a latch-key, and hurried me through the hall up stairs. He drew me into a luxurious chamber, brought me wine and bread, and I swallowed them eagerly.

* * * * *

Of the next few days I remember nothing. When I recovered my reason, I was lying in bed, while a woman was watching beside me. For a few moments I could recollect nothing that had happened, then all came back, and I roused myself with a faint cry for Easton.
I sunk back with a gush of blessed tears. Life was restored to me—not only life but love, and all that could make it worth the having.

The next morning I was able to rise and dress myself without assistance. Nothing had ailed me but hunger and exhaustion. I was quite well again.
I found books in the saloon; I amused myself as best I might, longing only for Easton—neither wondering nor caring where I might be, certain that I was in his charge, and that all was well.
CHAPTER XVII.

THE DRIVE.

That day and the next I passed alone; but there came two notes from Amory—he would soon be with me.

On the third morning my maid proposed that I should drive out, and I consented. She had prepared a rich carriage-dress in which she attired me. When my toilet was complete, she bade me look in the glass; it was my old self—older, paler, but beautiful still.

We took a long drive, and I leaned back in a dreamy content, enjoying the golden sunlight and the keen air, while the woman sat silent and respectful, but watching me curiously all the time. We went far out into the country, and when I returned I felt stronger, more like myself, than I had done since I left Woodbrook.

As I descended from the carriage, a boy was standing at the door, with a note in his hand; he held it so that I could read my name upon the address. Thinking it was from Easton, I snatched it from him with a few incoherent words, and hurried into the house.

When the maid attempted to follow me up stairs, I bade her go back. I went to my room, tore open the note and read:

"Madge:—Easton Amory was married to his cousin Louise the night before he sailed for Europe.

"Walter Stuart."

I stood for a moment dumb and unbelieving, then the events of that evening, Louise's hints, all came back, and a conviction of its reality burst upon me.

"This thing is true," I said, "all true!"

I felt no anger, hardly despair. I was icy cold, my voice firm and low.

"I do not curse him," I said; "God will do that! I do not ask for vengeance—the Father of all will give their due to
both the wronger and the wronged! I marvel how I could have been so long deceived."

I took the jewels from my wrists and laid them on the table, flung off my outer garments, muttering to myself:

"Saved! saved!"

I sat there for hours, reflecting upon those things; many times the maid came to the door, but I ordered her coldly away.

At last a terrible fear seized me—Amory might return and find me there. I started up in a sudden frenzy, opened the door, and without bonnet or shawl, fled down the stairs into the passage. The woman who had waited on me was standing there. She uttered a cry of dismay at my approach, and would have detained me, but I pushed her aside, and on I went—again in the street—homeless, friendless!
CHAPTER XIX.

PARADISE SQUARE AGAIN.

It seemed to me that I was treading the billows of a mighty ocean—around me were clouds and darkness. No stars were in the sky; a mingled storm of rain and sleet fell pitilessly on my bare head, but I need not.

On, on I fled, seeking only to escape from them; whither I went it did not matter, only to be away. I met no one; even the watchmen had deserted their posts, frightened from duty by the awful violence of the storm.

My dress clung tightly about my limbs, my hair fell drenched and loose around my neck, winding in coils around my throat and arms, till their touch was like that of serpents, and I shook them off in sudden horror. I had no idea of my whereabouts; I did not even think, but still fled on, on.

Once I heard a clock strike just overhead, so I knew that I must be under the shadow of a church. I shouted and laughed with the madness which was upon me.

I sat down upon the steps of the church, while spectral figures started up out of the impenetrable darkness and moved about me. There I sat until the frenzy which ruled my soul forced me to go on, aimless and blind, through the storm.

When morning broke, the tempest lulled its fury—there was promise of a beautiful day. I was exhausted, faint, partially crazed, but something told me that I was not safe in the fashionable part of the city where I found myself. I sought the close streets, went down the narrow alleys, and wandered on toward Paradise Square. Early as it was, loathsome-looking beings were astir, human in nothing. They looked after me and laughed, but nobody tried to detain me. I had sense enough to know that I needed some other covering than my showy dress. I stopped a woman, and bartered one of the rings still left on my fingers, heedless of its cost,
for the ragged shawl she wore. The creature’s eyes glistened, and, snatching the jewel, she ran off, fearful, I suppose, that I might repent the bargain; and I hurried on, still haunted by the idea that I was pursued, and that there was no safety for me but in new flight.

