

ROLAND'S DAUGHTER:

A NINETEENTH-CENTURY MAIDEN.

BY ✓

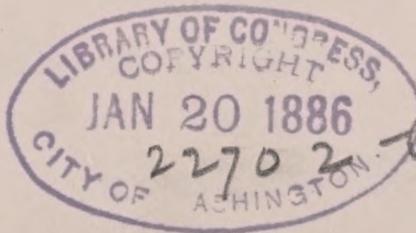
JULIA McNAIR WRIGHT,

AUTHOR OF

"AMONG THE ALASKANS," "ALMOST A NUN," "MR. STANDFAST'S JOURNEY," ETC.

35

"These are not the romantic times
So beautiful in Spenser's rhymes,
So dazzling to the dreaming boy:
Ours are the days of fact, not fable—
Of knights, but not of the Round Table."

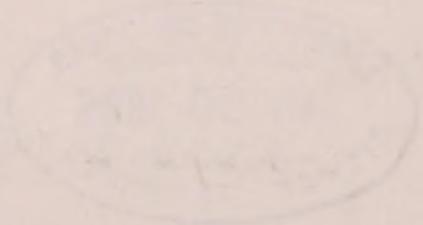


PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
No. 1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

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ROLAND'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT CAME OF AN INTERVIEW.

“But blooming childhood will not always last,
And storms will rise e'en on a tideless sea.”

“I HAVE sent for you, Miss Roland, to speak on a subject that demands instant and careful attention. I find myself in a very painful position in regard to you. I have been treated in a most shameful and unprecedented manner; it is necessary for you at once to put matters on a more honest footing.”

It was a formidable beginning, and the speaker was a formidable person. Her features, eyes, tones, manner, were distinctly suggestive of a whole armory of sharp steel instruments of keenest edge.

Miss Roland, at this juncture, should have been a person of mature age skilled in the noble art of self-defence and well panoplied in armor of proof. On the contrary, Miss Roland

was—thirteen. She was well grown for her age, but her yellow hair was braided in a thick club with curling ends which hung down about her waist, and over her square white forehead this yellow hair disported itself in very silly and babyish rings, while Miss Roland's mouth looked ready to laugh or cry on the smallest provocation. It would have been needful to pronounce her a hopeless, helpless case and deliver her at once to the power of her adversary had it not been that Miss Roland's large gray eyes could grow jet-black on the instant, her pretty, arched black brows could draw themselves into a straight line, and there was also a very decisive straight line from the top of her white forehead to the tip of her dimpled chin; all of which items suggested to a close student of physiognomy that Miss Roland, despite her insignificant age, curls, dimples, fair skin and flexible mouth, might be competent to do some battle in her own behalf, or even in behalf of an idea. At this moment she was not at all dashed by Miss Cade's allocution. She had not come into the presence of authority expecting any commendation, rewards of merit or moral sugar-plums; she had looked for an attack, and it was only a little fiercer than she had anticipated, that was all.

“Yes, madam?” she said, as all the pupils said when addressed by Miss Cade.

“It is now three years since your father brought you here and arranged that for three hundred and fifty dollars a year I should provide you tuition, lights, fuel, washing, clothing and the entire year’s board.”

This statement was incontrovertible, and Miss Roland regarded Miss Cade with a tranquil eye.

“I wish you distinctly to understand,” continued Miss Cade, “that there are no bills which should be so promptly and cheerfully paid as school-bills. Nothing else for which money is given is so valuable as instruction; in no other case is so much bestowed for so small a compensation as in the case of teacher and pupil. For a little paltry, perishable money the teacher gives mental, moral and religious culture, things imperishable and eternal. To defraud a teacher is the worst and very meanest form of fraud. When the teacher is a woman, a *lady* dependent on her exertions in her school for her maintenance, any deficiency or delay in regard to the payment of her bills becomes a most monstrous, outrageous injustice. Your father informed me that he was a teacher, a *professor*, a LATIN PROFESSOR IN A COLLEGE, and naturally I expected from him the most scrupulous uprightness in dealing. For two years all was according to agreement, but I desire to inform you that for the last year I have not received a single penny on your bills. I have written to your father re-

peatedly in the most urgent terms, and I have not had a word of reply. Do you understand that for a year, for your whole living, all your expenses, your tuition, board and clothes, you have been entirely dependent upon my charity?"

At this unexpected revelation Miss Roland's eyes became jet-black; she stood dumb.

"It is quite evident that I cannot have thus thrust on me the care of a stranger. My establishment is not an orphan asylum. I will not be tricked and cheated into charity. Evidently, your father has abandoned you. You are not old enough nor educated sufficiently to teach, but you are strong and healthy. So far as I can see, there is but one thing for you to do, and that is to get a place at service and use your wages in repaying me the three hundred and fifty dollars that you are in my debt."

There was a brief silence. In that silence Miss Roland put her ideas in order. She was but thirteen, but she was a diligent reader. She always read the newspapers when she could lay her hands upon them. She thought also of what she read, and she listened to the conversation of older people. Quickly rallying from the shock of the onset, she found her voice for a reply that Miss Cade had not anticipated:

"The debt you mention is not mine. I am a minor, and I cannot contract a debt; nor am I

responsible for debts which I could not contract. If I did go out to service, you would have no legal right to my wages; for you have no authority over me as a guardian and the contract you made was with my father. If it had been left to me, I should rather starve than be in debt; and it is quite true that I have no claim on you and that it is not your duty to support me. I will find a place, as you say; but, as to the wages I earn, I shall keep that for clothes. Perhaps you do not remember that, while for two years you got me the plainest and coarsest clothes, for the last year you have bought for me nothing."

These two hostile forces were now in full battle-array; each had thrown down her glove and stood in expectant attitude.

There was a little pause of suspense. Each considered. Said Miss Roland,

"I will go to Mrs. Villeroy; she is the only friend I have had since I came here. I will ask her to let me help her with the children, and I shall be worth my board and clothes, at least."

"This is all very distressing," replied Miss Cade; "I am very sorry for you. If you go to Mrs. Villeroy, unless you give her all your time, you will be of no use to her; and if you give her all your time, what will you do for schooling? Will you grow up with no more education than you have now? That would be

shocking. And then you will put Mrs. Villeroy in a very trying position. She will be too kind to refuse you; yet if she takes you as a servant, how many in the congregation will criticise and condemn it as extravagance! If she adopts you as one of the family, they will be yet more critical. I should be very sorry for you to put our minister's wife in an unpleasant position," concluded Miss Cade, diplomatically.

"I should risk it before I went out as some one's maid-of-all-work or to wait at table in a restaurant," replied Miss Roland.

"I can do better for you than that," said Miss Cade.

"But I don't want charity," answered Miss Roland.

"We will make it business," said Miss Cade, who had now reached the point at which she had been aiming from the opening of the interview. "You can remain here and have your board, clothes and tuition, as you always have had, but you will pay for them by helping me. I have agreed to receive two little girls, twin-sisters, six years old; you will share their room, dress them, go out with them, teach them their lessons, mend their clothes. You will continue your studies in history, grammar and French. You can learn your lessons in the evening when the twins are in bed, also when you are watching them play in the garden or square. You

must get up an hour earlier in the morning and dust the parlor and set the table, and on Saturdays you must sweep the parlor and clean the silver, in addition to attending to your own room and doing your own and the twins' mending."

"I shall earn all that I get," replied Miss Roland, dryly.

"You will get all that you earn," retorted Miss Cade, sharply.

Miss Roland meditatively faced her future as girls of thirteen do not face it unless they have been largely flung back on themselves and their own resources, and thus made older than their years. The life offered her was one of unmitigated labor and drudgery, but then she was exceptionally strong and she learned with unusual quickness. Four years of this hardship spent where she could have books and teachers would render her competent for a teacher's position, and she could then make her own way in the world. Suppose it should be even five years: people were not so very old at eighteen. Even at that advanced period the most of their lives still lay before them. She could endure for the present for the sake of doing by and by. As for the twins, she had an undeniable "faculty" with children, and they would give her practice in teaching and training. If it was her fate to be a pedagoguess, she might just as well prepare herself for her vocation.

“Very well, madam,” she said, after brief reflection, to her preceptress.

“The twins will be here to-night; you will make ready your room for them as soon as your lessons are over.”

Then did Miss Roland perceive that the whole plan had been to change her from the footing of a pupil to that of pupil-teacher and assistant chambermaid. All Miss Cade's talk about finding a place at service had been merely a *quasi* threat to bring Miss Roland into an amenable frame of mind.

“And I shall earn what I have?” she asked.

“That is understood.”

“Also that I cannot go in rags?”

“You never have been in rags,” said Miss Cade, tartly.

Miss Roland regarded her shoe: there was a hole in its toe.

The interview was ended, and Miss Roland retired to conclude preparations for her French lesson. French was Miss Cade's forte; she kept a “first-class French boarding-school.” Madame Malot, from Paris, kept a French boarding-school around the corner, but Miss Cade knew quite well that Madame Malot could not compare with herself as a teacher of Gallic tongues. “No Frenchwoman knows how to teach French,” said Miss Cade. She equally scorned the instructions of certain teachers who had been

several years in France. In fact, her scholastic *credo* was short: "There is no language but the French language, and Miss Cade is its prophet." If she could have made a coat-of-arms for herself, it would have been a shield livre-form, sabled with the irregular verbs; her pupils would have added thereto a demi-griffin gules. Whether Miss Cade's French would have passed for Parisian on the streets of Paris had not been proved, but she succeeded in producing pupils who could read it as fast as they could read English, and who supposed that they could also write and speak it. When Professor Roland brought his daughter to her, he had suggested that she should be taught Latin. To him the tongue of Cicero was the one tongue in the universe. Greek he tolerated; German had some good critical works; English he regretted being obliged to speak to make himself intelligible concerning daily affairs; but Latin was the one noble tongue fit for men and angels. Miss Cade assured him that French was much more suitable to a lady, and much more useful if Miss Roland should ever teach.

"Madam," said the professor, with dignity, "my only daughter will not be thrown upon her own resources."

However, it was agreed that Miss Roland should study French; but now, within three years, the girl who was never to be cast upon

her own resources had become Miss Cade's pupil-teacher, child's nurse, nursery-governess, second assistant chambermaid. How had this all happened? Margareth Roland knew better than to ask herself. Was she a girl to go into her classes with red eyes and set all the other girls wondering what she had been crying about? By no means. If she had troubles, she could at least keep them, as some people keep treasures, locked away in secret places. Are troubles ever treasures? Can all these tears, can all these sharp wounds that draw blood in secret, be as chaplets of pearls and diamonds, of rubies and opals, to deck the soul? Is there any secret alchemy for sorrow, whereby sighs and weeping and pain can be transmuted into glorious adornments for the spirit? Miss Roland had not considered such abstruse questions; she knew that if she stopped to consider her present troubles they would unfit her for present duties—namely, the French lesson, and the final examination in geography, and the preparing of the room for the twins. To these she devoted herself.

But at last there came an hour when the lessons were done and the room was in order; and it was five o'clock on a June afternoon, and she had time to sit down and ask how all this had come upon her—how, from the irresponsible little girl of yesterday, she had become the

self-supporting young woman of to-day. Why was it that she was not lamenting her disappeared father in a passion of tears, sure that he must be dead? Last year she had had but two letters from him, written from different places; this year she had had none. Miss Cade had written to the college where he had been professor three years before, but had received curt answer that he had not been connected with the institution for a year past.

Margareth Roland sat down to account to herself for all this. She brought her past to testify at the bar of memory. Fact after fact was stated in the tribunal of her own mind; the facts covered her life for ten years past. Her reason, as a judge sitting in equity, when all were set forth, summed up the evidence and pronounced decision. Margareth knew what was the root of the difficulty: it was another of the long roll of cases against strong drink. The Latin professor, with all his learning, birth, breeding, stately manners, effusive speech, was now and again in possession of a demon. Hereby, no doubt, he had lost his professorship, as Margareth remembered one had been lost before. Also, in such state of periodic insanity, he had used up the income—or perhaps the capital—of that little property left in his hands by her mother for Margareth's use. She knew what it was; she had heard them say when her mother died, three years before, that "Margareth

would have four hundred a year unless her father made away with it." Perhaps he had made away with it. Or perhaps, finding himself hard pressed by the enemy, he had in self-defence fortified himself in some asylum for reforming himself, of necessity using Margareth's income to pay his way. Then, when he should reform and come out free once more and take a high position, he would make all this up to Margareth.

How needful it was for her to see to it that when he came to himself and sought her she should be a daughter according to his hopes, well educated, well mannered, all that he admired! If he were dead, Margareth knew she would have heard of it in some way; it would have been in the papers or some one would have written. Evidently, he was in hiding, trying to reform, or seeking a new place, using her income because he must until he secured a salary again. Then all would be right; he would make it up. Had he not always been the best of fathers? Had he not always called her "my princess" or "pearl of maids," or some other charming name? Had he not insisted that she must have the prettiest of hats, the finest of shoes, the most fashionable of little gowns, when he took her out to walk? Who had bought her a fringed parasol, a plumed hat, a talking doll, a ring, a chain, but he? Would he not feel a

terrible sorrow and shame if he knew what cheap coarse shoes, what shabby hats, what ugly woolen and cotton dresses, what cotton gloves, what untrimmed unbleached goods, she had been provided with during three years under Miss Cade's care? "But then," said Margareth, philosophically, "it is not the clothes, but the mind, that matters. And when I am a grown-up woman and can wear what I like, what difference will it make to me that I was dressed shabbily now? I can be worth enough in myself to laugh at all that." Yes, she would see her father again, all would be right between them, and for his sake she must be the very best that a woman could be.

But she had a softer memory than this of her father, with his gifts and his eloquent sentences and his lordly airs: she had the memory of a saint. There was one who seemed to come within the horizon of her mind, softly and gradually evolved from tender mists of love and graciousness and comfort, who inundated all her life with sweetness and joy, who was so near herself that they had never seemed two, but one; and then, because she had grown too good for this lower world, that better half of Margareth's being had on a June evening when the roses were fading, faded with the roses and followed their fragrance into heaven. Some way, it had seemed to her that her mother still

lived near her, loved her, marked her life, and she half unconsciously looked for her coming back as the Britons looked "for Arthur from his tomb to reign again."

When Margareth had reached this point in her retrospection, she knelt down by her trunk and took out a sandalwood box choicely carved. It had in it various trifles, as a bottle of attar of roses and a gold thimble. She had asked her father for this box, which had been her mother's, and she had brought it with her when she came to school, after her mother died. It had been a year later when, clearing up the box one day, she found that the velvet lining of the bottom would come out, and beneath it was a card whereon by her mother's hand was written, "This is of all things the most terrible—to be weighed in God's balances and found wanting." When Margareth first read that, it was a cabalistic sentence, and she studied it curiously. By degrees light had grown into it for her. To-day she looked at it, and wondered in what crisis of her fate her mother had fortified herself with that thought. "It will be five years," whispered Margareth to herself—"five hard years; but I shall get through them somehow. I remember when I was eight, and it does not seem so very long ago. I must just make up my mind for five hard years, and in them not to be wanting."

“Wanted in the parlor, Miss Roland,” said some one, putting a head in at the door.

Margareth went down to meet her new charge, the twins. As she went Miss Cade was saying,

“Observe Miss Roland as she comes in—she has been entirely in my care three years—and you will see what splendid health and what pretty manners she has. Her friends brought her here and disappeared, and she is entirely dependent on my charity. My sole reward for all I do for her is the approval of my conscience.”

It was to be inferred that the charity had extended through three years.

Miss Roland was also a sample of what Miss Cade could do in physical, mental, moral and social training. It would be quite impossible for Miss Cade to find a better advertisement or testimonial.

Margareth entered, and was presented to the twins' father.

“Will you come with me?” said Margareth to the twins.

The pair put their chins sungly down on their lace collars and looked up from under their bangs; then they simultaneously rushed at her with a shout of laughter.

CHAPTER II.

MISS ROLAND RECEIVES A LETTER.

“How short our happy days appear!
How long the sorrowful!”

THERE was certainly no fault to be found with those twins. They were a jolly little couple, well satisfied with themselves and with all the “works of creation and providence,” so far as they knew them. They had been born into a world exactly fitted for their enjoyment, and had found a father and mother that suited them as well as if made to their order. Day and night followed each other that the twins might have play and rest; the seasons alternated that after ample sledding and snowballs the twins might have flowers and picnics, strawberries, peaches, apples and nuts. An accident to their mother which sent the twins from home brought no tempests into their existence, for they were set up as small empresses of the “select French boarding-school,” and Margareth was their first maid of honor.

Gold—potent “Open, sesame!”—had opened all Miss Cade’s indulgence to the twins. Their father evidently had no familiar demon to cause

him to forget his children. Once in two months he came to see them. He saw them alone; he took them out riding; he gave them all that their small hearts desired; he bestowed gifts on Miss Cade, but especially on Margareth, for their sake. It was well that he was moved to be generous to Margareth; she had an inherited taste for the dainty things of life, and how she would have found an assortment of decent gloves, a full dozen of kerchiefs, or ribbons, or white aprons, or a gown better than a ten-cent calico, had not the father of the twins, who was one of the dry-goods princes, brought her these things, could not be guessed. Miss Cade never offered to furnish her anything. Margareth worked indefatigably, but she had little beyond board and tuition. She sold, through Mrs. Villeroy, the ring and the chain her father had given her, and with the money she bought shoes.

Miss Cade was not a story-book monster; she did not plunder Margareth of the choice presents. She was well pleased to have Margareth go out with a nice navy-blue merino and a hem-stitched cambric kerchief, and to have people say, "How very good Miss Cade is to Miss Roland!" No doubt Mrs. Villeroy knew better, but it is not the calling of a minister's wife to tell tales.

No girl would voluntarily have taken a life

of unthanked drudgery such as Margareth led, and yet for her it had great advantages. Miss Cade looked forward to the day when Margareth should be her most useful though unpaid teacher, and no one in the "select French, etc., school" was so diligently drilled and required to be so thorough as Miss Roland. The other girls were not expected to know anything about sewing or housework; Margareth must learn to make, to mend, to run a machine, to do buttonholes. She could keep a house in order, she could set a table. In the summer vacation every one left the school but Miss Cade, the twins and Margareth; at that time the cook took three weeks' vacation, and then poor Margareth learned to cook. She confided with Mrs. Villeroy that she thought her existence hideous and sometimes cried about it at night when she was in bed and all the world was quiet.

" 'God has his plan
For every man,' "

said Mrs. Villeroy. "If we knew his plan from the beginning as we shall see it at the end when life is summed up, none of us would be likely to complain of his way of carrying it out. But in that case we should not be able to exercise the graces of faith and patience. All these things that you hate now are making you worth just so much more as a woman—worth more to yourself and to the world."

Margareth grew wise in the care of children. She nursed the twins if they were sick; she amused them; she taught them. They learned to read, write, sew, began French, arithmetic, geography, all with Margareth.

“How are your two teachers?” asked Mrs. Villeroy, once.

“My two pupils, don't you mean?” asked Margareth.

“You will find that they are teaching you more than they learn from you,” replied Mrs. Villeroy.

Margareth escorted the twins to Sabbath-school and put them in the infant class, while she was in Mrs. Villeroy's Bible class.

“Margareth,” said her teacher, one day, “what are the dangers of Sabbath-schools?”

“I did not know there were any,” answered the surprised Margareth.

“I will suggest some,” said Mrs. Villeroy. “First, the danger that the Sabbath-school may stand to the child in the place of the church; that it will become the children's church, and not the nursery of the church; that the little ones will have a habit of going to Sunday-school and a habit of not going to church.”

“Then I will bring the twins to church, but they will go to sleep.”

“They will in time learn to keep awake: habit will be formed. A second danger of the Sab-

bath-school is that all religion and teaching will be turned over to the teacher, and that home-instruction will be neglected. Of the two, home-instruction is more important, because, with the mind undiverted by other children, by their dress, by its own dress, the child at home comes into immediate personal contact with the teacher. There is a nearer bond, also, between the child and the home-teacher. There is the *tu*, not the *vous*, in teaching. A third danger of the Sabbath-school is that the lesson-leaf or the teacher's lesson-talk shall take the place of the Bible. Are our children learning as much of the Bible by heart as they should? Are they *familiar* with the book itself? Are they reading it? Are they apt in finding references? Do they search it for its stories? Is it the chief source of their knowledge, the first, best book in their library? It should be this. Of course you understand that I am illustrating the abuse, not the right use, of the Sabbath-school."

It was in striving to make the Sabbath-school a boon, and not a bane, to her twins that Margareth found that she could tell delightful stories. She began on Sundays with Scripture stories. The twins, delighted with the gift that thus shed a new glory and joy into their existence, became insatiable for tales. Then Margareth found the lately dreary hours of sewing passing fleetly while she told the twins all manner

of golden stories of old and young, of youths and children, of good and evil fortune. Very often she wove a splendid romance of what she would wish her life to be—what, indeed, it was sure to be when her father should come out safe and sane from the retreat or exile where he was hiding for reform, and should take his own honored place in the world, and should set Margareth, proud and happy, at his side. It was such a joy to utter all these glorious hopes to those honest-eyed children, who guessed nothing of the bitter meaning hidden in the tale. To them only Margareth spoke; neither Miss Cade nor Mrs. Villeroy guessed the mystery and sorrow of Margareth's life, nor imagined what lay at the root of that singular desertion. Then, too, when Margareth wanted to use some happy free hour for reading, she could now secure peace by saying to the twins, "Be good and quiet, for I am reading a splendid story to tell you after you have gone to bed." So she could read in peace, history or the age of fable or fairy mythology or the age of chivalry, and the twins, playing harmoniously, would admonish each other, "Keep quiet; 'member her new story."

If Miss Cade had guessed how much time Margareth thus secured, she would have given her more sewing to do, but Margareth locked her door and kept the twins still and happy; and their admiring father told all his friends

what a notable place Miss Cade's select French, etc., was for keeping little girls jolly and bringing them on in their studies in a marvelous manner.

If Margareth was wise, so was Miss Cade. If the girl fell ill, Miss Cade would be obliged to take care of her, and lose, also, that excellent, comprehensive, uncostly advertisement and testimonial known and read of all who saw Margareth. So, though the girl worked continuously, she had change of occupation, and also she was in a room flooded with sunshine and where in good weather all the windows were open.

So day after day and month after month of hard work went on, and Margareth increased not only in stature and in favor, but in wisdom also; for, while the paying pupils learned what was promised on the circulars should be taught, Margareth learned everything that Miss Cade judged could possibly make her more useful. Looking along the future, Miss Cade made sure that the father was never coming back, and that, habituated to her present life, Margareth would never think of leaving it, but, becoming each year a more profitable investment, would keep on at the select boarding-school indefinitely. Hard, calculating, avaricious, unsympathetic, Miss Cade was, but, like adversity, she was "a good teacher."

Nor was Miss Cade the only epiphany of ad-

versity to Margareth: the day-pupils and the boarding-pupils soon detected the altered situation. They saw Margareth busy in duties about the house; they noticed that to her Miss Cade's accents were always super-acid and mandatory. Catching the tone of the establishment, they seldom addressed her except to demand a service or some aid about the lessons; and when the daily procession set forth in its worship of Hygeia, no one wished to walk with Miss Roland: "She was shabby;" "She was half a servant." However, that practically was of small account, for it was Miss Roland's duty to close the line of march with one of the antic twins clinging to either hand and her whole attention in requisition to keep the pair from incontinently jumping over or into gutters or rushing into candy-shops.

The regular pupils were not allowed to go into the street alone: it would have been a crying sin to appear at the post-office or the railroad station or at any of the stores; but at all hours of day or evening Margareth could be sent on errands to any of these places, or to get milk, yeast, stationery, shoes from the menders or medicine from the drug-store. Liberty has its sweets, but Margareth did not find them in this fashion.

A year passed—almost another year also—and then the twins were taken home; their mother

was quite well again, and their father came for them. Their departure left the select French boarding-school a wilderness to Margareth. Her occupation was gone; her only friends were gone; and now, instead of pleasant cares for the twins, Miss Cade gave Margareth more housework to do. She had the bell to answer, the halls and stairs to keep tidy, the schoolroom to sweep and dust. Her own room, also, was changed: she now had a dismal little nine-by-ten chamber in the attic—a place without carpet or curtain or other furniture than a bed, a chair and a little table whereon stood a cracked bowl and pitcher. Margareth wondered if she could endure three years more of such life. It was the first of April; could she spend three long cold winters in this wretched fireless room? However, summer was now to be considered; she could get on then, and who knew what would occur before November? Never had she known two months so long as April and May.

Among Margareth's other duties was now that of going for the mail at ten in the morning. Formerly a lad had performed this duty for twenty-five cents a week, but Miss Cade thought that Margareth could now save her the money, and the exercise would be good for Miss Roland.

Miss Cade read all the letters that came to the house. Margareth carried them to her; she opened all, looked each one over, returned it

to its envelope, and then allowed Margareth to go and deliver it. The pupils bitterly resented this espionage, but it was one of the rules.

“You knew it before you came,” said Miss Cade, “and I alter rules for nobody.”

Early in June, Margareth came flying home from the post-office highly excited:

“Oh, Miss Cade, Miss Cade! Here is a letter for me! From father!”

“He has been long enough about writing,” said Miss Cade, laying the little heap of letters before her and taking up one slowly.

“Please, Miss Cade, won’t you read mine first, so that I can have it? Think! I have not heard from him for three years.”

“I shall read them in the usual order; yours will come last, as you are lowest down in the alphabet. I am the one that should be most interested in your father’s letter, as he owes me money. You can never hope to be a *lady*, Miss Roland, or even a respectable woman, while you are capable of such excitement.”

Margareth turned and looked out of the window; she was quivering with excitement and trying not to cry. She knew that the more anxious she seemed, the more slow Miss Cade would be. She wished she had kept the letter and said nothing about it. Oh, what did it say? He had written; all was well; he would send for her; her bondage would be ended.

Slowly Miss Cade cut open each envelope and read each letter. It took her such a weary time! Finally she said,

“Here, Margareth; distribute these.”

“But mine, please, madam?”

“I will read it while you are gone; you can come back for it. The young ladies must not be kept waiting.”

Margareth hurried from room to room with the mail, and was back as Miss Cade finished reading. Miss Cade's nose was very red; the little black curl at the top of her comb was shaking with indignation; her eyes scintillated. It is very sure that if Margareth had not already known about the coming of her letter she would never have known about it. Even now Miss Cade would have refused to give it up had she not known the damsel's decisive temper, and that if she refused her the letter which broke the three years' silence Margareth would promptly appeal to Mr. Villeroy and make her wrong known to the public. Miss Cade did not wish her ways criticised.

“There is your letter,” she cried, sharply. “Surely, the very coolest piece of impertinence I ever imagined! Take it!”

It was Miss Cade who was now forgetting the unruffled demeanor of a lady, but the instance was not isolated.

Margareth perceived that there was a battle to

be fought, and she stood still collecting her powers whilst she read her letter :

“MY DEAR DAUGHTER: In the time since I saw you, you have grown from a little child to almost a young woman. Five years! A long time for a father to be parted from his only daughter. The tie between a father and daughter is very close and tender. We owe that noble work *De consolatione* to the mourning of Cicero for the gifted and beautiful Tullia. I feel sure that my nineteenth-century maiden is not a whit behind the Roman daughter in charms and virtues. I regret to summon you from your happy life and school-duties to take the unpleasing cares of a nurse, but in sickness you are the only one to whom I can turn. Come, then, to me at once. Miss Cade will purchase through-tickets for you. See that you do not leave without money in your purse. It is my rule that one should always carry, outside of tickets, the full amount of fare for a trip, so that, in case of any accident or difficulty, there would be, at any point of the journey, means to proceed or return. Tell Miss Cade, with my compliments, that when this crisis is over I shall be pleased to communicate with her as to my indebtedness on your behalf.

“Your devoted father,

“M. TULLIUS ROLAND.

“He is sick! My poor father! And he has no one to take care of him! I will get ready at once. How soon will a train go, Miss Cade? When can I start?”

“‘Start’!” cried Miss Cade, furiously. “You will not start at all; you will stay where you are. The very idea of such a thing! At your age! Fifteen! To go from here to Boston alone! The notion is monstrous. And ‘Miss Cade’ is to buy your tickets and give you money in your pocket, is she? Cool enough, I must say! If he was able to write all that rigmarole about Cicero and Tullia and your beauty and virtues, he was quite able to draw a cheque for the money he owes me, and for your traveling expenses. ‘Miss Cade will provide,’ indeed! It is bold, shameless robbery. If I should send you off, I should never get back what I put into the trip, nor you, nor the eleven hundred dollars he owes me. No, no, miss; here you stay!”

“It is *not* eleven hundred dollars,” cried Margareth, hotly. “For two years I have paid, according to our bargain, for all I have had; he owes you for only one year.”

“*He* does not know that,” retorted Miss Cade. “And I must say that demanding railroad tickets and pocket-money is a new way to pay old debts. Say not another word, Margareth. This is by no means the letter of a dying man; and if it were, you would be better off in my care than

all alone in a strange city. Not a word! The stairs, both halls and the front porch need sweeping; then you will see that you have the ten pages of Taine's *Pyrenees* perfect for to-morrow. After that you will find on my table a basket of stockings that I was too busy to darn last week, and I want you to do them all—nicely, too."

Margareth thrust her letter into her pocket and went out without a word. Her heart was bursting with indignation. She must have time to think, to resolve; she could always think to more effect when she was occupying her hands. She took her broom, brushes, dust-cloth and dust-pan, and went to work at the halls. Probably Miss Cade's stair- and passage-ways had never had such a furious setting to rights as they got that day, when they received the effects of all Miss Roland's superfluous wrath and energy.

Taine's *Pyrenees* being next in order, Margareth took the book and adjourned to the room of Hope Cornell, a pleasant girl with a universal disability for all languages, her own included. The parent Cornells being ambitious and exacting for their child, Miss Cade moved her through the successive stages of the French tongue by grace of Margareth, who studied the lessons with her. When Margareth repaired to Hope's room, she took also a railway guide from the hall closet, where one of the departing pu-

pils had left it a few weeks before. While Hope wandered hopelessly in the mazes of Taine's best sentences, Margareth studied the guide-book. Finally she looked up:

"Hope, you said lately that you would need another trunk to take home your things at vacation. Will you trade with me—your portmanteau for my trunk?"

"Why, girl, you have only one trunk, and it is worth much more than my portmanteau."

"Not to me now. If you do not mind, I would like very much to trade."

"Oh, I'll trade, certainly. The gain will be mine."

"Miss Cade is in the second French class; the girls are all in their rooms. Will you empty the portmanteau and let me take it up to the attic now, and come with me and help me carry down my trunk softly?"

This looked immensely like an adventure, and was far more congenial to Miss Cornell's soul than the most fervid description of pink-skinned Pyrenean pigs. She promptly assisted in the exchange.

But when the trunk was down and hidden in the closet, Miss Cornell threw her arms about Margareth, and, having locked the door, challenged her intentions:

"Margareth, you mean to do something; what is it? You shall not stir a step till you tell me

the whole thing. Are you going to run away? I don't wonder—Miss Cade treats you disgracefully—but please, please don't go till after my French examination, or I know I shall perish. Margareth, tell me! I like you better than any girl in school; you are so kind about helping me and doing all those unutterably disgusting French exercises, and you are not one bit proud because you are so much farther on than other girls of your age. You are just ready to cry; I see it in your eyes. Has the harpy been abusing you?"

For answer, Margareth burst into hearty tears, moved by this unusual sympathy, and put into Hope's hand her father's letter, which Hope read with much eagerness, and vast disappointment that it was not the lucubration of some admiring youth.

"Your father! I didn't know you had a father," cried Hope.

"He is a very learned man—a Latin professor in a college," said Margareth, proudly. "I have not heard from him for three years. He has been away traveling, or—or sick, or something; and now, you see, he sends for me to nurse him. He is alone, he needs me, and Miss Cade says I shall not go a step. She forbids it; she will not get my tickets. She says if he dies I will be safer here. She wishes me to neglect my sick father!"

“The monster! The horrid wretch! I always hated that woman. Why, Margareth, your father may die all alone there by himself. Have you written to say you cannot go? Oh how I shall pity you! Day after day you will not know whether he is better or worse, or dead or alive. As like as not, she will not let you see any more letters. Very likely she has hidden your letters this three years. Poor Margareth! what will you do, wondering and waiting and not hearing anything?”

“It will not be that way,” said Margareth, drying her eyes and speaking with decision, “for I am going to him.”

CHAPTER III.

MISS ROLAND ESCAPES.

“Morn in the white wake of the morning star
Came, furrowing all the Orient into gold.”

“**YOU** are going to him !” cried Hope. “When?
How? Without leave?”

“I will tell you my plan, if you will promise not to say one word to any one about it.”

“I wouldn’t for the world,” said Hope, breathlessly.

“I must go,” said Margareth. “It is not for spite or for any fancy of romance about running away; but I know my poor father better than any one does, and I know what troubles he is subject to. Now that he calls me to help him, no one shall keep me from him. Before my mother died she said, ‘Margareth, always love your father and do your duty to him like a good daughter.’ I promised, and I am sure it is not my duty to leave him sick among strangers.”

“Indeed it is not. But how will you manage to go?”

“An express-train will leave the station here at two o’clock to-night; I shall have my port-manteau packed, and shall take that train. I

shall let myself out of the house quietly, and Miss Cade will not know until to-morrow at half-past-seven breakfast, when I shall be almost to New York."

Hope clasped her hands in intense enjoyment of the proposed adventure and of Miss Cade's coming surprise and fury :

"But how will you get that great portmanteau, with all your things in it, to the station—a quarter of a mile distant? Oh, I would love to go and help you, but I dare not."

"I would not allow you to," said Margareth, quietly. "I take the portmanteau because I could not get a trunk out of the house without too much risk of being seen by some one. You know Tom Neal, the boy I visited and told stories to when his leg was broken? He would do anything for me, and he is strong, if he is only twelve. I shall see him this evening and have him come and help me carry the portmanteau. He sleeps in a little down-stairs room at his grandmother's, and he can slip out easily in the night."

"Dear me! I wish I were going with you or in your place. I love adventures. Do you know how to go? Have you traveled?"

"I know how I came here, and I have heard the girls tell, and Mrs. Villeroy has told me all about their trips. The train at two in the morning is express, and stops only at Poughkeepsie

and New York. There I shall easily find the train to Boston, for it starts from the same station; and so I shall get on somehow."

"How much money have you?" demanded Hope.

"Fifty cents."

"But, girl, that will not be enough to buy your tickets."

"I know it will not; that is why I am so anxious to get an express-train. You see, after I am once on, they will not stop in the night to put me off, and they will carry me through to Poughkeepsie, at least. So on I shall keep, taking express-trains for long runs, and I hope to get through—after some trouble and delay, of course."

"Why, I never heard of such a thing!"

"It *is* horrible. But the railroads shall not lose money by it: when I get home, I shall send money back to pay for the tickets. I do not wish to take such a way, but I must go. I'd walk to get to my poor sick father."

"But, Margareth, in some of the cities they have great iron gates before the cars, and they say 'Show tickets' before they let you go inside where the trains are."

"I did not know that," said Margareth, much troubled; "but I hope the conductor will let me go on to New York when I say that I am alone and have no money, and then I shall only have

that one big city with its iron gates, and I can buy a little ticket with twenty-five or thirty cents, and then go on."

"Dear, dear! And what will you eat?"

"Oh, I can go without eating; or if I just have two biscuits at a penny each, I could get on for as much as two days, I think."

"You'll starve. It is the most dreadful thing I ever heard of. Why do you not get the money of Mrs. Villeroy?"

"You know the Villeroy's are all away for a month; Mr. Villeroy's father has died. I know no other person to ask; and if I went to any friends, they would think something strange and come right to Miss Cade. Then she would keep me from going. She might lock me up. She does not want me to go; I am too useful. And—I might as well tell you—there is some debt due for me, as you see in that letter, and she wants to keep me until it is paid. She need not fear; my father is a gentleman."

"She is a monster," said Miss Cornell, who made hating her schoolmistress the first duty of her life.

"All the same, I shall give her a chance to let me go. I shall go to her after tea, when she has had time to get cool and consider the matter, and set all the need before her and beg her for money just for my tickets and no more. Then, if she still refuses, I shall slip out and see Tom

Neal, and pack my portmanteau and be off by half-past one. I wish you would come down and lock the back door after me, so as to make the house safe."

"Now, here," cried Hope, furiously, "is what comes of our not being allowed to keep any pocket-money in this jail of a school! Miss Cade takes it all and doles it out a bit at a time when we tell her what we wish to do with it. I know she manages to keep half of it for herself. It's downright stealing."

"Oh, nonsense! No, she does not. Be fair," said Margareth.

"If we girls had any pocket-money left us," continued Hope, "between mine and what I could borrow, you need not go off in such a forlorn way. But let me tell you one thing, my poor dear: down under the lining of my brush-case, where the old spy cannot find it, I have hidden five dollars, which my brother gave me when he visited me lately. Now, that you shall have, and it will be enough at New York to get you on the Boston express, gates or no gates. Keep it for that."

"Oh, you are so good, Hope! I never dreamed of such a thing. I will surely pay it back."

"Not a bit; it is a love-token. I meant to have a real jolly spread some night—turkey stuffed with oysters, and what not—just to spite

old foxy. I'll take this expedition instead of it, and you shall write me under cover to Tom Neal and tell me all your adventures, and we will have a night-session and read it to all the girls, and you will become quite a heroine. Bless me! I haven't felt so lively since the term opened. Let me plan it all out. Your brown merino will do very well to travel in—quite genteel; your shoes, my dear, are simply not presentable, but I have a new pair: never had 'em on, and will not need them before vacation. Mother always provides too much. You shall have them. I hate them, any way; the heels are quite too low for my fancy. Your brown gloves will do, but your old straw hat with that rag of velvet about it and that old flower is too disgusting for anything; it makes you look thoroughly dowdy. If I cannot learn a French lesson, I can trim a hat, and that art now is more to the purpose. Right after dinner I'll slip up to the attic and get your hat, and sponge it off and trim it with that new silk handkerchief of mine—gold, brown and a dash of crimson. Just the idea! It will be more than swell, and father will assuredly buy me three handkerchiefs to make up for it when I tell the pathetic tale of its sacrifice."

Margareth remembered the basket of stockings, and knew that all duties must be performed if Miss Cade were to be in a humor to listen to her last appeal that evening. Hope Cornell,

with her voluble plans, was quite likely to get zero in her French for the next day. Margareth went, therefore, for the darning, begging Hope to forget her proposed flight and devote herself to the Pyrenees. When she returned, Hope was missing. She soon came in, breathless:

“See here! Here’s lunch for you. Lucy Day’s aunt smuggled her a pound-cake when she visited her yesterday; I bought this wedge of it with my red-bordered handkerchief. Lucy has been pining for that to wear with her red sash.”

“You dear girl! Your shoes, your money, your handkerchiefs! You will have yourself stripped for me,” said Margareth, overwhelmed by Hope’s unexpected zeal.

“I never enjoyed anything so much in my life,” said Hope; “it breaks up the intense dullness of my prison and enables me to exist until my freedom—that is, the twenty-ninth day of this present month. It will give me a splendid romance to tell to the girls during the summer, and perhaps I can so show up the amiable Cade in it that father will not return me to her mercies next September. Then good-bye to grammar—grammar, the science I can never learn; for why one word should be an adjective and another a noun I never could see. Speaking words is easy enough, but spell them according to Webster and Worcester and other inquisitors-

general of the rising race, that I cannot. In spelling I think every man should be a law to himself, and not set up to be a law to other people."

"Do, please, Hope, keep still and learn that French. To-morrow I shall not be here to help you with the next lesson."

"Then I shall be sick, go to bed and get excused."

In the evening Margareth went to Miss Cade. She earnestly set forth her duty as a daughter to go when her father needed her, begged her teacher to give her just her ticket by the cheapest way to Boston and not one penny more.

"I will pay you back, Miss Cade—indeed I will—if I earn it myself by sewing. And then there is my bottle of attar of roses. It has a gold stopper; it is worth the ticket, I am sure. You can have that until I send the money."

"'Attar of roses'!" cried Miss Cade, in great scorn. "As if I cared for perfumery! There has been too much of such wastefulness in your family, or I should have had my dues. Say no more; you shall not go. You are just becoming useful to me; you shall stay until my bill is paid. If your father wants you, let him send me my dues. Go to your room, and don't let me see you again."

Margareth obeyed minutely: she went to her room and did not let Miss Cade see her again.

She stole out the back door, found Tom Neal, bound him to secrecy, and engaged him to be at the gate at half-past one; then she returned to her room, packed her portmanteau and set everything in order. Her yearly-lessening wardrobe went safely into the portmanteau, and also her few treasures, her Bible and text-book, and a book of poems that had been given to her by Mrs. Villeroy.

At midnight, when the house was in profound sleep, Hope stole up in high glee to superintend Margareth's dressing. The boots fitted, the hat looked unexceptionably well, the brown merino was a very proper traveling-dress. The warm June night precluded the need of a wrap. Hope had surreptitiously made a sandwich at the tea-table, and she put that and the cake into a little lunch-bag of her own. It was no great work of charity for Hope to give away things: she greatly enjoyed doing it; and then her mother made all good to her by supplying the vanished articles with something more costly. In stocking-feet Hope and Margareth stole down to the kitchen door. Tom Neal stood, a little black shadow, in the moonlight. The girls kissed, Tom shouldered the baggage, Margareth warned Hope to lock the door at once and regain her room in swift silence.

"I'm going up to cry my eyes out," said Hope; "I shall cry regularly every day until

you send me a letter by Tom Neal. Don't wait too long, or my complexion will be quite ruined—just on the verge of vacation, too.”

From the shelter of five years Margareth was gone into the stillness of the moonlight night.

So far as regards any experience in traveling, no one could be more helpless than Margareth, but to balance this disadvantage she was emphatically what is called a “level-headed girl,” calm, decided, closely observant. Margareth took her place in the car which Tom Neal, who was a vender of fruit and small wares, told her was the one last visited by the conductor; she chose the last seat in the car, as that was some little distance from any occupied by passengers. Neal crowded the big portmanteau under the seat and was presently away, and then the train was rushing off through the moonlight.

It was some little time before the conductor sauntered up with his “Ticket, please!” Margareth looked steadily out of the window, replying very low,

“I haven't any ticket.”