I was in Paradise Square at last! I found the dwelling where Nan Briggs and I had lived. There was nothing changed in the neighborhood, except that all looked older and more ruinous.

A tattered, wretched woman passed me, carrying a pail, while a sickly child clung to her, whom she shook off with curses. I recognized her instantly. It was a girl with whom I had often quarreled in the old time. Our destinies had again joined for an instant. She did not remember me, passing on with a stare and a few rude words.

She went her way, and I went where the frenzy led me—it so happened that it took me out of Paradise Square and up an alley into the street where I had lately dwelt.

I reached the house from which I had been turned out a week before—to me it seemed an age since I had last stood there! In the doorway I saw the old woman holding conversation with a man, and in her hand was a letter, into which she was vainly trying to peer.

“I knows nothing about her,” she was saying, as I approached; “she’s left me, and in debt. I wonder what this ‘ere is.” Before her curiosity could lead her further, I started forward and snatched the letter from her hand, certain that it was for me. “Hoity toity!” she exclaimed, savagely; then perceiving who it was, she burst into a fit of laughter. “There’s a purty bird, to be sure! Jest pay me the money you owes me, or I’ll pull them velvets off o’ ye as sure as you stand here.”

I felt that letter brought me new hope, but I was careful not to open it there. The man turned toward me and said something about being paid for his trouble. I drew another ring from my finger.

“Divide this between you,” I said, “only let me get back to my garret, for I want rest.”

The man and woman bent over the ring together, examining it and me with looks of wonder.
“Sartin, sartin,” said the old crone, “go right up stairs, me dear, you knows the way—it’s all nice and comfortable there—go along, purty, go along.”

I hurried past her up the tumble-down staircases, till I found myself once more in the little garret—it looked like home. I fastened the door with a stick, piled the table and chair against it, so that I should be roused if it were forced open, and sat down on the bed to read my letter. As I did so a bank-note fell from it and fluttered to the floor. I picked it up—it was a fifty dollar bill.

I felt nothing—was capable of no sensation. I read the note—the story I had written so long before had received that premium. In the midst of my stupor came one thought, one desire—to get out of that great city. I rose and started toward the door, but fell back upon the bed.

I lay there like one excited by opium—I suppose the drugs I had taken so freely during the past week were still powerful in my system. I could neither sleep nor move. There I lay with open eyes, yet beholding the horrible visions which narcotics are wont to call up. Terrible shapes—a long train of ghostly faces, passed in slow procession round the bed, carrying a shroud in which they tried to wrap me. I stood on the brink of precipices, and demon hands would push me over—down—down—into eternity. I was in Paris while the streets ran with blood, and the reign of terror was at its height. Then I was out upon a stormy ocean with only a plank between me and destruction, drifting slowly on, through cold and mist away to a sea of ice. Then for a moment all would fade, and I remembered where I was, sought to rise, but was unable.

Night came on before I was aware. I had no lamp, and there I lay in the darkness. I can not describe half the terrible sights upon which I was forced to look; only those who have suffered from the improper use of opium can form any idea of my tortures.
CHAPTER XX.

THE AIMLESS JOURNEY.

When the daylight came I was stronger; probably asleep a little while before morning. It had rained again during the night, and the water lay in a pool in the middle of the chamber, penetrating my thin slippers as I passed.

Then I remembered my desire to get out of that house—out of that city which had become so horrible to me.

I crept from my room and down the stairs without being seen by the old woman. Once more in the open air, I felt a sense of security. The pawnbroker's shop, I had so often visited, was very near; I hurried there at once. The keeper of the place recognized me instantly.

"Come to buy or sell?" he asked, with a chuckle.

"To buy," I said; "let me see some of the dresses I brought here."

He took down several; I selected one, some underclothing, and a bonnet I had carried to him. I handed him the bill—he looked surprised and suspicious, but made no remark. I did not attempt to count the money he returned me; I could not have done it.

I made him let me go into a little room back to change my clothes, promising him the garments I had on by way of payment.

I dressed myself as neatly as I could, put on the bonnet and a decent shawl, and went away. After I had gone a little distance up the street, I remembered that I had left my money in the den where I changed my clothes. I went back immediately, but the Jew laughed my demand to scorn.

"Get out of this!" he cried, "or I'll break every bone in your body! You left no money here, and you know it. Clear out, or I'll have the Charlies on you in no time!"

I did not contend with him; my brain was too much confused entirely to realize my loss.
I went up the street, and found myself again in Broadway. On I went, turning neither to the right nor the left, quite out of the city into the open country.

I traveled all day, and when night came, entered a barn by the roadside, and, lying down in the hay, slept soundly until morning. I left the place unseen, and continued my journey.

I was conscious of no object that I had in view—had no reason for going on, except to escape, as far as possible, from that great city. I felt neither hunger nor fatigue—nothing but a sensation of relief in the strange quiet that reigned around. There was nothing in my appearance to attract attention, and I went on in perfect security.

I passed several villages, but did not stop in any of them. At last I began to have a burning thirst, and paused at a farm-house to beg a drink of water. The woman kindly gave it to me, asking if I was hungry. She brought me some pieces of bread and meat, and though I had felt no pangs of hunger, the sight of food made me almost ravenous.

She asked me a great many questions, but I answered evasively, and, after resting a little while, went away. She probably thought me some insane person; I was not in the full possession of my senses. I walked more slowly, for my feet began to pain me excessively. I sat down by a brook that was partially frozen, pulled off my shoes and stockings, and bathed my feet in the icy water. I walked all that day, but I do not suppose that I went over twenty miles, although it seemed to me a long distance when I thought of it.

Where I rested that night I do not distinctly remember; I have a faint recollection of falling asleep, waking in the middle of the night almost frozen, and walking on to keep from perishing.

About daylight a farm-wagon overtook me, and the man allowed me to get in and ride. I slept in the straw until he woke me and bade me get out, as he was going no further on that road.

It was then about noon, and the place where he left me a small, straggling village. I looked around, but something warned me not to tarry there, so I hastened through it, passed up the hill, along the river-bank, and soon lost sight of the last roof.
It was growing dark when I reached another village, perched on the river-bank, like a flock of birds that had tired themselves with a long flight and paused there to rest.

I felt more restless than I had done since my journey began, and spoke aloud, as if addressing some person:

"Am I to rest here?"

But the insane spirit which had guided me so far refused to answer. I went slowly on, trying to collect my thoughts and know where my journey was to end. I was completely worn out, and it was with difficulty I could walk at all. My strength appeared to have left me suddenly; it was the reaction of the fever which had consumed me for days.

I passed beyond the village; there was only a solitary dwelling here and there in sight. The wind grew more cold and piercing, and the snow began to fall heavily. The blast was so powerful that it almost lifted me off my feet, and deprived me of the little strength I had left.

I caught a glimpse of a white house close at hand; the gate blew open as I passed—I took it for a sign—walked through, and went up the winding path which led to the dwelling. As I neared the porch I could see the lights gleaming cheerfully between the closed shutters; but when I tried to mount the steps, my strength failed, and I sunk heavily upon the icy stones.

I heard a bell ring amid the tumult in my brain—heard steps in the hall—the outer door was hastily opened, and a woman's voice reached my ear.

"It sounded like some person falling heavily. Do see what it was, Margaret. God help any poor creature who is houseless this night!"

The hall-lamp sent its flickering rays out into the gloom, falling upon me as I lay on the steps, my garments stiff and heavy with snow.

For an instant they did not discover me; some one stepped on the porch—there was an exclamation of horror—the same voice cried out:

"She's dead! O Margaret! Margaret!"

Kind hands raised me; they bore me through the hall into a lighted room and laid me on a sofa. I was not insensible, but I could not frame a syllable, and lay passive while my
clothing was removed, other garments put upon me, a warm drink held to my lips, which I was unable to swallow. After that I remember nothing, except that the same woman’s voice called out:

"She is fainting! O my God, it is death!"

Then a great darkness gathered about me, faces and voices faded into the distance, and I drifted off through the thick gloom, trying in vain to stretch out my hands and beseech them to save me from the troubled waters down which I slowly floated to the deeper blackness beyond.

CHAPTER XXI.

NEW LIFE.

For weeks life was a blank. I remember nothing; the days came and went, but each successive one found me senseless, helpless as before.