“H'm! that is a poor plan. Always buy your ticket. Money?”

“I cannot buy a ticket,” responded Margareth.

“What? What is this? Lost your money, miss?”

“No,” said Margareth, looking around; “I

knew I could not get a ticket when I started, but I had to come."

"Now, see here! That won't do," said the conductor.

"I know it is very wrong," said Margareth, who would have sacrificed her last penny then and there for a ticket to New York had she not had in mind the closed iron gates of which Hope had warned her guarding the Boston express, and of the terrors of being penniless in that wicked city New York. "I know, sir, I am doing a very ugly thing, coming on the train without any ticket, but just as soon as I get home—to my father, that is—I will send you the money."

The conductor shrugged his shoulders; he had heard before of sending money. However, this was a very pretty, ladylike young girl:

"So you are going to your father? He should see that you had tickets and started properly."

"He would, but he is sick; he sent for me to take care of him. If I do not go, I fear he will die all alone."

"Well, couldn't the people you were with get your ticket?"

"It was my school-teacher, and she would not do it."

"Very inhuman I call that. This train stops at Poughkeepsie to change engines; that is the only stop—half-past four."

“I know; that is why I came on board. I am very sorry to be doing what looks so wrong.”

The conductor walked off. With a man or a boy he would have expressed himself differently, but this nice-looking girl traveling alone in the night, and evidently in distress, was another affair. After musing a while he mentioned the matter to an elderly man in the forward part of the car. The man looked back at Margareth and laughed a little :

“Let her alone. No doubt she is a runaway from one of these boarding-schools. She has got into some difficulty, and is going home to her people. I think they're too hard on the girls in some schools. We had such a case up where I live. A girl at school near Troy, by some ill-luck, in a crowd of girls, stuck her scissors in another girl's shoulder. It was pure accident, but the sufferer was a girl she disliked, and so she was accused of injuring her intentionally. That hurt her feelings so that she put on her bonnet and ran off on a night-train without a cent, and, upon my word, she borrowed, or whatever you call it, her way clear home to Buffalo. Of course her father made it right with the school and the railroad, but the child was so overwrought and fretted that she was sick for a month. This child has no doubt been set on some way, and feels as if she would die if she doesn't get home at once.”

Finding herself agreeably ignored, Margareth fell asleep. When she awoke, it was four o'clock and day was dawning. A pale light lay along the sky, the moon had set, the dew glittered on the grass, the cattle were stirring in the meadows. The conductor came to her :

“ We shall soon be in Poughkeepsie. Is your father there ? ”

“ No, sir ; he is in Boston. ”

“ And you are going through to Boston without any money ? ”

Margareth hung her head ; that five dollars weighed on her. She did not know what she ought to do. But the terrors of the iron gates, of night in New York, perhaps, and nowhere to go, and Hope's assurances that a stranger without any trunk must pay in advance at hotels,—all these things looked appalling, and her sense of right gave way under the pressure.

Boston ! That put a very different face on affairs to the conductor. He could not, as man or official, countenance such a trip. He spoke sharply :

“ Now, see here ! Sick father or not, you should never have undertaken such an expedition. No doubt your schoolmistress was quite right about it. If I let you stay on the train clear to New York, you will be worse off than you are now. Have you friends, know any one there ? ”

Margareth shook her head.

“It will never do at all. Ever been there?”

Another negative nod from Margareth.

“Well, I certainly am not the man to take you to New York and abandon you to the mercies of the city. Impossible! The way for you to do is to take the very next train *back* from Poughkeepsie. I'll give you a line to the conductor, and your schoolma'am won't kill you for running off. She can pay your trip up and send the bill to your folks. If your father needs you, he'll send money. No man wants his daughter, at your age, to be running around alone and penniless. The idea is monstrous. You go straight back from Poughkeepsie. The train will be along at eight; you can stop in the station until then. You'll be safe home at noon.” He wrote a few lines in a notebook, tore out the page, folded it, gave it to Margareth, and said coaxingly, “Now, I'll put you off at Poughkeepsie, and do you go back like a good girl.”

It was no more than Margareth had expected; she said nothing. The train stopped to change engines; the conductor came for the portmanteau. The day had grown clearer; a few trainhands were moving about in the crisp morning; the city was still asleep except the rumbling market-wagons. A little longer, and Margareth stood alone, her portmanteau at her feet, her caba in her hand; she felt herself to be the

most forlorn child in the world. The train had gone; New York, with its iron gates and its terrible reputation, lay far away; Boston and her father, farther away still. She was tired, chilly, faint, discouraged. One and another and another passed her. One man took the trouble to inform her "there would not be another train for an hour." Another kindly hinted "perhaps she would like to go inside and sit down." She scarcely heard either; she was wondering what she should do. Should she exhaust her little capital now? How then get through and out of New York, the vast city lying across her path like one of the old-time dragons which devoured young men and maidens? Then she thought it would have been better to have gone to Albany and found at his store her friend the father of the twins. No doubt the family had not left for the country so early in the season; the twins would be glad to see her, and she could tell her story to their father and borrow money for her journey to Boston. Possibly, now, she would do well to buy a ticket for Albany. But then suppose she should not find her friends there? What should she do then, quite destitute in Albany? Or suppose that her poor father, ill, alone, anxiously waiting for his child, should die while she was delaying? Margareth wished she knew what was right. What did God mean her to do? She had read something

about running before the face of Providence and then having to run back. She wished that now people were directed by an audible voice—not uncertain, like Dodona's oracle, but clear: "This is the way; walk ye in it." She thought of a favorite verse in her book of poems:

"Sweet were the days when Thou didst lodge with Lot,
 Struggle with Jacob, sit with Gideon,
 Advise with Abraham; when Thy power could not
 Encounter Moses' strong complaint and moan.
 Thy words were then, 'Let me alone!
 One might have sought and found Thee presently
 At some fair oak or bush or cave or well.
 Is my God this way? 'No,' they would reply;
 'He is to Sinai gone, as we heard tell;
 List! ye may hear great Aaron's bell.'"

Evidently, she had been born a great many hundred years too late. She was in a world where very many ways might seem right and none of them be right, and where maidens-errant were certainly at a disastrous discount. With her head bent low, her hands loosely clasped before her, her face snow-pale, with every happy dimple smoothed away and the mobile mouth much nearer a cry than a laugh, she made a more pathetic picture than she knew.

"What is the matter, child?" said some one, coming up behind her and addressing the club of braided yellow hair with curled ends. "Excuse me, miss, but are you waiting for a train?"

Margareth looked up. The speaker was an elderly man with gray hair, a benevolent smile and a shrewd blue eye. She answered frankly:

“I am thinking how I can get to New York without a ticket.”

“Well, that is rather a difficulty. How did you get here so early in the morning?”

“I was put off the express because I had no ticket.”

“The Scripture tells us,” said the gray man, “that no one setteth out on a journey without first sitting down to count the cost. The Scripture seems not to have had your case in view.”

“I was afraid it would cost more to stay than to go,” said Margareth, “and now I cannot tell whether I was right or not.”

“A case of conscience? I should say, on the first look at it, you were certainly wrong to take a ride and not pay for it. Suppose you tell me the business?”

There was something in the plain, friendly tone, the keen eye, the fatherly face, that encouraged confidence. Margareth without reservation told her story, including the dreaded iron gates and the five dollars given her by her friend Hope. She explained that her teacher had disliked losing her services, and was also holding her bound for a year's bill that was due.

“Possibly your father is not very well prepared to receive you.”

“He is sick ; he sent for me,” said Margareth ; and she took from her pocket the letter.

The elegant penmanship, the long words, the fine allusions, impressed the stranger greatly. He was a plain, self-made man with immense respect for learning ; to him a Latin professor was a being beyond the order of common men, seated in some high court of literary demi-gods. Yet his common sense told him that some element alien to literature and honest manhood must have entered into this professor's life to cause the long silence, the neglected bill and this summons.

“You see, I must go to him if I have to walk,” said Margareth.

A little straightening of her brows and darkening of her eyes told that she was equal to daring undertakings. That decided the stranger :

“Yes, I see. I have a daughter, and she would be bound to come to me if I needed her or she thought I did. Come, now, I have it. I am conductor of this through-freight that is changing engines on that second track ; we leave here at five, and we reach New York about twelve. There is a tidy little caboose on the end of the train, and, as it is fine weather, it won't be much used ; you shall ride in that. It will be slow and there are no cushions, but you will be quite safe and comfortable and airy with all the windows open. The hands are all

quiet family-men; there won't be any swearing. It will be all right. So, if you choose, I'll put your bag in and explain it; and when we get to New York, I'll try and see you safely off for Boston."

Here was help in good earnest; Margareth was not so deserted of Providence as she had thought. She gave a deep sigh of relief and followed her new friend and the portmanteau into the caboose.

The "through-freight" was soon rolling on its way—less swiftly than the express, but then there was no terrible conductor to demand a ticket. Margareth took heart of grace, ate her lunch, and, finding a book on the seat, began to read to distract her mind from fears about the Boston trip and a possibly-dying father. The conductor of the freight-train, her new friend, was in the caboose most of the time; the other hands came in and went out. No one troubled her; the wives and daughters of these train-men often went over this road in the caboose. They made but few stops, and were in the freight-station at New York before one o'clock that day.

Just before they reached the city the conductor came to Margareth:

"I have thought out how it would be best for you to do. The train to Boston will leave at eight, and you have not enough money for the ticket, and it would be a bad plan to go to Boston

without a penny, even if you expect to find your father there. The Stonington line boat leaves its pier at six o'clock this afternoon. You can get your ticket for a dollar; and if you do not take a berth, you will have a right to a chair or sofa or mattress in the ladies' cabin for your ticket. At this time in the year I do not think you could get a room or berth unless it was engaged two or three days before. From Stonington to Boston will cost you but a little, and you will be in the city before nine o'clock to-morrow morning. I will take you to the boat myself. You can wait until I get my business attended to here, and we will go in a street-car."

Margareth was accordingly taken to a little waiting-room, and her friend handed her two biscuits and a banana, which made her a very fair lunch. Then into the street-car, and so to the boat, where the kindly conductor escorted her to the upper saloon:

"The ladies' cabin is not unlocked yet. It will be open at four; you can stay here or sit on deck until then. After that perhaps you had better go down there. Here is your ticket. Be careful of yourself. I hope you will find your father all right. God bless you! Good-bye."

The man was gone before Margareth could thank him or realize that, in addition to all his other goodness to her, he had bought her boat-ticket. She had in her heart a shrine sacred to

the laughing, loving twins, another sacred to Mrs. Villeroy; she straightway erected a third to this conductor, whose name even she did not know, but who had been to her in her desolation so good and true a friend. She resolved to tell her father all about him, and to ask him to write a letter of thanks and send some token of remembrance even without the name; her father could find some way of discovering the right man.

It was but little after two o'clock; passengers had not begun to come on board yet. The saloon was still half dark—a very gorgeous place full of mirrors, cut-glass chandeliers, plush-covered furniture, Brussels carpets, gilding, painting and bronze figures. Several tall, colored men, servants, were lounging about, chatting and flicking feather brushes at marbles or mirrors. Far up at the end of the cabin Margareth descried through the dimness the stout figure of a woman seated in an arm-chair, a pile of luggage on a chair at her side, her feet placidly elevated on a chair before her, an early traveler like herself. Margareth slowly approached her.

CHAPTER IV.

"ME AND THOMAS HENRY."

"To be sure, the preacher says, our sins should make us sad ;
But mine is a time of peace, and there is grace to be had,
And God, not man, is the Judge of us all when life shall cease,
And in this book, little Annie, the message is one of peace."

SLOWLY, slowly, drawn by desire for the companionship of some one of her own sex and of superior age, Margareth moved up the saloon. The light was there clearer, and the stranger came into full view. Margareth stopped and contemplated the bizarre figure as one studies a *genre* picture. The stranger had taken leave to be so different from other people that she had seemed to lose ordinary personality and to be relegated to the category of curiosities. Besides, she appeared to be asleep. A stout woman, a short woman, a wrinkled woman with a very few threads of gray in her black hair, on her head a mass of quilled lace, bugles and little blue and black bows, evidently a bonnet, and fully as large as the law allowed. As the bonnet's wearer was dozing with her head against the straight cushion of the high-backed chair, the bonnet was well tilted down upon her fore-

head. The sleeper's ample shoulders were further amplified by a cape made of frilled black lace and bugles; her stout arms were crossed over her lap, and her black-merino dress was ruffled quite up to the waist; her feet, placed straight before her, on a second red-plush chair, exhibited the entire proportions of a pair of number six prunella boots. Although it was June, the sleeper was possessed of a wrap of reddish fur in the shape of a large cape that would reach nearly to her knees, and which was garnished around its entire lower edge by a row of closely-set reddish tails, which now, in the current from the open door, swayed to and fro as if alive. This fur mantle was lined with closely-quilted brown silk, and, being unfastened, fell back over and about the chair which the sleeper occupied. On a third chair, at her right hand, Margareth saw a large oval basket of wicker-work with a cover, a brown-silk umbrella, a paper parcel, a shawl-strap with a green shawl, and lastly a newspaper and a pair of black-silk mitts. All this made a fashion of defensive bulwark between the sleeper and the trespassing world as represented by Margareth. Probably the dame was not very sound asleep, for under the girl's scrutiny she woke up—woke all-alert and good-natured:

"Oh, my dear, I think we have not started yet? I believe I was taking a little nap."

“I hope I did not disturb you?” replied Margareth, meekly.

“Not at all, by any means; I was just passing away a little lonely time. Besides, I was warm, and I had been up to Fulton street to get my lunch, and I was obliged to carry all these things, as there was no one here to take charge of them; so I got a little tired. Did you ever go for your dinner up on Fulton street? A very nice little place, clean and reasonable; and well cooked too.”

“I do not know any places in New York,” said Margareth.

“Possible? Well, I know a good many, and in other cities too. I’m a traveler. But then I’m older than you. But really, if you don’t know the city, it seems to me you should be out improving your mind by seeing Central Park or Goupil’s gallery or Broadway or the post-office or the Battery. Great cities are very improving places to visit, I do assure you, and young people should improve all their opportunities.”

“Yes, but I do not feel like going out to-day, madam.”

“No doubt it is just as well; it is quite warm. Here is a chair between me and the door where you will be quite cool and comfortable, and we can improve the time by conversing. When I travel, I always look out for some one with

whom I can converse; I enjoy it, and it is improving. I never know who my mate in a trip will be, but I always find one. The minute I opened my eyes and saw you I said to myself, 'Here is my mate.' You are alone and I am alone, and we can converse. I am Mrs. Quincey, and I live five miles out of Boston."

"Oh, I am going to Boston too," said Margareth, taking the seat, "but I have never been there."

"Then you've met just the right person to show you your way. It is a very crooked city, but it needn't undertake to deceive me. I learned all about Boston before I went to other cities. Where do you think I have spent the winter?"

"Not in New York?" ventured Margareth.

"No, my dear; in Washington. I am coming up late because Congress rose late—quite uncommonly late for me. I stayed to see the whole thing through, and I did last year also. Washington is quite as improving a place as one can find. You may think me rather late in life improving my mind, but what you can't do early you must do late. To travel and compare was always my wish. The Lord did not open a way for me earlier in life, for one should never desert duties to travel and compare. But when in a manner a gate was set open to me, as if it had been said, 'Mary Jane Quincey, you

may now travel and compare,' then I carried out my wish, and really, my dear, I enjoy it quite as much as if I were younger. God's time is always a good time, though. When we get in a hurry, we are not apt to think so. How old would you take me to be?"

"Fifty-nine? Sixty?" suggested Margareth.

"My dear, it is a positive fact: I shall be seventy in a month. Oh, I could tell you a history, my dear."

"I am sure I should enjoy hearing it," replied Margareth.

"What a boat this is! A true floating palace. I do admire being in one of these boats or on a car. There were no cars and no steamboats like this when I was young; I rode on horse-back, and then we had a shay. Sometimes—perhaps twice a year—I went to Boston. I always longed to go about and see other places and improve my mind by observing other people. Not that I ever hankered after foreign travels, for that, I knew, was quite out of the question for me. We were thrifty people in those days. My father had a good farm, but in those times men did not suppose that good farms or some money in the bank countenanced them in keeping their children in idleness. No, they gave them trades. It was two strings to the bow, my dear. My brother learned carpentry and I learned millinery, and we both knew how

to manage a farm. My brother built the little shop in our village where I set up for a milliner; it had shelves and counter and show-window all complete. There I worked at my trade, and very popular I was, for I have a knack at making things. I made this bonnet and dress and cape, and all I have on.

"I worked till I was married; and when one has a house and a millinery-shop and a child to do for, they have very little time to crave after foreign travel. After my husband died and my good mother had died, father being old, I went to the farm to take care of him, but along with my niece I kept the shop up still. My father lived to be eighty-eight; he wasn't young when he married. A very big man, my dear; stood six feet four in stockings of my knitting, and weighed two hundred and fifty pounds. He was a deacon of the church; he had read Scott's commentaries through three times at family prayers, and he was the last of the Massachusetts tithing-men.

"Perhaps you'd think the tithing-men a queer institution nowadays; my son, Rufus Constantine, says they would 'interfere with the liberty of the individual.' I say to him, 'Rufus Constantine, don't cast any reflections on the duties of your grandfather, who was a man well esteemed long before you or I were born.' As for the liberty of the individual, I wish it were more

interfered with than it is at present. The individual takes too many liberties in the line of swearing and Sabbath-breaking and universal disorder. Now, in my father's time of tithing-men, he walked out on the Sabbath morning with a small rod of office over his shoulder; and if he met people walking abroad, he stopped them and inquired where they were going. If it was for a doctor, or a doctor going to the sick or to help a sufferer, or to go to church, all right; but if it was for visiting or business or pleasuring, he sent them right-about, and home they went. You'd think that queer nowadays, but it worked very well then; and most orderly and thriving people we were in Massachusetts, and the blessing of the Lord was in the lot of the righteous. Well, as I told you, I 'tended my father to the last, and he died blessing me; and it is a great comfort to a daughter to have her father's last blessing: it warms your heart right up. However, that was after the war. I must go back. Do you remember the war, my dear?"

"No; I was too small to know anything about it."

"So much the better for you," said Mrs. Quincey, heartily. "The war is one of those things that you can thank God not to remember. Mercy me! I wonder I did not cry my eyes out those days. I cried for both sides. When

there was a battle, so many lost on our side, I cried oceans of tears for them; so many on the other, and I cried oceans more for them. I wonder I did not go blind, but the Lord preserved me. Well do I remember the day when my brother Abraham Daniel came into my shop white as cotton and all out of breath. Says he,

“ ‘Mary Jane, they’ve fired on our flag.’

“ ‘’Spose they have?’” says I, quite cool in my ignorance, measuring off some ribbon. ‘If the flag’s spoiled, can’t we make another one?’

“ ‘Mary Jane,’ says Abraham Daniel, ‘that ever I should hear such wicked, reckless words out of your mouth!’

“ ‘I should like to know what’s wicked and reckless,’ I says. ‘I’m sorry if the flag’s hurt, but what’s a flag but cloth? and another can be made; I could do it myself. If they’d fired on a man, now, it would be a very different thing: they might have killed him, and it’s hard work making a man, and every man has mother or sister or sweetheart or wife to be heart-set on him. No, Abraham Daniel; I hold to what I said. I’m glad they didn’t fire on a man, to make blood flow; and if they damaged the flag, I know it was quite unintentional.’

“ ‘Well, Mary Jane,’ says my brother, ‘I assure you this will make much blood flow and occasion the firing on many more;’ so he walked out of my shop.

“Well did I learn what war meant later. I’ve heard tell of the Age of Gold, the Iron Age, the Bronze Age: I call war-time the Age of Black Bonnets. My dear, I might have got rich making black bonnets and veils if it had not been far from me to thrive on the loss of my neighbors. My shop looked like an undertaker’s room. As for profit, I just barely charged for the black bonnets the cost of the material wholesale. I got such a fame for doing them reasonable that I had orders from far and near. Well, I thanked the Lord when the Age of Black Bonnets was reasonably well over. The first white bonnet I made was a wedding-bonnet for the girl my son married. He set up on a farm for himself; fifteen years they have been married, but they haven’t any children.”

“I suppose you are sorry for that?” said Margaret, as Mrs. Quincey paused with a sigh. The sigh was possibly a taking of breath, not a hint of regret, for Mistress Quincey responded briskly:

“Well, I don’t know as I am. Seems to me people don’t know how to bring up children these days. They spoil them; they let them have their own way, and don’t keep them steady at work, and let them run around at loose-ends until they go to destruction and break the hearts of the entire family. If I was to be insured that the children would grow up good citizens and good Christians, I should wish there were twen-

ty of them. However, if they haven't children, they have cats: they have fifteen cats."

"What do they do with so many cats?" queried Margareth.

"Four of them they keep at the house and treat them like ladies and gentlemen; one of the four—the best one, Cæsar Napoleon—wears a red collar, has a bed in a basket, his special rug to sit on and a chair at table, where he eats out of a plate quite genteel. The other eleven are plebeian cats and live at the barn, but they are all well taken care of, and all know better than to worry chickens.