The first thing I recollect is opening my eyes in a large, pleasant chamber, carefully darkened to a twilight that suited my feeble vision. I was lying upon a bed, the curtains thrown back, so that I had a view of the room so far as the shadows would permit. I tried to think, to remember where I was; but there was a pressure on my head as if a cold hand had been laid there, and I knew nothing more.

It must have been another day when I again came to myself. I was too weak to move, but my head was free from pain. I saw a lady sitting by the bed; she was leaning over me with gentle solicitude, and when my eyes met hers in eager questioning, she smiled, and answered as if I had uttered the inquiries which struggled in my enfeebled brain.

"You are safe and in good hands. You have been sick, but you are better. Try to understand me and go to sleep."

She gave me something to drink, and I sunk into a quiet slumber.

That lady whom I had first seen was constantly with me, always kind and attentive; and there was something in the
sound of her voice, the touch of her cool hand, which was
inexpressibly grateful and soothing to me.

A fortnight after, I was able to sit up and converse a little,
though I was still too weak to walk more than a few steps,
and was carefully supported from my bed to the easy-chair in
which it pleased me to recline.

One day, after having been assisted to rise, I lifted my hand
to my head—my hair had been cut quite short.

"It will grow again," my kind nurse said in answer to my
look of wonder; "the doctor ordered it to be done, much
against my will, I assure you, for it was very beautiful.

"How came I here?" I asked, for the first time feeling able
to think and ask questions.

"We found you lying on the porch," she replied. "Prob-
ably you had intended to come in, but your strength
failed—"

"I remember," I interrupted; "I remember!"

Every thing came back to me then—my wanderings in the
streets of the city—my flight—the long journey and the last
terrible pang with which consciousness had gone from me.

Where were you going?" she asked, gently.

"Going?" I repeated; "going? Nowhere. I had nowhere
to go."

"Were you in search of some friend?"

"I have no friends," I answered; "no friends and no
home."

"I saw the tears start to her eyes, but she repressed them,
as if fearful of agitating me."

"God provides for the fatherless," she whispered; "trust
yourself to Him, he will never forsake you."

I had not heard such language for a long, long time—not
since Mr. Thornton died!

I whispered a request that she would read to me from the
Bible, and she at once complied. I think I never heard a
more pleasing reader. Her voice was exquisitely modulated,
so soft and clear.

I listened in silence, only motioning her to proceed when she
paused to see if I was tired, and drinking such strength and
consolation from the blessed words she read as I had never
before received.
At length she laid the book down and said:

“You must not listen any more to-day, my child; go to bed now and sleep awhile.”

“Will you read to me to-morrow?” I asked.

“Yes, to-morrow. You will get strong now every day.”

“I shall soon be well?” I said, inquiringly.

“Very soon, I trust.”

“I am sorry; I thought God would have let me die.”

“We must be resigned to His will,” she answered. “Remember the sweet promises I have just read to you, and be certain that ‘He doeth all things well.”

“I have waited so long,” I said, rather to myself than her; “is there never to be rest for me, never?”

“You will find it here,” she said, and her voice soothed the trouble that had surged over my soul of the blackness of the past; “sleep, my child, be at peace.”

I fell asleep with her hand clasped in mine—her dear voice murmuring a prayer that went with me into my slumber and blessed it.

So the days passed. She asked me no questions; I saw no one but her, an old servant, and the physician who visited me daily.

At last I was able to go down stairs with their assistance, and be taken into the pleasant parlor. It was a beautiful morning in early spring; the trees were putting out their leaves. A flock of robins were singing and calling from the maple branches in the yard, and the sunlight stole brightly in at the window, playing about me and warming my poor heart into new life. For the first time I asked how long I had been ill. The lady told me two months!

“And you have watched over me,” I said—“you have cared for me as a mother would have done. I did not know that Heaven had left such an angel on the earth.”

“I have only done my duty,” she replied. “I am repaid in seeing you well again.” I leaned back in my chair with a gush of grateful tears. “Do not cry,” she said; “see how bright the sun shines, how every thing speaks of peace.”

“I want to cry,” I answered; “it does me good.”

She drew my head upon her shoulder, and, nestled against her heart, I wept myself into composure. “May I ask you a
few questions?” she asked, when I was once more able to talk.

“Any thing you please,” I said; “I have nothing to conceal from you—nothing.”