"Well, my dear, my son being well married and I having the snug little house my father left me, and the rent of the farm and a bit of money laid up in bank, I sold out the shop to my niece, and, being past sixty, I thought it was only right to have my leisure a little. So I settled down quiet with my Thomas Henry. I really wish you knew Thomas Henry. He is the most affectionate creature, and so intelligent, and as handsome as a pink; he has such beautiful eyes! Thomas Henry is devoted to me. I enjoy his society immensely, and his morals are excellent: but then he has been properly brought up, in old-fashioned style. No modern-nonsense training for Thomas Henry. I stood a little about taking him to Washington. I knew he wanted to go, I knew he would miss me, but, thinking it

all over, I said to him, 'No, Thomas Henry; you cannot go. It is best for young people to stick to the farm. Your morals are now good; you are contented and your conscience is quiet. I couldn't answer for you if you were exposed to the bad manners of the city. You might take to wandering off nights; you might get noisy; you might even begin to depredate. Congress sits in Washington, Thomas Henry, and I could not answer for your morals if you went there.' Thomas Henry is my cat."

"And what did you finally conclude to do with him?"

"Why, having reasoned it all out with him, I took him to my son's to board. I told them I wished Thomas Henry to be treated like a gentleman, and for them to make him feel quite happy and independent; I should pay his board. Oh, I'm very particular as to Thomas Henry's morals and manners; I don't let him go in bad company. They wanted me to send him to the cat-show, but I told them no; he might learn more spitting and scratching and miauing—which is cat-swearing—in one week in a promiscuous cat-show than he would ever forget so long as he lived. I told him, 'Thomas Henry, I do not think it would be best for you to go to the cat-show: it might spoil your temper or give you some disease; and if you took a prize, it would foster your vanity. Stay at home quietly,

Thomas Henry, and you shall have as good a beefsteak as there is in the market.' "

"Did he know you when you came home last year?"

"Well, at first I think he was a little mixed up; but when I spoke and smiled, he came purring to me and rubbed against me, and stood up and put his fore-paws on my arm, and crimped them as cats do when very pleased. I hope he will remember me when I get home to-morrow. I am taking him some macaroons. He is very fond of macaroons, and I give him one every Sunday. You really should see Thomas Henry; he sits by me at table, but he never even looks for a bite till the blessing is asked. When I sit down for my morning worship, he sits on his cushion opposite me, and don't move a hair. Sunday, when I am reading and meditating, he sits beside me on a chair, and, though he cannot read, I am sure he meditates. When I am doing up my work, I talk to Thomas Henry, and often tell him how different the world is now from what it was when I was young. When two people are in a house living alone together, they fall into a way of having much conversation; and that's me and Thomas Henry."

"And are things so different now from what they were in your young days?" asked Margareth, finding her anxieties much beguiled by this easy-flowing chat of Mrs. Quincey.

“ Indeed they are! There is such a difference in the style of living! People run so after fashions now. Once they made a thing to suit them and wore it till it wore out. And I tell you things did wear in those days. There was no shoddy then. Silks didn't crack, nor satins grow shiny, nor woolens get faded. I made a bonnet once that an old lady wore ten years right on, and very well she looked in it too. But, my dear, of all the changes in fashion, none hurts me like the changes I find in church. In my young days we had a morning church with a good solid sermon an hour or more long. We had *doctrine* preached to us then, my dear, and we knew what the parson was talking about; the doctrines he laid down plain, so that a fool might not err therein, and he clinched them all with Scripture. The way they handled truths in those days reminds me of Abraham Daniel setting in a right particular nail: he drove it home straight and square with three or four blows hit as hard as he could; he clinched it on the other side, so it held fast and sure, after he had driven it below the surface with two good thumps at it on a nail-set; and then he puttied up the hole over the head and laid a little dab of paint on the putty. Catch any of his work coming to pieces! And so with our good parsons in the old time: they made folks sure of what they were talking about.

There's many parsons nowadays deliver to the people much about what is called metaphysics and ancient history and biology, also other *ologies*. I make no doubt they are all excellent college-learned things, but, after all, there's many plain people and poor sinners like myself would thrive better on the old style of pulpit work.

"And I notice that the new style don't seem to produce quite such solid, thoroughgoing Christians, especially among the young. In those days a man could scarcely attend one day's preaching, let alone three months of it, and fail to know that he was an out-and-out sinner, and that God is so holy that he cannot look on sin with any degree of allowance. Also he would find out that God had prepared a way whereby his banished might return to him, and that that way is the only one he recognizes, and that it won't pay men to get up any new-fangled way of reconciliation to God, because God won't countenance any of them. In those days they didn't slur over the solemn doctrine of the blood shed on the cross—no, my dear; and when they preached on one-half the verse, 'The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin,' they didn't slur over the other half of it: 'and will by no means clear the guilty.' No, they set to and showed how he could spare the guilty by laying on Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all.

Parsons let folks know, those days, that there must be downright confessing and forsaking and repenting of sin if there was to be forgiving. People didn't make bold to show how dishonest and shameful it was for Lord Bacon to take bribes and not execute justice, and then show up God as saying one thing and doing another, or winking at sin, or sliding over justice as a very small affair.

“But I mustn't forget that the real old gospel is preached in many a place. Last Sunday I was in Philadelphia; it rained, but of course I went to church, and well was I paid. In the morning I found my way into a Presbyterian church, and there I heard such a good gospel-preach out of the New Testament as made my heart glad. In the afternoon, seeing a church door open, I walked in, and the Methodists were having a missionary meeting, and I felt as if from all the ends of the earth a company of God's children had gathered and were sitting on the hills of glory with great delight. In the evening I went out again, and that time I got into a Lutheran church, and an old man with white hair preached out of the Old Testament, and it seemed just to bring the whole plan of salvation and the whole Church in all time right together to rejoice in what the Lord had done for them. Oh, no; the good old gospel is not dead—not at all.”

Mrs. Quincey paused to rest and to meditate on what she had heard the previous Sabbath; then she resumed:

"Now I am going home, I shall get Thomas Henry, open my little house, clean it, do my sewing, see my friends, work with our societies of all kinds until after Thanksgiving, and then, if the Lord spares me well, I will travel off again. You see, about five years ago I sat thinking, when it seemed as if a voice in my mind said, 'Mary Jane Quincey, you always wanted to go about to see other places and people and improve your mind; now the Lord has given you time and health and means: what is to hinder? Go! No doubt the Lord means you to go. Like a kind father, he grants the wish of his child's heart.' So I consulted my son, and he said, 'Go, mother, by all means. If you get sick, I'll come after you. You earned your money by hard work, and I want you to use it to your own satisfaction. I'm comfortable; you go enjoy yourself.' So I went. I have visited and stayed months or weeks in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, and I have traveled about some and have seen sights. I enjoy it. I make friends. I always find some real nice person like you to talk to. You need not think I travel in style. Oh no! I have not money for that. I go cheap. Now, for instance, I shall not pay out

one or two dollars for a room. Oh no! I shall just have a berth in the ladies' cabin or a mattress on the floor for no extra charge; I shall be just as comfortable. I shall not pay fifty cents or a dollar for my supper; in this basket I have plenty for my supper and breakfast. That is the way I travel. Now, you, my dear, I suppose have a room?"

"No," said Margareth; "they told me all the rooms would be gone. And, besides, I have not money enough for one."

"There's no need; I will tell the stewardess to give you a mattress right beside mine, and you will be as safe and comfortable as you please. Then I shall be so glad for some one to share my lunch; it is so lonely eating alone. At home I have Thomas Henry. Now I will tell you how I live in Washington. I suppose rich women would use in a month or a week what does me for a year. I get a little furnished room—I don't mind going high up, so it is clean and sunny—and I make sure of a little stove in it. Then on that little stove I can make a cup of tea, toast a slice of bread, boil an egg. I get my breakfasts and suppers so, and go out for my dinners. Washington is a great place to get a good cheap meal; you can get a good dinner—one that will satisfy your hunger—for fifteen cents or a quarter of a dollar. Also, you can get dinners for terribly high prices. A little while ago, going

up Capitol Hill, I saw a very pretty, elegantly-dressed lady who looked kind of lost. So I stepped up:

" 'I am acquainted here, ma'am; can I do anything for you?'

" Says she,

" 'Why, I want to see the White House and the House of Representatives and the Treasury, and I don't know the way.'

" So I said,

" 'Well, I know them all just like my own kitchen; and if you'll let me show you about, I shall be very happy.'

" So I took her about till four o'clock. Then she asked me to go with her to a restaurant for dinner, but I said I would go and sit by while she ate, and I should have my cup of tea and boiled egg and slice of cold meat when I got home. So, as I would not let her order for me, she ordered for herself; and such a dinner! Of all the fol-de-rols! and she nipping a little of this and a little of that, and seeming to take pleasure in calling for things out of season that cost high. At last she ordered in a bottle of wine and urged me to have a glass, which I refused, and she poured it out and drank it off so liberal! and at that I could not hold my tongue.

" 'Oh, madam,' I said, 'if you had known as I have what bitter woe comes from wine, never could you touch a drop. Oh, I beg you never,

never touch another drop; it may bring you with shame and sorrow to your grave.'

" 'Not so bad as that I hope,' she says, laughing a little. 'I have come into a fortune, and I mean to enjoy it.'

" 'Don't enjoy it ruining yourself and your soul,' said I. 'I see your cheque for that dinner is nine dollars, which would be nearly all I spend in two weeks. I pray you remember money is to use right and render an account for to God; and wine I beg you give up, for it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder, as well I know.' "

Margareth looked up with one swift glance. The girl's keen intuition read some unspoken woe in Mrs. Quincey's life. She had noticed how the good woman had passed over in silence her husband and her married life. Some dagger had there entered her soul.

Mrs. Quincey caught her look.

"My dear," she said, "I warn you also. With any that drink have nothing in this world to do."

"If I cannot help it?" queried Margareth.

"Why, if it comes in the order of nature, as father or brother or child, why one has only to cast the burden on the Lord and ask for strength according to our day. But I warn you, who are young and so very pretty, never love nor marry any man that drinks."

"That I never will," said Margareth, earnestly.

"One lovely young creature in Washington, in the same house with me, first floor, I do remember—she a judge's daughter and he a millionaire's son, and one child as pretty as a picture. She loved her husband, I can tell you, and his one fault was drink, which his folks hoped marrying would put an end to; but it did not, so at last the only way to get on, as he devastated everything, was to send them two hundred a month, and then, as he used that up in two days, his folks sent it to her. So this winter he saw her coming from the bank after cashing the cheque, and a month's board and other bills were due. So he softly followed her to the room, and as she laid down her pocket-book while taking off her hat he snatched it and ran. She only thought of the bills due, and of her shame to write next day for more and say how this had gone. So, as he ran, she ran after him, and right into the street, he flying first and she without coat or hat, her pretty hair all falling about her face. And with that some one cries 'Stop thief!' and a big police he out with a foot before the running man and trips him down flat on his face. She comes up:

" "Oh, is he hurt? Is he hurt?"

" "No, he's not hurt. Is this your pocket-book, miss?"

“ ‘Oh yes! Thank you! Oh, is he hurt?’

“ ‘No, and I'll have him to the jail, and you'll appear against him to-morrow.’

“ ‘No, no! I'll never appear against him. Let him go.’

“ ‘I'll be hanged,’ says the policeman, ‘if I catch a thief and let him go. What fool do you take me for?’

“ ‘He is not a thief,’ says she; ‘it is my husband. Please bring him home for me. The money came from his mother for our board-bill, and I was so frightened! He took it because—he has been—drinking—you see.’

“ ‘So the policeman pitied her, she crying and so young and pretty, and he pulled him along home and got him laid on the lounge, though he swore more than I could have desired. When he got sober, the young man laughed it off and went on as bad as ever; but she, poor soul! did not look herself for a long while. She was so ashamed! He'll drink himself to death and break her heart. So, my dear, take warning.’”

Mistress Quincey had so winged the time with anecdotes and reminiscences that four o'clock had come and passed; the boat was filling with passengers, and state-rooms and berths were being distributed. Mrs. Quincey said they should go to the ladies' cabin. Margareth, taking her heavy portmanteau, followed that experienced traveler Mrs. Quincey down stairs. Having

spoken for two mattresses and consigned part of their luggage to the stewardess, Mrs. Quincey reconducted Margareth to the deck, where they watched the final bustle of loading and departing.

"To-morrow this time," said Mrs. Quincey, "I shall be at home, keeping house, me and Thomas Henry. What do you think? One day this last winter a telegram came to me. 'My goodness!' says I; 'now I know something has happened, and I must leave Washington and go home before Congress breaks up.' Why, I felt just as if the entire affairs of the nation would go to pieces. So I opened the telegram, and all it said was, 'Thomas Henry is well and hopes you will come soon.' My son went and sent that just for mischief, do you see?"

At last the steamer was off. Slowly it swung out from the dock, and then puffed along among the crowded shipping, by the islands with the villas and the islands with the refuges and penitentiaries, out into the sound. Mrs. Quincey produced her lunch-basket and had supper with Margareth.

"My dear," she said, after this ceremony, "I like to improve my mind by observing other people. I have told you a good bit about myself; suppose you tell me something about yourself. Have you been to school? Are you going to your friends—to your parents?"

Margareth considered with herself that she might as well tell Mrs. Quincey something of her story; the good dame knew all about Boston, and could tell her where to find her father. She explained her circumstances, and told the events of her escape from school and her journey.

“Three years is a long while not to hear from a father,” said Mrs. Quincey, “and you make sure you heard from him now?”

Margareth, flushing, handed over her father's letter.

“Yes, I see,” said Mrs. Quincey. “But are you certain it is not some one writing in his name? The world is full of wickedness. Perhaps this is a forgery.”

“Miss Cade didn't doubt, and she is used to his letters. You see, it is a very beautiful and not common script. I have two other letters from him in my portmanteau.”

“Suppose you compare them?” suggested the wary Mrs. Quincey.

Margareth went into the cabin and got the letters.

Mrs. Quincey studied them carefully before delivering an opinion:

“Yes, I should say it was the same. I'm not so easy to deceive, if I have a simple way of talking about Thomas Henry; I study the world in Thomas Henry and myself. And

you say the teacher wanted to keep you on account of a three years' bill?"

"Oh no, only one year by rights; for the other two I have paid in my work. I suppose she did not like to lose my help just as it was getting to be more valuable. But I am sure I gave enough for what I had. She got nine hundred dollars a year for the twins, and I did everything for them. I taught them and took all the care of them."

"I've no doubt. But some natures never can be satisfied; the more you do for them, the more they demand. I think, my dear, that you will need to grow up and have more experience of the world and of its dangers before you will appreciate how the Lord has taken care of you in this journey. Truly, he has protected you and kept you. It seems to me you are a bit of work he has handed over to me, saying, 'Mary Jane Quincey, look after this child.' I sha'n't leave you, my dear, until I see you safe at the place named in this letter and find your father is there expecting you."

"I'm sure you're very good," said Margareth. "It makes me feel quite safe."

"And don't expect too much when you get there. You see, something must be wrong, or there would not have been three years' silence and the bill standing. You may be going into the storms of life, but make sure that the Lord

can care for his own. The way may be rough and hard, my dear, and you will need his help, but he will give it."

Margareth herself felt this presentiment of coming ill. As she neared her journey's end the shadows of trouble seemed to darken all the way before her, and to wave out as sable banners from walls of blackness where fate would draw her in out of light and hope. She dreaded what she might find her father to be—that something which she had named and hinted to no one. Yet what could she do but go straight on to find him and to do her duty by him?

Margareth slept little on the boat that night.

Early in the morning they were on the cars for Boston.

"We'll get on a street-car right at the station and go straight to that address; it is quite on my way. When we get to the place, you will go in and see if your father is there and expecting you, and I'll stay on the sidewalk. You can come out and tell me how it turns out. If all is right, I'll go on my way. But make sure I'll call on you, my dear, the first time I come to Boston."

"Yes, do, do!" said Margareth; "I haven't a friend there." After a pause she suddenly asked, "But, Mrs. Quincey, suppose I should not find my father; what then?"

"I'd stop all day and help you find him."

"But suppose—suppose the letter was forged or he was dead; what then?" asked Margareth, with a quiver.

"Child, it's a good old proverb, 'Do not cross a bridge till you come to it.' And I've always found that if the Lord leads you straight up to what seems a blank wall, he also shows you some little door in it."

The city was reached, then the street-car, and Mrs. Quincey and her *impedimenta*, and Margareth and her big portmanteau, rolled down the long street.

"My dear, here's our place," said Mrs. Quincey.

They were on the sidewalk. Margareth looked about bewildered. Not a dwelling-house was in sight; all were places of business on the steep, narrow street.

"It is that corner building opposite," said Mrs. Quincey.

The building indicated was ancient. The front was crooked, clapboarded, full of little windows, and would have seemed about to roll into the street had not the side been reinforced by a strong new brick wall. Across the building, in black letters a foot high, was the legend, "Old Original Toy-Shop." The low doorway and the windows, clear to the top of the building, seemed bursting with toys, which overflowed upon boxes and shelves along the sidewalk.

Dolls hung by the neck; rattles, whips, mallets, were tied in bundles; picture-books were strung along miniature clothes-lines; tops and bells were piled up like ammunition in a fort; tin horses pranced with their legs in the air; liliputian dishes were spread out on liliputian tables; woolly sheep on wheels thrust their inquiring noses into automatic engines and grinning masks looked down on Noah's arks, while dolls, bureaus and cradles, and rocking-horses' heads, and fancy-baskets and boxes, peered through the windows of the entire three stories, until one wondered not to see them rising up like overlight dough and bubbling through the squat chimneys and flowing down upon the black-shingled roof.

"Terrible trap for a fire, that," reflected Mrs. Quincey. "We may as well go across. You step in and inquire while I wait on the curbstone."

Margareth opened the store door; it was draped with hoops and jumping-ropes that swung as the door opened, and Margareth's big portmanteau nearly overset a willow work-table, and then incontinently overthrew a stack of tin toy dishes.

"Does Professor Roland live in this building?" she asked of a stout woman who came out of the obscurity occasioned by the toy-crowded state of the windows.

"Yes; third floor, first door on the left-hand side. Are you his daughter?"

"Oh, he is expecting me? How is he? Very sick?"

"He'll do, I guess. You can't carry that vallis up them narrow stairs; you'd knock down a bushel of toys. I'll have my boy take it up when he comes in; he'll run it up on his head. Go on up; there's only two sets of stairs. Keep right in the middle of them; they're safe, if they *are* dark."

Margareth ran out to Mrs. Quincey, who was patiently waiting for her:

"I have found him. He is expecting me; he is better. Thank you so much! And you will come and see me?"

"Sure and certain," replied Dame Quincey; and when Margareth had returned to the shop and then run up the dark stairs, Mrs. Quincey entered the "Old Original Toy-Shop," bought a blue-morocco collar with a gilt bell for Thomas Henry, and, leaning over the counter, was soon on very confidential terms with the stout proprietor of so many toys.

A low murmur of question, answer, explanation; a shrugging of the toyseller's shoulders; various editions of "Oh! Ah, dear!" in all kinds of type, from Diamond to Great Primer. At the end of the conference some sort of a compact of friendship seemed to have been

made, for the two suddenly shook hands. The owner of the toys said,

“Do drop in again; I shall be most particular pleased to see you, and I'll give you a hint of how things is going.”

“I certainly shall. I've been traveling and observing all winter, and I may say I am carrying on my observations straight up to my own doorsteps quite as useful as any made at any time. This world, my dear, is full of histories—chockful, indeed; as full as your shop of toys;” with which simile in mind, the worthy Mrs. Quincey wended her way to her home and Thomas Henry.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY.

“But you, sir—you are hard to please;
You never look but half content,
Nor like a gentleman at ease
With moral breadth of temperament.”

UP the steep, narrow flights of stairs. Margareth was dimly conscious that little wheelbarrows and express-wagons hung on hooks on either side; furthermore, boxes of German villages and farmyards and dissected maps and ninepins piled on each side of each step diminished the width of the passage-way. The hall above afforded storage for drums, small chairs, doll-houses and bird-cages. She had been told to go to the first door on the left-hand side of the hall. There she knocked, and, not hearing any answer, she opened the door and walked in.

Margareth had a dim realization of a large and disorderly room. A window was opposite the door, and between this window and Margareth was an untidy table supposably set for breakfast, but with very little upon it. In an arm-chair at this table, with his back to Margareth, was a large man with curled black locks

that seemed to the girl dimly familiar flowing over his shoulders. The owner of the curled locks wore a dark cashmere dressing-gown with frayed velvet collar and cuffs. Facing him, in a high-chair, sat an exceedingly small specimen of the genus girl-child—a specimen with a crop of tangled yellow curls, a very pale and dirty little countenance and a solemn, aged expression. This human morsel opened a minute mouth, extended a lean finger and oracularly announced the intruder :

“Lady!”

The *vis-a-vis* of the small female leaped to his feet and turned. After five years Margareth and her father were face to face. There was a short moment of hesitation. In those five years the father had grown stouter, redder in complexion, redder in eyes and larger in nose than Margareth had remembered him. She, on the other hand, from a slim, frolicsome ten-year-old, had become the tall, calm, earnest-eyed girl. Let us say “the woman,” for with the opening of that door all Margareth’s childhood had fallen from her like some dainty parti-colored raiment for which there was neither use nor fitness in this advancing sternness of her fate.