“The greater portion of your history is known to me,” she continued; “you revealed it in your delirium, living over the painful scenes of your life, calling upon those who should have befriended you; so you can have very little to tell me.”

“Did I mention any names?” I asked.

“No one heard them but myself,” she replied, “and all that I know will be sacredly kept. Your last name I never could catch—you almost always called yourself ‘poor Madge, poor little Madge.’”

“My name is Madge,” I said, “Madge Wylde—a strange name they used to say, but no stranger than my life has been.”

“Let it now begin anew,” was her answer; “date another existence from this sickness, and forget the old one.”

“How shall I begin?” I questioned, and the trouble came upon my soul again. “I do not know how or what to do—I was so strong and brave once, but strength and courage have forsaken me.”

“God will show you the way,” she said.

“Yes, I will trust in him,” I answered fervently. “I have trusted in man too long.”

“You are very young yet—there is a long life before you. Let us hope that your troubles are over.”

“Oh, I can not bear any more,” I exclaimed. “God will not ask me to suffer any longer. This must be a new life that I take up now, or I had better have died with the fever.”

“It will be a new one, my child, sanctified by the memory of old troubles, by the courage with which you bore them—by the noble, womanly nature that aided you in the darkest hour.”

“I have no friends,” I said; “no one to whom I can turn. When I leave your roof I am all alone again in the cruel, pitiless world.”

“I, will be your friend; and, trust me, I will never forsake you.”

“You,” I said. “You will add to the kindness you have
shown me—you are not tired—you are willing to do more?"

"Your own mother could not feel more kindly toward you than I do, Madge. I have promised to be your friend, and during my whole life no one can say that I have ever broken a pledge."

"How shall I repay you?" I sobbed. "Tell me how."

"By doing your duty—striving to be happy, and making the best use of the means placed in your reach."

"I must have work to do," I said, eagerly. "I can not be idle; I shall soon be strong enough—let me go to work."

"You shall—you shall!"

"I can teach many things. I have had classes in drawing; I can write. I am willing to do any thing—any thing, only to be at work."

"You will find that close at hand," she said. "We have a large school in our village; they are now in want of a teacher. If you prove yourself capable I can procure a drawing-class there, and you will earn enough to make you independent and tranquil."

"And I can live in this quiet village—find rest and peace here!"

"I trust so—I am certain of it. But you must not think of work yet; you must keep yourself calm and get strong as fast as possible. That is all you have to do at present."

"God bless you!" I said, sobbing on her breast my gratitude and my tears. "But I must not stay here; I shall never be able to repay you for what you have already done."

She clasped me to her bosom and talked to me for a long, long time, and when our conversation ceased, we understood each other well.

"I have no daughter, Madge," she said; "live with me—be my child!"

I had no words to speak my feelings, but she comprehended my every thought. Mutely my arms encircled her waist, and her kiss upon my forehead sealed the bond.

"Now be at rest," she said, and I was so.
CHAPTER XXII.

AWAKENING POWERS.

Time passed on and I grew stronger, happier, more content than I had been in all my life before.

Mrs. Chester appeared to me hardly human. I used to marvel Heaven had not claimed her long before.

She was still a very lovely woman, and almost youthful looking, though she had approached middle age. There was the seal of a great sorrow upon the pale, beautiful face, but its bitterness had passed, leaving a holy calm. There was a peculiar charm in her every movement—kindness, gentleness, all womanly emotions and sympathies in her look, and my poor, trampled heart turned toward her with an outpouring of affection, such as I remembered to have felt for my mother years and years before. In a few weeks I was sufficiently recovered to walk in the open air, to sit dreamily in the warm sunlight, to read, and even employ my pencil.

There were several lovely views from the house itself, which I sketched; and I made copies of pictures from memory, which Mrs. Chester showed to the principal of the school, and those, with her influence, procured me the situation I desired, at a salary far beyond what I had ventured to hope.

I put my past life resolutely aside, and when memories from its darkness would intrude, they had lost their power to pain.

The love which I had felt for Easton Amory was gone wholly out of my soul. I had not even hatred or contempt for him—no recollection connected with that wild dream had power to trouble me. I could only thank God for having preserved me in my hour of temptation and peril.

My school duties occupied me during several hours of each day, to my great content. I did my best, and was glad to
know that both employers and pupils were satisfied. I made friends. Life blossomed into beauty around me. All my life before I had been an outcast, an alien—here I was loved and respected.