The hesitation was but for a second. M. Tullius Roland stepped forward with open arms and effusive exclamation: “My daughter! My beautiful, peerless Margareth!” and Margareth, re-

sponding to the voice of Nature in her own soul, sprang to his arms: "Oh, father, father!" For five years she had seen no one of her kin, no one who had a natural right to love her. Changed as he might be, Professor M. Tullius Roland was yet a very handsome man with a straight, stately figure, fine features, flowing silken hair, always holding himself with a conscious dignity.

"And you did not hesitate to come to me, my faithful child! And your schoolmistress, I hope, is well? She made all easy for you to come to me?"

"She made nothing easy at all; she did nothing."

"Except get your tickets?"

"She did not get my tickets."

"That was exceedingly careless; a young traveler like you might have made some mistake. She should have gone to the station with you, or sent a servant, instead of letting you go alone. However, she gave you money for the tickets and plenty for possible emergencies, I hope?"

"She did not give me a cent. She refused to let me come, so I took my things and ran away, as you needed me. However, I came through all safely."

"It is the most barbarous and inhuman thing I ever heard of in my life!" cried M. Tullius Roland, with honest indignation. "The woman is a monster; she deserves prosecution. My

child, my young daughter, reduced to such extremities! What might have befallen you! Is this a specimen of the honor of the nineteenth century?"

The professor stopped: Margareth's eyes had wandered past him. There was a bed at the farther end of the room, and that bed was not empty. M. Tullius Roland hesitated a little, but drew himself valiantly together to meet the inevitable. He took Margareth's hand, led her ceremoniously to the untidy bed, and began his flourishing oration:

"My dearest daughter, this is—ah!—your— This, Margareth, is— Oh, she is my wife!"

Was it some sudden flood of sympathy rushing with the crimson into the beautiful girl-face, or was it the strong contrast of so much youth, health, hope, possibility? A pair of faded blue eyes swiftly closed, a thin, pallid face was suddenly hidden under the sheet, and a storm of sobs shook the tumbled bedclothes. Then, between the sobs, weakly mingling with them, came a sound that Margareth had never before heard—the wail of a very young and very feeble infant. It is that sound which God has ordained shall go swiftest and straightest to the heart of every real woman. She may be deaf to the voice of love or of flattery or allurements, but into her inmost soul will enter and find answer the weeping of an infant, even as the heart of

Pharaoh's daughter was moved in compassion when "the babe wept."

Margareth, with quiet force, released the bed-clothes from the thin, nervous hands, turned them back a little, and there, bundled up in flannel, was a miserable little child some ten days old.

"And you are my father's wife?" inquired Margareth, softly.

"Yes—oh yes! And oh, I wish I was dead!"

"Are both these children yours?"

"Yes."

"Then, if I were in your place, I would not wish to be dead: little children need mothers. You will feel better when I have set things to rights here. Have you had breakfast?"

"I did not want any."

Margareth looked for her father. After introducing his unexpected family to his daughter, he had fled. In fact, he had fully intended to be absent when Margareth arrived, and to allow his family to introduce themselves. Failing in that, he made his disappearance with what haste he could. As Margareth realized his absence the door burst open to give entrance to her port-manteau, which seemed to have come without any human aid.

Without the discipline of those last hard, bitter three years with Miss Cade, Margareth might now have sat down helpless or looked about disheartened; as it was, she harvested where she

had sown in tears. From her long training in that school of hardship she had this benefit—that she was in full possession of herself and her faculties. She set the door open, opened the second window, and then took her portmanteau to a room of which the door stood ajar, leading from the apartment she had entered. It seemed to be a sitting-room with a lounge-bed, which her father had evidently occupied. Presently she came back wearing the dark calico dress and great gingham apron which had been her regalia when doing housework for Miss Cade.

Margareth was well endowed of Providence with that desirable quality common sense. She also had keen intuitions. She saw at a glance that this sick woman was pining away with discouragement, insufficient nourishment and anxiety. She had said that she did not want any breakfast, not because she did not need any, but simply from inanition. Margareth divined that if the unfortunate mother saw her room and her children cared for and things falling into order, she might find an appetite.

“Have you done breakfast?” she said to the small girl.

“I did not want it—no,” said the child, exhibiting the same low physical conditions as the mother.

“Come, then. When we find a clean face and a row of curls for you, you will think better of

breakfast. If I pull your hair, you must not cry; we will leave crying for that small child in the bed. Did you ever hear 'Hickory dickory dock' or 'Little Jack Horner'? Now I shall tell you those stories."

The toilet-apparatus was in the next room. Margareth brought it out, made the pale face and arms neat, curled the yellow hair, found a well-furnished work-basket in a corner and sewed on the child's missing shoe-buttons, and then asked her to find a clean apron. The little maid indicated a drawer in the bureau, and the apron was put on. Margareth had in her bag an orange, given her by Mrs. Quincey. She cut this into small pieces, put them in a saucer, sugared them, cut into miniature slices the thick piece of bread which the child had rejected with dislike, and, putting the meal on a window-sill, tied the youngster fast in her high-chair before it:

"Now, missy, you can get the air and your breakfast. Eat a little piece of orange, and then a bit of bread—first one, and then the other. That's the way."

While the child ate and then sat contentedly at the window, Margareth put the room in order.

"I'm afraid you'll find the children very vexing," said the feeble voice from the bed.

"I like children," replied Margareth, briefly.

“It was very good of you to come; I thought you would not.”

“I supposed, from the letter, that my father was sick and needed me to take care of him.”

“Didn't he tell you I was the one sick?”

“No.”

“But—but,” said the woman, earnestly, “he has told you all about me and the children?”

“No. In fact it was three years and more since I had had a word from him.”

“Not a word? But he sent money for your bills?”

“No; not a cent for three years.”

There was a sob from the bed.

“Don't cry,” said Margareth, gently. “What difference does it make whether I knew it or not? I should have come all the same.”

“I didn't think to be so helpless,” said the invalid, “but there was no one to take proper care of me or the children; and I sat up in bed a week ago and tried to wash them, and it nearly killed me. The doctor said I might lie here all summer. Then your father wrote for you. I am sorry he had to do it.”

“You need not be sorry; it was not so very pleasant where I was. But why didn't my father wash the children?”

“He? Why, he's a man!”

“I don't see as that excuses him from making himself useful,” answered Margareth, sharply.

She had many opinions evolved from her inner consciousness and experience, not gathered from Miss Cade's teachings in the class-room.

The apartment reduced to order, Margareth exchanged the big apron for a white one, and, taking her own purse—which, owing to the providential goodness of unlooked-for friends, still was furnished with the five dollars and a half—she went to a dairy which she saw across the street and bought half a dozen eggs, two fresh rolls and some milk.

“Now,” she said, cheerfully, when she came back, “you shall have your toilet.”

From a bath-room at the end of the hall she got warm water, and, bringing it to the bedside, bethought herself to take out the animated flannel bundle and lay it on a pillow placed on a chair.

“I never saw any one so quick and handy,” sighed the poor mother, admiringly, as Margareth put water for tea-making on a little kerosene stove, and while breakfast was preparing combed her patient's hair, made the bed, and further improved her appearance by bringing a silk tie from the work-basket and knotting it under her chin. Thus improved, the invalid found that she could eat a roll and an egg and drink a cup of tea. While this breakfast was in progress, Margareth freed her prisoner from the window and proceeded to wash the baby.

“When does my father come in to his dinner?” she asked.

“He doesn't come; he has breakfast here, and sometimes he comes in to tea. He gets his dinner at a restaurant. I had gotten into a habit of not having any dinner, only a bit of bread or a cracker for Persis and me.”

“No wonder you and Persis look so pale and thin,” pronounced Margareth, concealing her nervous alarm at her altogether novel task of washing a baby. She had noticed that in the closet where dishes and provisions were kept there was nothing in store except a little tea and coffee, some sugar in a paper, a stale loaf and some butter in a semi-fluid state. The head of the family seemed to be a poor provider. “What is my father doing, to keep him out all day?”

“Oh, he is not *doing* so much, but, you see, this place is not what he is used to or has a right to expect—the third story over a toy-shop, and only two rooms, and Persis running about. It does well enough for me, but it is hard on a gentleman and a learned scholar like him. And then I'm no company for him; I've only common-school education. I never could even teach a country school, and he's been a college professor. I should have known that it would not make him happier to marry me, but now it can't be helped; only, of course, he is lonely here,

and so he stays where he can find company suited to his taste."

"Isn't he doing *anything*?" asked Margareth. "I won't hurt this little thing turning it over and over, will I?"

"I'm sure you handle it as nice as can be. Do you see anything wrong about it?"

"I don't know what would be *right*; I never before saw a baby so young. It seems terribly thin, but I suppose it will grow. And father?"

"I think he has a pupil or two in Latin, or writes letters for some one; he picks up a little—what pays for his clothes and his dinners. You know, if he does not dress like a gentleman, he will be out of the way of getting anything to do such as he is accustomed to. I'm sure, if he only could get a professorship or a secretaryship such as he wants, I would be very willing to stay here and not be in his way, if he would send me enough to keep the children with."

"But if he only does enough to provide his clothes and dinners, who does the rest? Who takes care of you?"

"When we came here, I paid four years' rent in advance to Mrs. Benson; she keeps the shop. She is my second cousin, and I knew if we needed to leave I could relet, and get my money back. I brought things to furnish these rooms, and I've supported myself and Persis since, and

paid for all I had, by sewing. But, you see, lately, what with running the machine all day and going up two pair of stairs and worrying about what would become of us, I rather broke down."

Margareth completed her task and the invalid finished her breakfast.

"I want you to do me a favor," said the woman.

"What is that?"

"Call me 'Harriet,' please; it would be all nonsense calling me 'mother.' I'm not old enough, though dear knows I look old enough, and I'm not a lady, like you; and if you'll call me 'Harriet,' I think I'll feel more comfortable."

"Very well. Now, when I clear away these things, I shall draw down the shades and you must take a sleep. I shall take Persis and put the other room in order. Where am I to stay?"

"Mrs. Benson said if we would send for you you could have the little room at the end of the hall. I'm afraid it is not in order."

"I'll put it in order; you are to think of nothing but keeping quiet and getting well. It is all nonsense to talk of lying there all summer; now that you are taken care of, you will soon be better."

Margareth took Persis, and, having darkened the large room, went into the smaller front apart-

ment, which she proceeded to set in thorough order. She had already learned several things about her father's wife. She was a yielding, humble creature shamefully neglected; she was also industrious and cleanly. All the little establishment gave token of scrupulous care, and the disorder was surface disorder, due only to the time of illness.

As Margareth cleared up the front room she heard a sound of voices in the sick-chamber, and presently the mistress of the toy-shop came in where she was. She eyed Margareth, who stood duster in hand.

“Heaven be praised! *You've* got a heart,” she said.

“Very likely. I should be no more alive than one of your dolls else.”

“Well, there's some folks as don't show much heart, whatsoever they may have in their internal economy. You've done that poor soul good already. Mark my words, no good deed is like water spilt on the ground that cannot be gathered again: it comes home some time. I stepped up to mention it is one o'clock and we are just having dinner, and I came to ask you down to eat with us; and then, as you're not used to this sort of housekeeping, I can tell you a thing or two about how we manage. Also, as soon as dinner is over, I'll step up and help you set in order that little hall-room for yourself. It's not

much of a place—no doubt you're used to better—but we'll make it do."

Margareth remembered her late forlorn attic at Miss Cade's, and concluded that it would do. Her present lot had its disadvantages, but she would no longer have Miss Cade's sharp voice and bitter hints and taunts, nor "the sick and scornful looks averse" of the girls—all except Hope Cornell. If she was to live in an attic and do drudgery, it would at least be for her kin. She promptly accepted the invitation to dinner; she was not one of those to miss benefits by refusing them. Besides, she was honestly hungry, and Persis ought to be. So she gladly went down to the Benson establishment.

Mrs. Benson had two daughters, who acted as clerks in her store, and a nephew from the country, who was her errand-boy. The room in which they ate was as heterogeneous in its contents as the rest of the house. It seemed to be dining-room and sitting-room, and, besides the chairs, table and lounge belonging to the family, had a great basket of odds and ends of fancy dry goods and another basket of dolls; the elder Miss Benson occupied her leisure in arraying the dolls in the fragments. A table furnished with silk, lace, fringe, glue, pictures, and a variety of like treasures, indicated where the junior Miss Benson devoted her spare time to making valentines and Easter, Christmas, New Year's and

birthday cards. The room had for frieze a rope on which were hung battledores, grace-sticks, jumping-jacks, kites; for a dado it had an array of sleds and baby-coaches. In the space between, the Benson family carried on domestic avocations, and by long practice whisked about without knocking things down.

The Benson family evidently did not starve themselves: for dinner they had salad, roast mutton and peas and pie. Mrs. Benson told Margareth that she could use her range when, as was usual, it had fire in it, for cooking anything that required time. The range was in a little back kitchen, and Mrs. Benson hospitably offered her some use of her refrigerator.

“I’d do anything in reason for Harriet,” said Mrs. Benson: “I have always liked her, and she always showed sense till she undertook to get married. Up there in Maine, where she lived, she had her neat little furnished house, all her own, and she let a room to summer lodgers, and, being the village dressmaker and seamstress, she lived in comfort and well respected. But there! some folks don’t know when they’re well off. I’ve done what I could for her here. Many’s the time I’ve carried her a pie or a chop or a dish of salad, but I make sure she wasn’t the one that got the most part of ’em. She’d make her dinner of dry bread and a swallow of tea, and save up any tit-bit for *his* supper. But there!

I won't say any more," concluded Mrs. Benson, recollecting that *he* was her auditor's father.

As Mistress Benson offered to show Margareth the nearest and cheapest grocer's and meat-shop, and to give her some hints as to what could best be cooked on an oil stove, the two went out after dinner, taking Persis with them. Having returned and put soup and rice to cook on the range, Margareth went up stairs and prepared the hall-room for herself and Persis. Harriet had had a long sleep, and seemed less melancholy. There was a pile of mending on the work-basket, and Margareth sat down to it.

"There is a woman who does my washing, and I sew for her," said Harriet; "but she is getting in a hurry for two gingham dresses for her little girl and one for herself, and I'm afraid she'll give them to some one else and stop working for me."

"As for that," said Margareth, "I can make the dresses as well as anybody. I will go find her this evening, before dark, and tell her to send the girl and the goods here to-morrow. If all the food, fuel and light have come from your sewing, I suppose they must now come from mine. If my father has not been able to provide for the house thus far, he probably will not after this; so where is the sewing to come from?"

"Ned Benson goes for it and takes it back.

It seems dreadful for you to come here and nurse and do housework and sew. I'm afraid it will kill you."

"Not for some months, at least," said Margareth, "and by that time you will be well again."

At supper-time Margareth brought up the rice and soup.

"But I shouldn't eat soup at night; I'm afraid it will keep me awake. I hardly sleep any nights now."

"That is because you eat, not too much, but too little," said Margareth. "You are below the sleep-point. Big, full-blooded people can eat little or no supper, and they will sleep better, having less tendency of blood to the brain; but persons feeble and bloodless as you are should take some strengthening food to bring them up to a point of healthful sleep. I've set up here for doctor and nurse, and my name is Dr. Common Sense."

Finally, both the children were made ready for bed, and then Harriet fell asleep. Margareth locked the outer door of the sick-room, and, going into the front room, lit a lamp and set the door wide open, so that her father should come there when he returned. He had left her all day without making any provision for her comfort, or even for needful food, and it was eleven o'clock when he came in and found her reading

by the table in the plain little sitting-room. Evidently, he wished she had gone to bed; but his feelings and his tongue were usually unequally yoked together:

“My charming child, you will lose your bloom sitting up to this hour, after traveling all last night. Never sit up for me; it is delightful to find you here, but I must remember your good, not my pleasure. I am often late. A mind like mine requires the stimulation of suitable companionship; at home, as must already be plain to you, I have no society, and I go abroad to seek it. I am in a period of misfortune—in exile, in retirement, let us say, as was Cicero when, under the dictatorship of Cæsar, he withdrew to the Tusculan villa. There he found time pass more easily when occupied in philosophic disputations.”

“And can you find friends to discuss philosophy with you?”

“Not all that I might wish,” he replied, more sharply, “but what is at least better than the everlasting click of a sewing-machine and the worrying of a child. I do not find in myself any fitness for domestic life; I am a man of letters.”

“But, father, having reached an age when you might discern what life you were fit for, why choose again a domestic state, for which you say you have no aptitude?”

“Does my daughter reproach me for my follies?”

“Not at all; I do not even say it was a folly. But when we accept or choose a state, that state having certain duties, I was questioning in my own mind whether we have any right to neglect these duties because they are displeasing.”

“I discern in you, my dear daughter, some trace of a philosophic mind; I think, in course of time, with study, you might become a pleasing companion to me. We are so little acquainted that perhaps I need to tell you I am one of those always sacrificing themselves to the desires or good of some one else. I see in your face and tone a glimpse of firmness, of logical consideration, that may hinder your becoming a sacrifice to others and to your own generosity—as I have become. You feel and deplore that I am unequally married; my daughter, I admit it. I cast myself on your sympathy, and I devote myself to philosophy and bear up as well as I can. If, in thinking of a third marriage, I had shown the judgment I did in my second, and married a woman of station and high culture and some small fortune—like your mother, Margareth—I should have done more justice to myself. But I saw that Harriet had set her whole heart on me; I knew she would be overjoyed if I married her. In the weakness of my generosity, I could not refuse to make her happy, though

evidently I purchased her happiness and gratified pride at the expense of myself. My lovely child, you are like your own mother. She would have been so proud of you! What progress have you made in your studies? I chose Miss Cade as a good educator; I hope she has fulfilled her duty to you. She expects you back?"

"Possibly she would not take me back, as I ran away."

"Why run away?"

"You wrote to me that you needed me; you spoke of sickness: I imagined you dying among strangers. As for Miss Cade, she wished to keep me in pawn for a year's bill due."

"Ah!" said M. Tullius Roland; "ah! a year's bill?"

"Yes. There would have been three years, you know, only I paid for the last two years myself."

"You? You paid for the last two? Ah!" He looked at the ceiling.

"By making beds, cleaning stairs, running errands, darning stockings, teaching the alphabet and sewing, and so on."

"How it grieves my heart to hear of my lovely daughter—your mother's daughter, Judge Holt's granddaughter—in such a case! Few men have been so unfortunate as I am. Oh how often I think of those noble words of Cicero!—'Now, tossed by so great a tempest, we fly to that same

port from which we went out, and, broken by so great misfortunes, are driven into that same harbor whither pleasure and preference drew us in our earliest years. O philosophy, leader of life, nurse of virtue, chastiser of vices, what would we be without thee?' If I had known of your arduous situation, it would have increased my troubles. My dear, you will think me philosophic in speech and foolish in act when you consider this last marriage, but Harriet—poor soul!—does as well as she can. She feels that she is not worthy of me, and she tries to make amends. Yes, it was the ineradicable sympathy and generosity of my heart that led me to risk, and lose, so much."

This was one side of the story of the marriage; Margareth painfully guessed that there might be another.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY.

“When I reflect how little I have done,
And add to that how little I have seen,
Then, furthermore, how little I have won
Of joy or good, how little known or been,
I long for other life, more full, more keen,
And yearn to change with such as well have run.”

HABITUATED, under Miss Cade's iron rule, to early rising, Margareth was up in such season that the rooms were in order, the children washed and the invalid made comfortable when, at eight o'clock, her father came forth for his breakfast. He was brushed and shaven, adorned with a clean shirt, polished boots, and a knot in his tie that would have excited the envy of Beau Brummel. The coffee being good, the butter just off the ice, the bread neatly sliced and the eggs admirably poached, he looked at the tidy table with the approbative remark,

“This is the first decent table I have seen here this two weeks. I wish you, however, my daughter, a better office than that of housework.”

“I suppose,” replied Margareth, laughing, “that any honest work does you honor if you only do it well.”

“My dearest child, you come very near being a philosopher. That remark savors of the exquisite argument of Cicero—‘*In virtutem ad beate vivendum*’—wherein he shows that virtue is in itself sufficient for happiness. I have often tried to impress that on Harriet, but she does not seem to realize it.”

Margareth, having served her father, proceeded to wait on Persis. As she buttered a small slice of bread and seasoned a poached egg her father calmly remonstrated:

“My dear girl, in your lack of experience you will spoil that child. Nothing is so unpleasing as gluttony. When we cater to an infant’s appetite, we encourage it to set too high an estimate on mere food. If a child is hungry and its appetite is normal and unpampered, it will eat bread; if it is not hungry, let it wait until Nature dictates eating. I should say that egg and butter at one meal were too much for a child.”

“Oh, my dear father, do you not know that the idea of putting little children on short commons is an exploded folly?” queried Margareth, with mild audacity. “Little children, the doctors tell us, need a great amount of food in proportion to their size; they must eat to live and supply daily physical need and waste, and they must also eat to grow. If I had offered the twins that I took care of at Miss Cade’s a

breakfast of merely one egg and some buttered bread, they would have shrieked so as to be heard over the whole house. But they were excellent children when they had their own way, and they grew finely."

"How could your preceptress have been guilty of spoiling them?"

"It is easily explained: they paid nine hundred a year."

Margareth had now made ready a neat little tray of breakfast and carried it to the invalid.

"My daughter," observed her father as she retook her seat, "I really object to your leaving the table during a meal; it is not etiquette."

"That is true, father; I will remember to-morrow, and give Harriet her breakfast before we sit down."

Words cannot express the consternation of the sick woman as the self-reliant Margareth thus held her discourse with her father; Mr. Roland's consternation scarcely equaled it.

"Speaking of to-morrow," he said, "I must mention that I dine at home on Sundays; you will be prepared."

"That will be delightful," said Margareth; "we can then have time to talk over those five years when we were strangers. And, now I think of it, father, you will give me money for marketing; there is nothing of which to make the dinner you mention."

More consternation. M. Tullius Roland was not accustomed to being requested to provide dinner. However, he felt in his pocket, finally extracted thirty-five cents, and handed the amount to Margareth with the remark,

“I have some bills to pay, and am short of change.”

Soon after, he put on his hat and retired from the field of action.

“Oh, Margareth, Margareth!” said Harriet, breathlessly, as the young girl came to the bedside to remove the tray; “never, please—never!—try that again.”

“Try what?” asked Margareth, in surprise.

“Why, asking him for money for dinner. Oh, if you do that, he will not stay at home to dinner on Sundays. He only does it now because he likes to lie in bed till eleven or twelve o’clock. And if he is off Sundays, he will get into trouble. I tried it once. I felt so done out, and I said, if he wanted his dinner at home, he should help me buy it. He didn’t say anything—he is never cross, nor rude, nor violent at the worst times, only a little sarcastic now and then—but he went out Sunday morning, and he stayed all day. At night they *brought* him home. His head was cut, his coat was torn, his clothes were bloody and dusty. Oh, I just vowed and vowed to myself that I never would ask him for anything again.”

“It is a man’s duty to provide—” began Margareth.

“But indeed men don’t all do their duty. Oh, please, always get the best you can, and never drive him out by asking for anything.”

“Do you have a doctor?” said Margareth, abruptly turning the conversation.

“He only comes when we send for him. You see, he has not been paid. He has come now and then for three years, and I have not been able to pay him, I had so many other calls, and I suppose he hates to give his time and climb these stairs for nothing. He said what I needed was nourishment, a quiet mind, nursing and to lie still on my back. I thought I must just die if I needed all that. But you are giving it to me. I wish the doctor would come and look at the baby, though.”

“What about the baby?”

“I’m afraid it is made wrong in its back; it was that that hurt me more than the exertion the day I tried to dress the children. I saw the poor little thing’s back then, and—and I’m afraid it is deformed.” She began to cry.

“Stop crying at once,” said Margareth; “I do not allow my patients to cry. Don’t even think about the baby. I don’t believe a doctor could help a baby of that age; it is too little to be doctored. What it needs is care, rubbing, bathing and sunshine.”

“Oh, but think of its being a poor helpless hunchback!”

“Being a hunchback won’t make it either poor or helpless. One of the greatest lord treasurers of England was a hunchback; so was one of the greatest astronomers. If the Lord takes away from a human being in one way, he is very apt to give to him in another, and so make all even. Now, I’m going to lay that baby on a folded quilt right here in the sun, on the floor, while I go down stairs for a minute.”

“But the light will hurt its poor little eyes.”

“Then I’ll tie a black ribbon over them,” said the positive Margareth.

When she had set the room in order and gone down stairs, poor Harriet, turning her faded eyes from the bed, thought she had a strange young house-mistress to deal with. The place was in perfect order. Persis was tied fast in a high-chair at a window to be sunned and aired, and to enliven her mind by distant views of the street, the opposite windows and the flitting, flirting sparrows. On the floor, for his sun-bath, the skeleton baby lay on a folded quilt in scant array. Poor Harriet did not know whether the treatment would kill him or cure him; at least, it was uncostly. And perhaps if the child died that would be better than living deformed.

Meanwhile, Margareth marched down to her ally Mrs. Benson, whom she found in the kitchen.

“Can you get a dinner for four people out of thirty-five cents?” asked Margareth, bluntly, laying down her small change.

That skillful housekeeper promptly sorted out the dimes and nickels:

“Ten cents, a large loaf; five cents, salad; five cents, a pint of beans; five cents, half a pound of pork, to bake with the beans; ten cents, potatoes. There you are, and a very fair dinner too. I’m going to market, and I’ll buy for you and save you the trouble.”

“I have a little more money, but it is my own,” said Margareth, “and I must buy little things with it for that poor sick woman. You can’t tell how sorry I am for her; she is so weak and miserable!”

“You have a large heart, my dear, and may the Lord bless you for it! There’s some folks with a deal bigger bodies has no heart to speak of;” with which fling, Mrs. Benson took up her basket and set off for market.

Most of the day was spent by our heroine in working on the gingham dresses for the washer-woman. Harriet had the patterns for this customer, and, with a few hints from her, the dress-making proceeded famously. Persis, a child used to neglect and quite unused to as good meals as she was now getting, played contentedly with some broken toys from the great magazine below. If the baby had troubles, he kept them stoically to

himself. Harriet at first fretted at lying in bed while Margareth sewed, and begged for some work as she lay on her back; but finally she took comfort in seeing the seams fly out of the machine and the two children's dresses rapidly approach completion.

"You sew twice as fast as I do," she said to Margareth; "you do everything fast. You don't seem to lose a minute. Somehow, things for you follow their order without your stopping to think them out."

"If I limited myself to a crust or a cracker for a meal," said Margareth, "as you say you did, you would soon see me working slowly too. If one is freely to use nervous energy, the nerves must have something to live on. Now, I mean that we shall have dinner at one o'clock."

To be sure, it was a plain dinner. The ten cents' worth of potatoes proved to be more than enough for Sunday's dinner, so Margareth abstracted three of them, made some croquettes of her yesterday's rice, and bought a pint of milk to eat with the potatoes.

Rest and food were reviving Harriet, and after tea, when Margareth sat down in the big rocking-chair to make the buttonholes on her two dresses, Harriet began to talk:

"And your father never wrote you that he was married?"

"No, not a word. But never mind that."

“I'd like to tell you how it was. Did you know that he went to Maine?”

Margareth shook her head.

“I don't know why he went there. Sometimes I think it was in self-defence, trying to save himself. I owned a little house in a quarter-acre lot; my father left it to me. I went out sewing and took in sewing, and I lived real well. I had a room I let to lodgers summers; ours was a quiet village, and usually Mrs. Benson sent me up some nice old lady for the season. But one day, just on the edge of winter, your father came along and wanted to rent the room; he said he had heard of it from a Mrs. Green that lodged with me once. I felt real flustered and told him I never let to gentlemen, but he said he wouldn't make me a morsel of trouble; and he was such a handsome, stylish-looking gentleman—quite the most elegant manners ever I saw—that with that and the advantage of letting the room at fifty cents a week, out of season, why I consented. He paid me for six weeks in advance, and I saw about nothing of him. He went out every morning, and usually came back only at nightfall. He had bought a dollar's worth of wood, and I left his fire ready to light when I did up his room in the morning. Sometimes he lit it, sometimes he didn't. He arranged with me for his washing for a trifle a week, and I kept all his clothes in order. Some way, I got

the notion he was poor and in trouble. Once in a long while he dropped in to sit with me half an hour in the evening. So it went on till Christmas, nearly. Then he owed for his room and washing, but I did not mind that: he was such a handsome, pleasant-spoken gentleman! And, somehow, he began to look very pale and to lose flesh. The fact was—though I didn't know it—he wasn't getting enough to eat. He was in debt at the hotel where he boarded, and told them he was waiting for remittances; but they never came, it seemed. And so, when they looked black at the bill running up, he went without or dropped in at a farmhouse and got a bowl of bread and milk for a few cents; and as long as the orchards were full he had plenty of apples. Only all that I never guessed till later. Finally there came a day when he did not leave his room; that troubled me. I dared not go up and inquire, for I felt shy of that, but I worried dreadfully; and when Miss Briggs came in, in the evening, I told her.

“‘Maybe he is dead,’ she said; ‘folks often die in their sleep. Or maybe he is in some trouble, and has killed himself; did you hear a shot?’

“Of course I told her ‘No;’ but Susan Briggs always was a terrible hard one to picture out distressing things. She said, ‘As like as not he is hanging by the closet door, or as like as not he

has cut his throat;' and when I begged her to go up with me and knock, she wouldn't for the world, but she said if he didn't speak by morning I ought to call in the neighbors.

"I can't tell you what I felt all night; I felt as if I had killed the gentleman by my neglect. In the morning—I had listened several times at the door—I did not like to call in the neighbors to stare, when perhaps there was nothing very wrong; so I knocked and called. At last I heard a moaning. The door was locked, but there was another door I had the key to, going through a closet; so I mustered up courage and went in by that. He was in bed, looking dreadful sick. He said he had been sick since he came in, the second night before. He seemed very faint and cold. I felt as if it was nourishment he needed. I lit the fire, let the sun in the room, went down and brought right up a cup of warm coffee. I had to hold his head and give him the first spoonful, then he took the cup and drank. I went down and made a good slice of buttered toast and another cup of coffee, and while he took that I tidied the room, and then got him hot water and his brushes. After that I went over to Mrs. Wilkes, a real good old lady, and told her my lodger was very sick and asked her to come sit by him a bit. He was in bed for a week. Mrs. Wilkes was real good, and stayed with me most of the time. When he got able to come down stairs, he sat

by the stove in the room where I worked—in that very same big chair you are in. He was very pleasant to all that came in, and as, of course, he could not walk half a mile in cold and snow to the hotel, just up from sickness as he was, he boarded with me. I got everything just as nice as I could for him. I felt paid by his talk, and he so highly educated; and somehow I told him all my affairs and about my little house, and so on.

“Susan Briggs was one of those meddling people that nothing will content, and she went ferreting around, and at the post-office found he was always asking for letters that did not come and writing letters that never were answered, and how he was in debt at the hotel and hadn't had a regular meal for a week before he fell ill. All that made my heart ache, to see such a gentleman in such straits, worth, as he was, ten thousand Susan Briggses. So I did my best for him, and he got quite well, and walked abroad each day looking so dignified and stylish! and he still kept on boarding with me.

“We might have had peace only for that gossiping Susan Briggs. One morning, as I was cooking breakfast, in she came and gave me such a going over as you never heard. She said the whole town was talking that I should have a single gentleman boarding with me, and that I was disgracing my father and mother to permit it.

The idea of Susan Briggs saying such things to me, that never thought harm of or to a living soul! Well, I broke out crying, and she left me there crying with my face in the lounge-pillow; and there your father found me when he came down to breakfast.

“‘What is the trouble with my admirable hostess?’ he says, so kind. ‘If she is ill, I must return some of her goodness and take care of her. I hope it is only some passing indisposition.’

“So I just broke out:

“‘Oh, sir, won’t you please go and find board with Mrs. Wilkes or somebody? for Susan Briggs has been talking to me and throwing up your boarding here, and I am a poor woman without any relations and with my own way to make in the world, and, being thirty years old, I must look out for my good name.’

“He marched up and down the room, silent for quite a long while, seeming to be thinking and turning everything over. So at last I said,

“‘Your breakfast will be spoiled, sir; I’ll finish getting it. And then— If you’ll please not be angry with me, but go find another place.’

“‘No, Harriet,’ he said: he never had called me ‘Harriet,’ and I jumped right to my feet, it was so strange; ‘there is no need for me to go away. You are a very good girl, and I am not

disagreeable to you ; and if we should simply get married, Miss Briggs would have no more to say. So, if you choose to walk over to the parson's with me any time to-day, we'll settle the matter, and I will stay here until I return to the city and take you with me.'

“ You may fancy how overwhelmed I was ; I could hardly get the breakfast. However, after a while I calmed down, and I went and told Mrs. Wilkes and asked her to go with us to the minister. She advised me not to get married ; said I was well off as I was : I could keep myself, but perhaps could not so well keep a family ; and the gentleman was such a stranger ! But I would not hear to her : he was the finest gentleman by far I had ever seen ; so the end was we got married that day.

“ We lived on just as nice as could be until summer. I was as happy as a queen, but he got terribly sick of the country and began to tease me to sell the house and lot and go to Boston, where he would set up in some business or get a professorship. Well, I agreed ; I thought I ought to agree to all he said, and he made it all clear how he should soon have a large income and a fine house. It was then he told me he had been twice married, and that his first wife's son was at boarding-school in Pennsylvania and his second wife's daughter near Troy.

“ Well, we came to Boston. I sold my house

and lot and part of my furniture for a thousand dollars. Fortunately, it was not all paid down. I sent on here what furniture I have in these rooms. We went first to a boarding-house, a very quiet little place, and then I found what my trouble was; for he broke out drinking and spent fifty dollars in the first week. When he came to himself, he was very sorry. I had consulted Mrs. Benson, and she gave me good advice; and I leased these rooms for four years, and paid the three hundred dollars in advance, and put in my furniture and a year's coal. When all was done, your father had five hundred of my thousand in his hands, and that is the last I ever saw of it. He talked about business, and for a while he brought home meat and groceries; but after the first few months I provided everything myself."

So this was the other side of the story of the marriage!

Harriet had tired herself out talking, but Margareth saw that the pent-up story must come forth before the poor creature's heart would find any rest.

The buttonholes were made; Ned carried away the little dresses and the clothes that were to be washed; Margareth put her three helpless charges to bed.

"Be sure and don't sit up for him; he is always late on Saturday night. Light the little

lamp on the wall in his room and go to bed," said Harriet.

Margareth went to bed, but not to sleep. Harriet's story had opened the floodgates of a sea of sorrow upon her soul, and her heart sank like lead in the midst of these dark waters. Midnight came; soon after, heavy, stumbling steps up the stairs and along the hall, and the deep mumbling of a voice thickly pronouncing lofty words: "Sunt enim omnia ista ex errorum orta radicibus," and so on; which words, Margareth, if she had rightly divined them, would have known to mean that "all these things spring from roots of errors which must be deeply rooted and torn up, not merely circumscribed or cut off." Her father had, then, a method in his madness: it was on Saturday night that he arranged to come home drunk, so as to sleep off his troubles late on Sunday morning! Was there anything in all the universe wide enough, deep enough, blessed enough, to afford compensation for a shame and grief such as this?

Margareth was young yet, and limited in her experiences; she did not yet know how far she might draw for consolation on the great heart of God. She sat up in bed, the moonlight falling whitely over her shoulders and her fair hair. She was, then, the fourth in the line of women on whom the burden of her father's iniquities

had been laid? Perhaps she was the fifth; perhaps his mother, for whom she herself was named, had gone down with sorrow to the grave. There had been her father's first wife, of whom Margareth knew little except that, distrust being in her soul, she had left her child and his little fortune to a stranger's guardianship. Then there had come her own mother, dead—no doubt, heartbroken—in her early prime, and less wise about her child and her small property. Then here was this poor Harriet, too weak to bear her burdens and dropping them on Margareth. But there drifted into the girl's soul some good words from the best of books, and, strangely composed, she lay down and slept until the sun was high.

The day began with Sabbath calm. The swallows chirped and fluttered as on other days; the chorus of the bells broke over the city. Harriet had slept well and was tranquilized. The children were dressed, the work was done; below, the dinner cooked itself beside Mrs. Benson's culinary exploits; finally, the room was shaded, and Margareth sat down with Persis on her knee. It was proper to instruct Persis:

“Persis, who made you?”

“Nonebody—no,” said Persis, tranquilly.

“Oh, think again. Come, who lives up in the sky?”

“Nonebody—no. They’d *fall*,” said Persis, with assurance.

“What! Persis does not know who made her?”

Persis perceived that she should accord somebody the honor:

“Mamma made my dess,” she observed, tentatively.

“But, Persis, to whom do you say your prayers?”

“Why, no! Persis don’t say prayers, Lady.” “Lady,” and nothing else, would Persis call her half sister.

“It is true you have gone to bed asleep these two nights,” said Margareth, “but hereafter you will go earlier, and say your prayers.”

“I thought she was too little to learn anything,” suggested Harriet, apologetically; “and then I don’t know much myself, and never could teach: I have no gifts that way.”

“She is not too young,” said Margareth. “It seems to me that the idea of God should be the first idea of the child’s mind, and it should know the name of God as soon as it knows the name of its mother. The idea of God is not foreign; it is born in all with their soul. We fashion the idea to speech and name, and teach the child due love and fear and gratitude.—Persis, I shall tell you a story. Now, listen: God made you; God lives in the sky. He made everything—mamma,

and Persis, and the little birds, and the horses, and the baby—”

“And the house, and my doll?” interposed Persis.

Margareth was judiciously silent: she had said “everything.” At present she would not seem to limit God’s power by limiting his creative works. She then proceeded to tell the story of the garden of Eden and the first man. Persis listened with rapture to the description of the garden-home “with grass, and trees, and flowers, and birds—”

“And apples?” said Persis.

“Yes, and apples.”

“And kittens?” urged Persis.

“Yes. Nice little furry kittens. And little dogs.”

“Yes,” chimed Persis, in ecstatic delight; “white dogs wis little curly tails, and no bark in ’em.”

It was an enchanting story; Persis held her breath with joy. When it was finished, she sat meditating long; then, with a deep sigh, she put her mite of a finger on the dimple in Margareth’s chin and said ardently,

“Lady, tell it adain.”

Margareth repeated the history, but this time, possibly, Satan and his temptations took the place of hero, as in the *Paradise Lost*. At all events, Persis was much impressed by Satan.

After considering upon the tale a long while in silence, she observed,

“Notty old Satan! God put him out.”

“What did Satan do that was naughty?” asked Margareth, curiously.

Persis mused; then—

“He didn’t want to go to bed?”

“No, not that,” said Margareth, concealing a smile.

After more consideration of the problem, “I know!” cried Persis, triumphantly: “he kwied for butter on he bread.”

It was a simple little speech, but there rushed into Margareth’s mind the realization that this little child knew nothing of sin except those small failings of her own which she had been told were “bad.” She was a pale, quiet, underfed morsel, and one of her sins had been to “kwie” for butter on her bread. The thought brought before Margareth a whole family history of repression, poverty, discouragement, wrong-doing. In those few words the woes of the past week and the watchful sorrows of the past night seemed to culminate for her. She placed Persis on the floor and fled to her little room, and remained there for half an hour. When she returned, sounds of some one stirring came from her father’s room.

“He always wants a cup of strong coffee when he comes out—only that,” hinted Harriet.

Margareth lit the oil stove, and had just made ready the coffee when Professor M. Tullius Roland came from the inner room and with a groan dropped into the great chair. He was dressed with his usual nicety, but his hands were tremulous, his wrinkles were deepened. Altogether, M. Tullius seemed much the worse for wear. The coffee revived him; he looked approvingly at his daughter.

Though Margareth could not go to church, she had celebrated Sunday by putting on her best, a blue lawn, a gift from the father of the twins on their behalf.

“Candiduli dentes, venusti oculi, color suavis,” said he.

“Which I do not understand,” said Margareth, “but I am sure it is something complimentary.”

“It means ‘snowy teeth, beautiful eyes, fresh color,’” said her father. “How much I am to blame for allowing that inhuman schoolmistress to teach you the trifling French tongue rather than the noble Latin!”

“Not to blame, father, for she taught me French well, but Latin she would have taught very poorly.”

“Dear me!” said Harriet. “Why, do you know French?”

“Of course,” said Margareth, who supposed that tongue a common heritage.

“How much you two know!” cried Harriet, admiringly. “And I don’t know anything!”

“My friend,” said M. Tullius, graciously, “that is your misfortune, not your fault.”

However, the chance remark was not fruitless. Harriet, in telling Margareth’s praises to Mrs. Benson, enlarged on the French. Mrs. Benson discoursed thereof to the butcher’s wife. The butcher’s wife had a pair of daughters of whom she designed to make “ladies,” and she requested Margareth to receive them for daily lessons. The price was not much, but the teaching went on with some hand-sewing, and was a help. As for the sewing by machine and the children’s dressmaking, that progressed well, and Harriet, lying back on her pillows, was allowed entire rest and nourished on chocolate, eggs and soup until she saw some prospect of restoration.

Margareth wrote to Mrs. Villeroy, enclosing her father’s letter as explanation of her sudden and secret departure. She enclosed also a note to Hope Cornell.

“I found my father married,” she said in her letter to Mrs. Villeroy; “I found a sick wife and two young children. The eldest is a cunning, delicate little thing. I mean to take her to church with me as soon as I can get her properly dressed to go. I’m afraid something is wrong with the poor baby. I never studied much physiology, but it does not seem to me that a baby should

have a loop in its back-bone. I'm not sorry I came; there is no one to take care of them but me. I will write you again, if I have something good to write; but I think people had better be silent if they have only troubles to tell of. Do not let any one know what I have told you in this letter."

Mrs. Villeroy wrote, and also sent a package with two little cambric dresses, stockings to match and a lace-and-mull cap, which she asked Margareth to accept for church-wear for Persis. Margareth replied with thanks; then she wrote two letters far apart, and then Mrs. Villeroy did not hear from her for years.

One part of Mrs. Villeroy's letter was this:

"I cannot believe that, with your natural abilities, God intends to keep you always in the position in which you now find yourself. You should strive to fit yourself for any station in life to which you may be called. Your education is well begun; you must carry it on by careful reading. Never pass a day without an hour for reading—more, if you can. Read history, biography and natural science, also travels, a little *good* poetry and fiction. There are large free libraries in Boston, and you should have your father bring you such books as I have suggested. Also you will hear of free lectures, and the Christian associations offer many privileges in the line of lectures and

classes. In fine, embrace all opportunities for self-improvement. *Make* such opportunities. Let not better days, when they come—as, in the good providence of God, I believe they will—find you unprepared or with lost time to lament. Cultivate yourself; improve yourself.”