My home was with Mrs. Chester—after that first conversation it never occurred to either that I could have another. Peace and rest came to my heart, and with their dawning the powers of my mind woke to a strength and vigor they had never before possessed.

I wrote a great deal; and after a time my productions gained that force which only practice can give. Mrs. Chester sent a number of articles, both prose and verse, to leading magazines, and before I could realize it, I was a constant contributor to their pages, rapidly gaining favor and emolument.

At last I began a novel. I did not even confide my secret to Mrs. Chester. I felt timid to approach the subject.

I recollect so well the day upon which it was commenced. The thought had been in my mind for weeks and weeks—the plot had worked itself out—the characters stood clearly before me. I stopped writing for some time—that pleasant dream was so palpable that I could put pen to nothing else.

I was sitting with Mrs. Chester in the library that day—she had been reading to me, but I had heard nothing except the melody of her voice, which blended itself pleasantly with my dream. At last the power upon me would no longer be controlled. I left the apartment without a word—I could not break the spell—went up to my chamber and begun to write.

I labored from midday until dusk, and then a tap at the door aroused me. I rose, laid down my pen and put away the scattered sheets, weary physically, but with an acuteness and an activity of mind I had never felt.

Mrs. Chester entered softly, and bent over me.

"You naughty Madge," she said; "come down immediately."

I obeyed her at once, but I felt as if dreaming still.

"You have had no dinner," she said, laughing; "did you know it? I saw you were inspired when you went out of the library. But what have you been doing? Really, you look quite dazed—what revelation have you had?"
“I will tell you in a fortnight,” I replied; “let me have my own way till then.”

Mrs. Chester complied at once, and never, during the interval, did she evince the slightest curiosity. I was left to myself, walking about, dreaming at will, and working with heart, and soul, and hand.

When the time had expired, I went down to her one evening, with as much of the manuscript as I had been able to complete. I read it to her, made the story plain, and then asked her if it should be finished.

I remember so well the look she gave me, so full of love, but she only said:

“My child, you have a great gift bestowed upon you; be sure that you employ it aright.”

After that I read to her every evening what I had written; we discussed every separate chapter and scene, and from her judicious criticisms I received wonderful benefits.

I worked faithfully, and with my whole soul in the task. There was a long vacation in the school, and the pleasant summer was a season of freedom.

Mrs. Chester took good care of me; she insisted upon my writing only a certain number of hours each day; she made me take long walks and drives, and put every thing like work or strong mental effort aside when I left my desk.

I was well, happier than I had ever been—happy in the consciousness that my dreams were no longer aimless—that I had made them my subjects instead of submitting to their tyranny.

At times, in spite of all, there was a void in my heart, an emptiness—no craving for that poor love which had died out—but a pang at my own blindness, and regret for much that I had flung heedlessly from me.

I talked freely with Mrs. Chester; more and more I recalled Walter Stuart’s goodness, his purity of character, and the host of noble qualities I had once overlooked. I could see them all now, could contrast them quietly with the passion, impulsiveness, and reckless character which had left Easton Amory a bad, degraded man, and reproached myself for my own blindness and folly.

Mrs. Chester was a patient, attentive listener; and after one of those confidences I rose up calmed again by her sweet counsels and tender sympathy.
When October came, with its purple skies, its gorgeous woods, its soothing, holy influences, my book was finished. I laid down my pen for the last time with a sigh, and the sorrowful feeling with which one would part from a dear friend. I had lived so long among the creations of my own fancy that I could not bear to see them fade from me, and know that they would never be mine again.

I had bent my whole mind to my work; I had written and re-written, considered every incident and page. I had tried to make a good book—one from which those who read would rise up benefited and strengthened. I knew that the writing of it left me a better woman. I have it not on my soul that I wrote a line or a word, which, on my death-bed, could rise to haunt me with the wrong it had done.

Mrs. Chester took the manuscript from me, saying only that I had no further concern in the matter—it was her child now, and to be dealt with as she saw fit.

I asked no questions; I thought little about it after the first few days of missing its companionship; I was languid and indisposed to mental exertion, as continued labor is sure to leave one—I only wanted to be quiet.