Margareth showed this part of the letter to her father, and it greatly pleased him. It roused his interest alike in his daughter and in education, and he did not fail to select the books for Margareth from the library, and to select them judiciously.

Margareth had been home over two weeks when a hurried, heavy step in the hall and a familiar voice heralded the arrival of Mrs. Quincey.

“Oh, my dear,” she cried, settling herself in the big chair and lifting Persis to her knee, “how glad I am to see you, and much more to hear about you from Mrs. Benson! Oh, she told me all that you had been doing. When I left you that day, I knew it was a time of trying, and I concluded to stop away until it had had time to turn out one way or the other. You have done well, my dear, and glad I am of it. When I tell Thomas Henry of it when I go home, he’ll be glad too. Oh, you are laughing. Thomas Henry is well; he knew me as soon as he saw me, and overjoyed he was. I often tell him he has too sensitive a nature for his own good.

Yes, my dear, you have done your duty nobly. Well is it to be weighed in God's balances and *not* to be found wanting."

Margareth flushed. She had never mentioned that treasured card, but was it so that her life was fulfilling her mother's thought?

"And how do you find yourself, ma'am?" Mrs. Quincey asked Harriet.

"Oh, I'm much better, I'm getting such good care. But I know it is a terrible trouble for *her*, and why does she have to bear it?"

"Why, indeed?" was echoed by Mrs. Quincey. "There's a 'why' of divine Providence back of all the affairs of this life.—My dear," to Margareth, "did you ever pray to grow in grace?"

"Why, yes," answered Margareth, flushing. "Last New Year's, Mr. Villeroy preached a sermon which I liked very much. He said it was a good plan for God's children to ask New Year's gifts of their Father in heaven, and he said the highest use and dower of the New Year could and should be growing in grace; and he advised us all especially to ask God to help us to grow in grace this year, and I did."

"Well," said Mrs. Quincey, "I don't see but that explains it, so far as *you* are concerned. Now I'll tell you my experience. Once I particularly requested the Lord that I might grow in grace during a year. Well, such a year I never saw before or since in all my life—trou-

bles, disappointments, losses, vexations, evils of no end, till I fairly felt, 'After that, the deluge!'

"And did you stop praying to grow in grace?" asked Margareth.

"No. I was frightened at my troubles, and I felt tempted to say, 'Hold, Lord! I can't grow in grace at this rate;' but I considered that growth in grace was really worth all it cost, and well to have at any price; so I kept straight on. But when I got through that year, I warrant you I felt as if I had been to the wars or crusades and come back scarred and tattered like a veteran."

"I cannot at all understand what you two are talking about," said Harriet, from her pillows.

Mrs. Quincey accepted the remark as a hint to make conversation more generally intelligible.

"This is a sweet little girl," she said, "but she looks as if she needed country air and a good roll on the grass."

"She hardly knows what grass is," said her mother. "I did take her to the Common a few times, but I could not spare the hours from my work. She is delicate. I know she would love the country; flowers are the only things she cries for."

"When I come back, in two weeks," said Mrs. Quincey, "I'll take her with me and keep her a month; Thomas Henry really needs a playmate. When I come, I'll bring you some of my straw-

berries.—Now, Margareth, in this basket are some of my own flowers, eggs, lettuce, radishes and a young chicken to fry. Just take them out.—And do you, ma'am, pick yourself up, so that by August I can take you out to my place to stay a fortnight with your baby. It is not much I can do with my little means, but I can open my house to those that will be benefited by country air.”

Nothing that any one could have done would have been a greater charity. Persis thrived well in her country visit, and Harriet's two weeks were three and sent her home in August nearly well, while Margareth could scarcely estimate the help that came in the baskets of good things from Mrs. Quincey's "little place.”

CHAPTER VII.

A HALF BROTHER.

Happier he, the peasant, far
From the pangs of passion free,
That breathes the keen yet wholesome air
Of rugged penury."

WHILE Harriet was enjoying her visit in the country, M. Tullius Roland came home for his dinners—not because he feared that his daughter would be lonely, but at that juncture his finances were even lower than usual, and his credit at the restaurants was quite exhausted. The professor, Margareth and Persis were accordingly at dinner, the room door being open on account of the heat, when a burly young fellow with a strong general likeness to M. Tullius appeared on the threshold. Margareth looked at him blankly, M. Tullius with some little struggling recognition in his eyes.

"Why, hullo, governor!" said the stranger. "It is not a very devoted parent that don't know his own son when he sees him."

"Positively, it is Rufus! My son, how are you?" said M. Tullius, springing up and shaking hands with effusion.

“All right, what of me isn't melted. You didn't expect to see me, sir, and I— Really, I didn't expect to find you in just these quarters. You lived in swell style when I was at home as a little bit of a shaver, if my memory serves me truly.”

“I have been very unfortunate,” sighed Roland. “Sit down, Rufus; sit down and share my humble meal. It is not what you have had at your guardian's, and that we are so nearly strangers is not to be wondered at, when a stranger instead of a father is left guardian of the person and property of an only son. I'm not to blame, Rufus.”

“Nor am I for what I had no hand in doing,” replied Rufus. “In fact, I hadn't as much hand as you, for I understand you signed the instrument transferring me, in consideration of five thousand dollars.”

“I yielded to your mother's wishes.”

“That was right, certainly. Who is this? Surely not—”

“This is your half sister Margareth.”

“Bless us, Margareth! Is this you? How you have grown! I remember I used to be right fond of you when you were seven and I was eleven. You were a real accommodating little tot, and pretty also. Yes, I liked you, and your mother too—I did, upon my word.”

This reference to her mother won Margareth.

She held out her hand to the almost forgotten brother, and made ready a place at the table.

“Who’s this?” demanded Rufus, looking at Persis. “Rather a peaked specimen, seems to me.”

“That is our little half sister,” said Margareth.

“Oh! I remember the governor did me the honor to mention that he was married. Where is the lady in question? I hope she is more presentable than her infant?”

M. Tullius and Margareth preserved a discreet silence.

“I am indebted to whatever circumstance sends you to visit me,” said M. Tullius as he filled his son’s plate.

“The circumstance is a more than usually violent falling out with my guardian, so I just squarely let him know that I would not go through college and meant to get out of leading-strings.”

“You are quite wrong about the college; every man should desire a liberal education. Was that what you quarreled about?”

“No, not precisely. The immediate cause of contention lay in cigars and a champagne supper or two, with a modicum of beer and billiards. I concluded that you, sir, would not be quite so strait-laced. I remembered that I had been taken from home and sent to school to remove

me from your supposed pernicious example, but, not being afraid of it, I have come back. However, it was a great mistake to send me off to a boarding-school at eleven; it did me more harm than good. Margareth's mother would have antidoted any damage which you might have done to my youthful mind and morals, sir."

"And have you made any terms with your guardian?"

"The terms are that he is to pay the munificent sum of twenty-five dollars a month for my board and washing; he will also settle some tailors' bills if they are reasonable. Otherwise, if any tailor allows a minor like myself to run up an unreasonable bill, he must look out for himself; I'm not responsible."

This remark struck Margareth very painfully; it was the very line of argument which she had used with Miss Cade. She wondered if it was difference in circumstances that made the statement seem different, or whether the whole principle were wrong.

Rufus continued:

"He also advised me, as I declined further studies, to get into some business as quickly as possible."

"He was quite right," said Margareth.

"Very right indeed; I hope you'll do so," said his father.

After dinner Rufus watched Margareth closely

as she cleared away the dishes and then, putting on her white apron, sat down to sew.

“Will you come out with me?” asked his father.

“Excuse me; I think I had better renew my acquaintance with my sister.”

When they were alone, Rufus placed a stool before Margareth and jerked at her sewing:

“See here! Do you do all this housework? Things don’t look very flourishing here. What are you sewing on this cotton gown for?”

“I do the housework; and do not despise this cotton gown and others, for by making them I get bread and butter to put on the table.”

“Zounds! And this other wife? What is she like?”

“She is a plain, simple, harmless creature. She has been very ill, and is now off in the country—getting better, I hope.”

“No money, then, I fancy?”

“She had a thousand dollars; it is gone.”

“I suppose so. Your mother left you a capital to give you four hundred a year, Margareth, but you don’t seem to be getting much good of it. It was entirely in *his* hands; is that gone too?”

“I have had no use of it since I was twelve. For one year since then I am in debt for my schooling; for the other two I paid in housework, sewing, teaching. Now, here, I am doing

housework, sewing, teaching, to help on myself and others. Yet I am not so very badly off. No one interferes with me; I like the children, and I take an hour or two every day to study, and have all the books I can use in that time. I keep up heart, for some day there may be better things."

"Father resents not having been my guardian, but it was luck for me. I have been maintained so far, and shall be till I am twenty-one, and then I'll have a little sum in hand. If father had had the care of my property, he would have had me thrown on my own exertions before I was fifteen. He devastates everything."

"So far as the result is concerned," said Margareth, "I do not know that you would be better off for being allowed the privilege of devastating your property yourself. And if at fifteen you had been forced to earn your own way, perhaps there would have been no complaints of cigars and champagne suppers. Suppose you find business, and work with all your might? I shall be very proud of you. You must like something, even if you do not like books."

"See here! What had I better do—about living, you know? I fancied that father had made another good match, as he had twice before, and was living in a house, not in a third story over a toy-shop."

"I hope you will stay here. You will not

find Harriet unpleasant, and father is always polite; and you will really be better off. If you will pay me that twenty-five dollars a month for board, I will see that you have a comfortable room on this floor—it will be small, but, you see, the price is low—and I will give you as good meals as I can, and keep your clothes in order. And then you will feel that you are helping us along. It really will be a help, I assure you, especially to get it in full every month, so that I can buy coal and flour, and such things.”

“The guardian won’t send it through me, you bet; he’d fear I’d spend it. He will send it by cheque each month, and we can get him to make it out to this ‘Harriet,’ as you call her, if she will hand it over to you. I don’t much care where I stay; I couldn’t get much style for twenty-five dollars a month, and you’ll be some company for me.”

“And you won’t dislike Harriet and the children? There is another child—a baby. He is feeble, and he has a crooked back.”

“Poor little chap!” said Rufus, heartily.

It was the second touch of kindly sympathy in him, and it pleased Margareth. She stopped her work long enough to give him an approbative pat.

“It seems to me,” said Margareth, “that you have as good a chance in life as any young man could want. Your board and clothes will be

provided for two years; that will enable you to take a small salary in some business you like, and work up. At the end of two years you will have a little capital to invest. I should think you could save nearly all of whatever you earn to add to the capital."

"Tut! It wouldn't be enough to be of any account. Say three hundred laid up: what is that?"

"Not so much in itself, but worth more than as many thousand," said the wise Margareth, "in the habits of economy and self-restraint it represents."

"The idea of a pretty, dimpled, yellow-headed girl talking so sagely as that! What nonsense!"

"You must remember that for more than two years 'the girl' has been cast on her own resources, and that brings gravity and wisdom and ages one. At fifteen, I, who have earned my way, feel older than you, who at nineteen have never earned a dollar. With the habit of self-support, I may be in money-matters much safer than you are. Of course it was wise and right for your mother to try to secure to you what little property she had, and yet it seems to me dangerous to settle on a boy such an income as will until he is twenty-one entirely obviate the need of labor. By twenty-one our habits are usually fixed, and the boy, not forced to industry, may have gained the habit of idleness and wastefulness. If he is sure

to be a student, to go to college, to work hard at his books, then it is well for him to have an income that will enable him to do so."

"Well, Miss Wisdom," said Rufus, laughing, "how would you have fixed it so that in my youth I should not have become a bloated and indolent millionaire?"

"I should have arranged for you to be sent to school until you were fifteen; and if then you did not show the tastes of a reasonable student and desire a collegiate education, I should have arranged that you were to be put to work at some trade or business and made to depend on it for a living outside of extraordinary expenses. And if in the six years until you were twenty-one you had shown energy, industry, economy, you should then have had your capital to invest in your business; if not, you should have gotten only your interest until you were thirty, to see if you would have learned prudence and have settled down by that time."

"By that time the guardian of your selection would have gobbled up the entire capital for himself. You can't trust men."

"If I could not trust the individual, I would trust a trust company."

"Gracious, girl! you talk as if you were forty!"

"I read the newspapers," said Margareth, "and I think about what I read."

“I don't—only to see if any horses have made extra time.”

“But now tell me: what business do you prefer?”

“I don't prefer any. What I prefer is to hunt and fish and row and ride a bicycle. I think my guardian should have let me keep a boat on the river and have bought me a first-class bicycle. He wouldn't do it.”

“Perhaps he knew that your income would not cover such outlay, and did not wish to be accused in the end of devastating or ‘gobbling up’ your capital.”

“He knew very well that if he kept on good terms with me, and let me have what I wanted, I should never have made any fuss when we came to settlement.”

“I strongly suspect that your guardian is an honest man,” said Margareth, quietly. “However, if you greatly desire a bicycle, why cannot you save up your wages as soon as you get a place, and buy one? If you save three dollars a week, you can get one in six months; and that way of using the money would be better than frittering it away weekly on shows and plays and worse nonsense. It is better to learn to save for almost any end than not to save at all, and I suppose a bicycle well taken care of is always available property.”

“Upon my word, girl, you talk as wisely as

some of those ancient sages—whose names I have, unhappily, forgotten.”

“Try Solon or Socrates,” suggested Margareth, “or Plato.”

“Thank you! Solon: that is quite sufficient.”

“And if you get the bicycle, I hope I shall not see you wheeling around on it on Sundays, as so many young men do.”

“You’d better believe, if I had one, I’d wheel nine days in the week if there were so many. But the idea of my saving and keeping one end in view for six months! The very notion is absurd. I couldn’t do it.”

Margareth’s heart grew more and more heavy. This youth seemed to have absolutely no strength in his character, nothing solid of morals or religious purpose or vigorous intending, upon which to build anything for refuge and shelter in his life. Another Reuben, unstable as water.

“Rufus, I must say something to you that it hurts my feelings to say.”

“Say right along; don’t hesitate. I’m amiable; I can stand anything.”

“It hurts me—not on your account, but on father’s.”

“Don’t be scrupulous; he’s not here, and I’ll not tell him.”

“The places where he spends his time are not proper places for you to be in; the ways in which he spends his money—the little he gets—are not

ways which should claim any man's money. Our father has wrecked and ruined his life. You said at dinner that he used to live in style when you were at home. I remember that time. We had a nice house and two servants and a little phaeton and pony, and all the people who came to see us were nice people; and he was a professor in a college, and people looked up to him. Now he picks up here and there money for his clothes and dinners, except what he gets on credit. He lives in this shabby third story, and his wife and daughter support his home. You know what has done it, Rufus—the places and the things I hinted at, the wine, the beer, the brandy, the cards, pool, billiards, in the saloons. Once he would not have stooped to such places, but by the wine and brandy at home and in places of so-called fashion he fell, until he lost first one professorship, and then another; and then he could not get such places as he wanted, and he has gone on down to this. Don't go that way, Rufus. You are young; you have your life to make: don't begin wrong by getting these habits and by using these indulgences. Father tries to find in them a way of forgetting what he was and what he lost; you have nothing to forget. Keep out of all these snares if you want something to hope for."

"You ought to have been a boy," cried Rufus. "What a straightforward, up-and-down, ener-

getic, self-restrained fellow you would have made!—just the very beau-ideal of my guardian. President of the United States, no doubt, in course of time.”

“I don’t see why common sense, energy and self-restraint are supposed to be the peculiar inheritance of men,” said Margareth. “Women need them just as much, and put such qualities to as good use as ever men do. Now, if I had the mapping out of your life, this is what you would do: you would to-morrow set yourself to hunt some business such as you thought would interest you and hold your attention; you would show the greatest energy and industry at once, and so become speedily valuable; you would in the evenings go to lectures or libraries or out walking with me; you would save your money; you would go regularly to church, to Bible class on Sabbath morning, and to weekly prayer-meeting; when you were twenty-one, having some business knowledge, good habits and fixed principles, you would invest your little fortune in some paying business at which you would work zealously; in time you would marry, set up your own home, be a useful citizen and good man, and flourish more and more from year to year.”

“That is a promising picture, but there is a deal of hard work in it. And what is the use of all that religion?”

“In the first place, it has practical, financial

use, for God says, 'Them that honor me I will honor;' second, it has use in that there is no firm foundation of morals except in religion; third, it has highest use in that it takes hold on immortal life and fits us for happiness in that eternity on which we may at any instant enter."

Rufus shook his head:

"You are a queer girl—mighty old in your notions—and also you are a very pretty girl; and, come to look closely at you, I think you are the kind of girl one could tie to without any fear of your going back on him. I remember your mother had just such crotchets. She was a very good woman, and I liked her. I remember that I felt pretty bad when I heard she was dead. She used to write me letters and send me little presents. Now, Margareth, I'll step out and have my baggage sent here, if you think you can make me comfortable. I'd better do that while I have cash in hand, for no doubt before I'm twenty-four hours older the governor will want to borrow the few dollars I have."

"You needn't lend it—all," said Margareth, anxious for both.

"You see, it has always been one trouble with me that I never could say a good square *No* to anybody. Perhaps you can."

"Yes, I *can*, if it is necessary," answered his sister.

“Then by all means bring the crisp little monosyllable out forcibly if any one comes courting you, for I plainly see that you are the one member of this household destined to hold all the rest together. That is the duty of the house-band, or husband, but in these degenerate days he doesn't always do it.”

“If you are in funds,” said Margareth, “you had better subscribe for a month to the best advertising paper, so that you can look up places of business. If you take one to look at early, you can see the others later in the day at some of the free reading-rooms.”

“What a business-head it is!” cried Rufus, admiringly, as he went off.

Margareth applied to Mrs. Benson for another room, made terms for it, and, aided by the younger of the Benson daughters, began to set it in order.

Rufus came back with his things. Evidently, he did not know how to save his money. His clothes were needlessly nice and numerous; he had more knickknacks than a properly-trained girl would need; he brought in peaches, beef-steak and tomatoes, which he said must be had for supper, and he showed his kindness of heart by tossing Persis an orange and a stick of candy. For the next week he spent his time in seeing all the sights in Boston, making trips on the river and the railroad, until, with these measures and

a loan to his father, he had exhausted his ready money. After that he set himself to look for a clerkship, and, having tasteful dress, good manners and good appearance, he at last secured a position at four dollars a week in a dry-goods store. His evenings he spent in running around here and there until a late hour; he had to be called, shaken and nearly dragged out of bed by Margareth in the morning to get to his duties in time. Sundays he followed his father's example in lying in bed until nearly noon; in the afternoon he took a walk or a trip on the bay. Margareth was utterly unable to correct any of these practices; he was good-natured in speech, but obstinate beyond description in self-indulgence.

When Harriet came home, she was as much in awe of Rufus as of her other relations by marriage. It is true he had not that scholarship which she supposed to abide in M. Tullius and in Margareth, but then he was "such a stylish young man!" She was in great terror lest the children should trouble him, and lest things should not be good enough to please him. The monthly board-cheques coming to her so overwhelmed her that she would at once have presented them to him to cash and keep had not Margareth insisted that they should be given to her, that they two were unable to support Rufus unassisted, and that

it was greatly for his good that he should pay his board.

“In fact,” said Margareth, “I am willing to stay here and help you so long as you exercise common sense; but if you give those cheques to Rufus or father to help ruin himself with, I’m going away. The first cheque you hand to either of them—that ends my being here.” This vigorous threat secured her the prompt possession of the guardian’s monthly letters, delivered to her sealed.

As for Rufus, his views of his second step-mother were clearly stated to Margareth as soon as Harriet came home:

“Seems to me the governor got pretty low down when he chose his last wife. Your mother, Margareth, was a lady, and this poor body has neither birth, brains nor beauty to recommend her.”

“At least, she gave him her all,” said Margareth, tartly.

But what headway could Margareth make against the tide of folly of these two men? On the one hand were the reckless tastes and inclinations of Rufus; on the other was the disastrous example of his father. When Rufus had cash in hand, his father would invite him to go to a restaurant for dinner with ale or wine and let Rufus pay the bill, or they would go off in great amity for an evening at billiards. Did M. Tul-

lius Roland feel inspired to give his son moral lessons, he couched them thus :

“So long as you have a guardian, Rufus, don't fall out with him. Don't run up bills to anger him ; he may pay them out of your property. In a couple of years you will have your money, and you can use it as you will.”

Margareth sometimes painfully felt that her father kept on good terms with his eldest with an eye to sharing his capital when it fell into the son's hands. This notion aroused her to more pity and anxiety for her half brother, and to warmer desires to defend him from himself and his father.

The moral lessons of M. Tullius were as pernicious as was his immoral example. For instance, at the supper-table, his cheeks purpled, his eyes bloodshot, his voice thick with drinking, he must needs fix his flickering gaze vaguely in the direction of his son and discourse in favor of temperance :

“Temperance the Stoics called the fountain of all virtues. It was moderation in all things. Intemperance was excess in anything. I wish you understood Latin, so that I could give you the noble original—‘*Omnium autem perturbatio-nem*’—but I must translate : ‘Intemperance is the fountain of all diseases of the mind, because intemperance is a defection from all conscience and right reason, and so averse to the authority

of judgment that the appetites are willing in no manner to be restrained or ruled. But temperance calms appetites and secures that they obey sound reason, and a proper balance of mind is preserved. Intemperance, hostile to this, inflames all the tenor of the mind.' Rufus, why did not you study Latin?"