Meantime, life passed pleasantly. My duties in the school commenced anew; I read, walked, sailed on the beautiful river, growing each day calmer and more at rest.
CHAPTER XXIII

HOPE AND FAME.

The autumn glided on toward winter, and there had been no talk of my novel between us. Mrs. Chester would not allow me to read either newspapers or magazines, but she managed so well that I really had no thought of her reason.

She never told me the book had been placed in the hands of a publisher, and I had ceased almost to think about it—any writer will understand that feeling.

At length, one day, I was in the library, lying on the sofa, and very happy in my idleness, when Mrs. Chester entered, looking flushed and excited, and happier than I had ever seen her.

Without any explanation, she placed a pile of newspapers and reviews in my hands, pointed out particular paragraphs, saying:

"Read those, Madge."

I did read them—read in a sort of dream notices of my book, so full of praise that I could not believe it real.

"It can not be," I said; "I don't understand it at all."

Reader, I was famous!

But those kind arms were about my neck, that dear voice was murmuring praises in my ear sweeter than any the world could give.

"I am so bewildered," I said; "I must be dreaming."

"Not at all—it is true, Madge! Oh, my darling, you have been sorely tried, but the future shall make amends—it spreads broad and clear before you—thank God and be satisfied."

After a time we were both calmer, and then I asked her to explain everything to me, for it looked so mysterious and incomprehensible.

"And the book is published!—but we have never seen even the proof-sheets."
She took a volume from the table and handed it to me—it was my own novel.

"I read the proofs," she said, laughingly, "and consider myself a blue- stocking on the strength of it. I was determined to astonish you, and I flatter myself that I have succeeded."

"Indeed you have—but please explain the whole affair to me."

"This was the way of it, illustrious lady! I sent the manuscript to a publisher of great influence whom I had once known—he was acquainted with your name from your magazine articles. The book charmed him—he accepted it at once, and on the most liberal terms. It is creating the utmost interest, and is the great success of the season. I have kept everything from you until now, but as your name is in everybody's else mouth, you ought to know your own worth."

She was radiant with happiness. Had I been her own child she could not have rejoiced more sincerely.

"You are making not only fame but money," she said, smiling; "the editions are selling like wildfire, and you will be an heiress after all."

So we fell to wondering and marveling that it should have so befallen—at least I did, but she said:

"You are only a child in spite of all you have suffered, my pretty Madge."

"I believe I always shall be," I replied.

"I hope so," she said, earnestly; "yes, always a child, but a child-woman."

"If I were more like you!

"Suffering affects us differently; it would never have made you like me. Madge, you have a great gift committed to your charge. I am only an humble servant of His will."

"You are my preserver, my guardian-angel! But for you, where should I be? Mrs. Amory was kind to me, my friend, but you have taught me to live for something beyond the hour—to make my life of use; after all, the book is more yours than mine."

"My dear," she said, playfully, "I claim only the glory of having corrected the proofs. I defy anybody to point out an error."
"It was fortunate that my crabbed writing was not trusted wholly to the discretion of the printers. I certainly am much obliged to you."

"Please to show it by putting on your bonnet and going with me to walk—you have been sitting in the house too long."

"I believe you consider fresh air a remedy for 'every ill that flesh is heir to.'"

"I certainly think it an excellent preventive. Look at yourself: how much healthier you are in body and mind when you take regular daily exercise—cheerful, hopeful and happy."

"It is your presence, your care, that makes me so," I answered. "Oh, my dear friend, I am the work of your hands. You have taught me, lifted me up, brought out the powers of my mind—made me all that I am or ever shall be."

"With God's help," she whispered; "think what poor creatures we should be without that."

So we were grateful for the good that had come upon me, and received it prayerfully.

Already I could see that my past sufferings had all worked to my benefit; they had given me a knowledge of life; taught me deeper insight into the human heart, and helped to prepare me for the profession which I had taken upon myself—one that I reverenced and strove to honor always."
CHAPTER XXIV.

HAPPINESS AT LAST.

When winter appeared close at hand, it suddenly stayed its progress, and a troop of beautiful Indian-summer days descended upon our mountain home.

The skies wore their most transcendent hues—the air was mild and calm—every thing spoke of peace; but there came upon me a sadness which a season like that will always bring, only it was deeper than it will ever be again.

I was bowed beneath a vague, unsettled sorrow which nothing could dispel, but no one chid me for it. I think it was neither weak nor wicked. As much as was possible, I restrained my feelings, but I could not always prevent the gust of emotion which would sweep over my soul. There was no bitterness in it—not much of vain regret; but a strange longing, an unsatisfied yearning, a great aspiration which begged for comfort, and I had none to offer.

One day, Mrs. Chester had gone out upon some business, and I was alone for many hours. I felt very solitary, full of unrest. I sung low, mournful songs for a time, but grew weary of that, and, pushing away my guitar, as I had done books and papers before, allowed myself to fall into a long, dreary reverie, such as I had come often to indulge in of late.

The tears were still wet upon my cheeks, though I could not have told why I wept, and blaming my own folly, I broke from the crowd of sorrowful thoughts that haunted me like a host of repining spirits, making me a companion in their suffering.

A volume of engravings lay upon the table, and I took it up, turning to a face that always possessed a peculiar charm for me—it reminded me of Walter Stuart.

It seemed more like him then than ever before. There were the same truthful eyes—the same sunny wave to the
brown hair; the mouth so firm yet sweet, wearing the look of a man who knew no deceit. It was a face that a stranger might have trusted; the wretched would have turned to it for consolation; a grieved child would have known instinctively that there he should find sympathy.

My thoughts went back to the childish days at Woodbrook—to our last terrible parting. I found his character always consistent—always upright and decided, yet gentle and tender as the nature of woman.

I remembered the peculiar sweetness my name always had when uttered by his lips, the misty softness of his eyes when he pronounced it, and it was with a heavy sigh that I laid the volume aside, confessing to myself that I was wiser now, and that, were the threads of my destiny again to be placed in my hands, I would fling them forth far differently from the course they had taken of old.

"Walter," I involuntarily said aloud, "Walter, I was blinded by a frenzy—could I see you now I might at least beg to be forgiven for my waywardness and cruelty."

"See how your wish is answered," said the sweet voice of my only friend, speaking suddenly.

At her words I looked up—she glided away like a spirit of light, and in her place was he for whom my soul had called—Walter Stuart was standing by my side.

A long hour after, the door opened softly, and Mrs. Chester stood there smiling down upon us. How that time had passed I can not tell. I know that to me it was as if heaven had suddenly opened and dazzled my eyes with its glory.

"My children," she said, moving toward us, "be content! The clouds have passed—lo, the new morning! Will you accept me as your mother, Madge?"

Walter Stuart drew me gently to her feet; we knelt there together, and she pressed her silent kiss upon the forehead of each. I was startled—I looked wonderingly from one to the other.

"I do not understand," I said; "what is this mystery?"

"One that is easily explained," she said. "When your delirium revealed to me who you were, I recognized the girl who had been Walter's hope and dream for years. The physician forbade my allowing you to know any fact that
could agitate you, and I kept my secret a little longer than was necessary. Madge, I am Walter's mother—will it be a new bond between us?"

I know my arms were about her neck, my kisses on her cheek, but what I said cannot be told.

She pushed me gently away.

"Walter looks jealous—go back to him."

I crept to the shelter of his arms again, feeling that henceforth there was a resting-place for my poor heart.

When we had all grown more composed, I learned every thing that had been unknown to me.

When Walter Stuart saved me from that bad man, he had been on the eve of starting South upon business which could not be deferred. He was forced, after a day's search, to leave me for a time, writing to his mother to come at once to New York and spare no efforts to find me.

Before she could comply with his letter, I had found my way to her house—the rest is simple enough. Business had detained Stuart; besides, his mother had written him that on all accounts it was better he should remain where he was for a season.

I made few acquaintances in the village. Mrs. Chester was a stranger there, Walter entirely unknown, and never having heard the name of her second husband, it was, of course, natural enough that no revelation of the tie between herself and Stuart should have reached me.

"Now you understand it all, Madge," Walter said, "when the story was concluded.

I looked into his face, pale with the emotions which rushed over me as I thought of the storms I had battled, the shipwreck I had escaped. He read my thoughts as he had always done—drew me to his heart and said:

"It is over, Madge, forgotten; my own beautiful, gifted wife!"

"Come to me, my children," whispered our mother, and again we knelt at her feet, and when she pressed a parent's kiss upon each forehead, we heard the murmur of her voice in blessing, and felt the flow of her tears in holy thanksgiving.