"I did," said Rufus, "as far as into the beginning of the *Reader*. I remember I read a fable about a crab trying to teach his son—to walk straight."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MODERN JOAN.

‘A maiden-knight, to me was given
Such hope I knew not fear.’

AUTUMN saw Harriet restored to health. Sustained by the strong common sense and vigorous help of Margareth, the poor woman took a new lease of life; the burden resting on her was now shared, and since the arrival of his daughter M. Tullius found less fault with his domestic surroundings. Harriet had accepted censure and condemnation as her legitimate and proper portion; when M. Tullius complained, she was ready to admit that his home was not worthy of him, that she herself was a very insufficient mate for so great a gentleman and scholar, and that he had every right to reprove and condemn.

M. Tullius felt instinctively that Margareth would receive his strictures in a different spirit. Was his home less comfortable than he desired? Perhaps, if he denied himself and labored as diligently as did the women of the household, he might command such comforts as he craved.

Was he disappointed in his wife? He had chosen her, and had taken and used all her little property. Why should he devote his energies to faultfinding? It would be more practical to spread in his home the good cheer of encouragement; and if his surroundings were not up to his merits, let him raise them to his level by due exertion. Professor Roland considered that his daughter was quite enough like himself to think and express these reasonable opinions. She might be a girl to sacrifice herself, but she was not a girl to assert that the demand for that sacrifice was either legitimate or virtuous.

When Harriet recovered, she took upon herself the housework and the care of the children, and added to this labor as much sewing as she could make time for; and Harriet was a diligent worker. Margareth, for her share, took the teaching of her two pupils, sewing, and opened a new industry in repairing or reconstructing damaged toys for Mrs. Benson. During the busy months of December and January she also acted as saleswoman in the toy-shop.

On the Sabbath, Margareth went regularly to church and to Sunday-school, taking Persis with her. She urged Harriet to attend one service in the day, but Harriet had a quiet indifference to religious things that was quite as disheartening as the jesting and questioning of Rufus or the

derision of the professor, who valiantly proclaimed himself "a heathen of the Ciceronian style."

"I heard Mr. Villeroy say," observed Margareth to her father, "that boasting of being heathen like Cicero or Cato or Epictetus is quite false boasting, for they, while heathen, were up to or beyond the level of the best teachings of their religion; they sought for truth and desired to go forward, and not backward, in knowledge and virtue. Those who in this day reject divine light and teaching to go back to the opinions of men who had less light do not follow the example of Cicero, who studied and accepted the best opinions that he could discover among all teachers."

When M. Tullius was at home—which he was more often in winter than in warm weather—he enjoyed discussing subjects with his daughter, and often the discussions resulted in this good, at least—that he thought of some book that would be useful to Margareth to read, and secured it for her from the library. She spent the winter evenings in reading and study, except when she went to lectures, to which Rufus was always ready to escort her. When she studied at home, she frequently secured her father's aid and instruction, and so kept him safely in the house after supper. On such occasions Harriet showed great discretion in keeping the children quiet and out of sight.

“Margareth,” said M. Tullius one day, after carefully observing Persis, “that child is very much improved since you came here; she is fat and healthy, also she seems intelligent and is quite good-looking. I thought she was going to be ugly. I am not fond of ugly people; all my children have been handsome, as they have all resembled me. You are most like me in mind, as you are fond of books, which Rufus, unhappily, abhors. I see gleams of intellect in Persis, and possibly, under your care, she may so develop that she may be worthy of education.”

“Me no want ed’cation,” said Persis, who had become attentive on hearing her own name; “me want a b’oom.”

“What?” said her father.

“Me want a b’oom, to feep,” cried Persis, emphatically.

Margareth burst into a laugh:

“I think the genius of Persis is entirely in the line of housework. What she likes is to fuss about, rubbing the furniture and picking up scraps from the carpet.”

“Me like feep, dus’, make beds,” cried Persis; “many lots of beds—papa’s bed, my bed, Nufus’ bed. Me like to help Lady.”

M. Tullius shook his head:

“Those seem to me very low tastes, Margareth. Do you think she inherited them from

her mother? I married Harriet in one of the emergencies of my life. There was a time, Margareth, when, struck with remorse at having used up all your property and made you destitute, I endeavored to break loose from the habit that ruined me. I fled to Maine, as it was a prohibition State, but then it was a State where I was unknown, had no friends, could find nothing to do, until, maddened by inertia and having the temptation of a little cash in hand, and appetite always being more dominant in idleness, I came here. I have injured you, my daughter, but it is not so much my fault as the fault of law that permits men to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear. In that the human does not copy the divine, if the Scripture speaks truly. Now, it seems to me that, as the human mind reaches its highest development in the region of law-making, in that it should be likest the divine; for Cicero says, 'The human mind being derived from the divine mind, with no other than with God himself, if it is right so to speak, can it be compared.'"

"You are quite right, father, as to what human law should be, and it is a thousand pities that what it should be it is not. But when human law fails to help us, we can by prayer take refuge in the divine and get grace to help in every time of need. Don't talk about having injured me; we will let that drop: you have

injured yourself much more, and a little money-injury done to me is really nothing in comparison with my loss in having you less a good, noble, honorable, respected father than, with all your gifts, you might be."

M. Tullius shook his head. It was Sunday afternoon. Harriet had gone down stairs for a little gossip with her cousin, Mrs. Benson. Margareth sat opposite her father, with the infant, Archie, on her lap.

"Margareth," said her father, changing the conversation, "that child has a very beautiful face and very intelligent eyes, but some way it holds itself wrong and has an odd appearance. I never noticed it much before. In fact, I never noticed infants much. You and Rufus had nurses to keep you out of sight until you were presentable."

"This child," said Margareth, quietly, "will always hold itself differently from other children: it is deformed."

She did not know what effect this would have on M. Tullius; Harriet had greatly feared to have him know that his youngest child would have a crooked back. Now he started and turned pale, but the sad fact seemed to rouse whatever of the father and the man there was in him. He took the child in his hands for the first time since the little one had been born, and held him on his knee:

“What a misfortune! Always to be an object of the pity or dislike of other men! I have always taken great satisfaction in my appearance; it is a proper subject for pleasure. Cicero and other wise men enumerate beauty among the sources of happiness. But, Margareth, this child has a fine head and a fine eye. Happiness does not consist in beauty alone; virtue is in itself sufficient for happiness; but, like the ancients, I do not recognize a virtue that has not knowledge as one of its component parts. Margareth, you and I will educate this child. We will secure for him such graces of mind that he will forget his deformity of body; he shall be so wise that he will be honored in spite of a crooked back. There have been many instances of the highest mental advantages conjoined with, but victorious over, the greatest physical disadvantages.”

“I have thought of that too, father,” said Margareth; “but how much more certain he would be of securing education and good fortune in this world if you should return to your former position! For his sake can you not begin again?”

Whenever matters personal to himself came under consideration, M. Tullius changed the conversation. Now he said,

“Margareth, this must have been a great grief to his mother.”

“Yes, father; I think it kept her sick so long this summer.”

“Poor thing! Poor Harriet!” Then he put the child back on Margareth’s lap. “Margareth, this unfortunate child must look mainly to you. Will you promise me never to desert him?”

“I will never desert him. But consider, father: he has you.”

“I, unfortunately, am a broken reed, piercing the hand that leans upon me. My three wives have found it so.”

“And the child has his own mother.”

“Yes, and no doubt she loves him; but love for an unfortunate like this must have a deeper foundation than natural affection. That may yield to self-interest or the expulsive force of some new affection. I am not a religious man, Margareth, yet I know that there are crucial moments in life when the one strength to be relied on is the divine Strength that I reject. You have religious force, Harriet has none; therefore I feel that you rather than the mother should be relied on for this unhappy child. And yet we will not anticipate evil. If he grows up, he may have a straight, strong, large mind even in a small, weak, crooked body.”

“And if he does not grow up,” said Margareth, “he will have a straight, strong, beautiful body in heaven.”

More than this frail human body laid across his way would be needed to turn Roland from that path of death which he had chosen. That downward road grows constantly steeper, and progress upon it is accelerated. Though M. Tullius stayed more at home during the winter, he came home more often in a state of drunkenness.

As Harriet was relieving her of all housework and she was not obliged to rise to prepare the breakfast, Margareth made a practice of establishing herself with her books in the little sitting-room which her father occupied, and there waiting for his and Rufus's return. Rufus usually came first. He would warm his feet, ask for something to eat, laugh at Margareth's remonstrances at his mode of spending his evenings, saying he was at no harm—had merely had a game of billiards or had seen a match out at pool or tenpins—and then saunter off to bed, telling her to give herself no concern about him and declaring that he would come out all right some time. Her father's moods varied.

“Why is it I always find you up? Possibly you think I am not old enough to find my way to my room and put out my own light? Daughters are all very well, but it is less comfortable when they undertake to play police. Very proper of you to look after Harriet: she is not over-bright, she has no education; but I

—I am a man, I have been professor of Latin in a college.”

“Yes, father; I sit up to make you more comfortable when you come in. Will you have some hot tea?”

“I will call for what I want. You sit up to play the spy on me. Rufus is much older than you, but he does not sit up to watch me.”

“See, now! Your bed is open, and here are your night-clothes. Are you quite warm? Shall I come back for the light?”

“I thank you; I can wait on myself. You cannot deceive me as to your intentions by pretending to wait on me. I see clearly that you sit up to condemn me. You condemn my ways of enjoying myself. My hours do not please you, my companions do not please you, my pleasures do not please you. But what? We are not all made alike; Cicero says ‘Te tua, me delectant mea.’* If you had studied Latin, you would know my meaning. But I forgive you.”

This was painful enough, but it was still more painful when he came home lachrymose. Then he would drop into the great chair and exclaim:

“Still waiting for me, wronged, beggared, forgiving child! Harriet has gone to her bed. She considers only herself: that is quite natural; but you wait for me. Oh what a fate is mine! Have

* “Your ways please you; mine, me.”

I not struggled? Have I not sworn? Have I not mourned? Was it my fault that I was born with a taste for strong drink? Margareth, do you know what *atavism* is? Go study inherited tendencies. Was it my fault that the customs of society surrounded me with temptation, that lovely women offered me wine? Was it my fault that my friends offered me wine at their tables? Has it been my fault that government licenses the making, selling and buying of strong drink? Do you suppose I did not suffer agonies of shame when I lost first one and then another Latin professorship? Did I not know remorse when first one wife and then another died heartbroken? Was I not miserable when I wasted my all and your all? Have I not shut myself up for days? Did I not fly to a State where there was prohibition? Would I be a drunkard if there were prohibition everywhere? Is it wrong for the weak to cry out for help to the strong? Does it need any argument to prove to me eternal misery? If I admit that man is immortal, then the sinning man must be immortally miserable; for in his remorse and self-hate and self-accusation he carries his hell in his own soul when he enters the spirit-world. Shaking off the body will not change the status of the soul nor shake off its burdens. My remorse does not abide in my bones or in my flesh: it is in the *me*—in the inner, undying, unforgetting *ego* that cannot perish

and go down into the grave with the blood and the muscle."

When he had gone to bed thus bewailing, Margareth would come back wrapped in a blanket and sit on the floor beside his lounge-bed, and stroke his hot head with her soft cool hands and sing to him sweet old hymns—"Sun of my soul, my Saviour dear," or "Jesus, a single thought of thee," or "Come, ye disconsolate." It might have made angels weep to see the tossing, demon-vexed man, the girl, fair, young, faithful, and to hear the voice soft and low in the shadows. Lulled at last, M. Tullius would sleep, and then Margareth, calmed by the spirit of her hymns, as her father had been by their music, would go to her room and find profound rest for herself.

Joan, the French maid, beholding her country desolated, felt herself called by God and buckled on armor to go to the rescue of her king and to drive out his enemies. There are many households to-day invaded by the hosts of sin—households whose sole hope is in maiden-knights that hour by hour do battle for the rescue of their homes. Their panoply is invisible—the whole armor of God, that "they may withstand in the evil day." One of these maiden-knights of the nineteenth century was Margareth, on whom devolved the burden of the defence of her home. To stay the failing courage of Harriet, to protect the two little ones, to rescue Rufus, to check the down-

ward course of her father,—all this fell on her. In warfare of offence and defence she became skilled. One while she was in a state of siege; she gathered in her household, whose members the beleaguering enemy attacked and defeated as soon as they appeared beyond the walls. Sometimes, when they went out, she went also to protect them; sometimes by prayers and by reasoning she tried to supply them with weapons and armor for their own defence. But there were sharpshooters and outworks and hostile towers on every street-corner, and Margareth knew that the sapping and mining went on in all directions; and whenever she threw up a new breast-work or strengthened a gate or deepened a moat, the enemy could erect a taller counter-battery or a new countervallation or bring a heavier siege-gun or dig a deeper mine to-morrow.

When you estimated the progress of this warfare by months, Margareth's was the losing side. Rufus never saved his salary for any purpose whatsoever. Rufus was in debt; bills came in which he laughed at, and his guardian's name was kept a profound secret from his creditors. Rufus never made himself so valuable that he received promotion in his business; in truth, Margareth suspected that he more than once narrowly missed losing his situation. He spoke lightly of it, saying it was a situation quite below his birth, breeding, appearance and abilities.

Sometimes Rufus tried to persuade Margareth to "lend" him part of the cheque sent monthly for his board; that she steadily refused: it would be unjust to Harriet and the children.

"We can barely live now," she said.

"Oh, come! You are so industrious you could make it up."

"I could, but I will not," replied Margareth. "I will do for you anything in reason; I even go beyond reason. If you were sick and helpless, I would risk injuring my own health by toil to make you comfortable, but I shall take no such risk merely to indulge you in sin or selfishness. I shall take honest care of myself for the sake of the future. I am seeing hard times now—we all are; but I believe that God will send me good some time, and I mean to be ready to use and enjoy it when it comes."

Over that future, with its possible good, the fate of Rufus hung like a heavy cloud. Her father was never violent, never even cross, when intoxicated; if he said disagreeable things, it was in a peevish, not an angry, tone. But when Rufus had indulged in ale and wine, his face flushed, his eye lit, his voice elevated itself, he asserted himself; no place seemed equal to his ideas of his own merits, no treatment was good enough for his deservings. Margareth thought that if the time came when Rufus took stronger and more alcoholic liquors he might be dangerously violent.

These same ideas gained possession of Harriet:

“If your brother ever took to drinking, I should be afraid of him. He would be quarrelsome and reckless; he might kill me or the children.”

“Don't live in fear of what may never happen. I will take care of you,” replied the courageous maiden. “Before he kills you or the children he will have me to settle with.”

Thus Margareth was the champion of the family.

CHAPTER IX.

MISTRESS QUINCEY TO THE RESCUE.

“The heavens are better than this earth below :
They are of more account, and far more dear ;
We will look up, for all most sweet and fair,
Most pure, most excellent, is garnered there.”

THE trouble with Rufus became the pressing trouble of Margareth's life. The knowledge of her father's great failing had come to her early, and the realization of its enormity had been gradual—she had never known him free from his besetting demon—but Rufus she had known as a joyous, innocent boy ; her first memories of childhood were associated with him, her dictatorial, affectionate playmate with all good possibilities before him, and beside those bright pictures of the past must stand, in their horrible dreariness, these scenes of the valley of the shadow of death into which he was going down. He was so young ; there might be so many years of life before him, such vast possibilities of happiness and well-doing. Within poor weary Margareth's breast arose bitter thoughts, angry yet unavailing risings against her brother's evil for-

tunes. Was it his fault that he had been born heir of his father's thirst? Was it his fault that early example had been pernicious, that he had been in childhood severed from home to segregate him from his father's disastrous example, that now all his father's influence was leagued with the powers of hell for his son's destruction? And yet in calmer moments came the sad recognition of the fact that Rufus was voluntarily going downward, step by step, to lower and yet lower depths. From beer and wine, moderately partaken, he had gone to whisky and brandy in occasional excess, and they wrought fierce havoc, notwithstanding his burly strength, with his hot, excitable temper.

“This misery about Rufus is worse, twice over, than the misery of my father's case,” cried Margareth to Mrs. Quincey. “I cannot endure it, I cannot understand it; it drives me frantic. I have prayed for him, and it seems as if I pray to the winds or against gates of brass. As sure as I pray much, and more earnestly than usual, so sure, it seems, is he to break out worse than ever, until I am afraid to pray for him. In earth and heaven there seems no compassion for him but in my heart.”

“Such compassion is not—cannot be—inspired by the devil, Margareth: this your pity flows to your brother through your heart from God; and the fountain must be fuller than the stream.

Whatever you feel for Rufus, God feels still more."

"But if it were in *my* power, I would reform him at once. I would rescue him before he sinned or suffered more."

"God's ways are not as our ways, and it is good to know that they are not lower than our ways, but higher. God gives in his own time because his, all things understood, is a better time, and he gives in his own way because his is a better way. This sorrow about Rufus is your cross, Margareth. You know Christ says, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Now, Margareth, mark: it says *his* cross; it means some cross especially prepared and designed by the Lord for him. We cannot go about seeking or preparing some cross for our ownelves, to suit our own notions of what would be good for us and not be any trouble to carry. If we could do that, we should spend our whole lives picking and choosing, and not have any crossbearing at all. But crossbearing is the portion of the Christian, for the disciple is not greater than his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. Christ bore his cross, and so must we bear ours; and, moreover, that cross was of his Father's ordaining, even though of *men's fashioning*: men hewed the wood, and Roman hands prepared the cross of Christ.

So our crosses very often have so clear a human making that in them we forget to see God behind the human hand. Another thing about the crossbearing is that, while the allotting it is God's part, the taking it up and carrying it is our part. Not that we could get rid of it by refusing to carry it, but that verse about carrying it means that we should be patient under it; and if so be we cannot be glad of it—as, I'm sure, we are not required to be when the cross is another's sin—still we can say, 'Not my will, but thy will, be done,' and trust perfectly that God will bring good out of evil. He that trusts in God shall not be ashamed, and he that believes God shall not be confounded."

"But," asked Margareth, "can this patient bearing of the cross go along with constant ardent praying for its removal, as I do when I pray continually for my brother's reform? I can understand why Paul could stop praying for the removal of his thorn in the flesh: that was a personal trouble in which there was no sin; but I do not believe that he ever stopped praying for the salvation of Israel, whose unbelief he said was to him a continual heaviness and sorrow of heart."

"Quite right you are," replied Mrs. Quincey; "we may often stop praying for the removal of some personal or finite grief, but I don't know as we are to stop praying for the conversion of

any one that is laid upon our heart. The cross is given us for some end, and that very end may be to bring us closer to God in prayer. If there is anything we may have confidence in, it is in God's hearing us in our intercessory prayers. In intercessory prayer we are nearest in likeness to our Lord, who prayed for his people as long as he stayed on earth, and continues to intercede in heaven. And then, again, prayers for soul-saving must be inspired by the Holy Spirit, who, it seems to me, will not dictate waste prayers or prayers against his own intentions. In these prayers, too, we pray in the line of the divine idea, because God says that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. You are not willing that Rufus should perish; it has been laid on your soul to pray for his salvation. God also is not willing that the lad should perish."

"But oh, then, why does he let him go on in sin?"

"That we do not know. We do know that where sin abounded grace doth much more abound. Also the word is that he turneth the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he will restrain. That means that he will not let sin go any farther than will serve for the glory of God and some one's growth in grace. Now, so far as you are concerned, there may be a certain amount of growth in knowledge, faith,

patience, perseverance, that you must get out of this very trouble, and as soon as that is gained God will restrain or cut short any evil that might go beyond that limit. So far as Rufus is concerned, it may be that a certain amount of falling and sinning and suffering is needed to make him hate sin and seek God. The serpent, you know, cured the bite of the serpent; some men get sick of sin only by sinning. As a mere moralist Rufus might get through this world decently and be just as far from God as was the emperor Nero, and have no hope in the life to come, but he may by sinning learn to let go himself and to take hold on the cross; he may see himself so vile that only the blood shed from the foundation of the world can help him, and fly to that."

"I cannot understand you two at all," interrupted Harriet; "you talk of the queerest things! How can you enjoy this talk all about the cross?"

"Because in it is all our hope, ma'am," answered Mrs. Quincey. "But truly, perhaps, you would like better to have us get on farther, and talk of the crown?"

"It seems all one," said Harriet, "cross or crown; I cannot understand either of them. I only understand *real* things."

"Why, ma'am," said Mrs. Quincey, "these seem to me to be the most real things of all;

they are so real that they belong not only to this life, but to the life to come. Living alone as I do, my mind often fixes on these things, and my reading is mostly the Bible and Scott's and Henry's commentaries, which my good father owned, and I can talk freely enough of these matters when once I get started."

"If you could only tell us something practical to cure Rufus, I'd be glad enough," said Harriet, "for I'm afraid as death of him."

The struggle with the demon in Rufus came soon. He returned home one afternoon at an hour when he should have been at the store. He had been drinking; his blood and brain were on fire. As soon as he entered the room and caught sight of the blanched cheek and quivering lips of Harriet his fury rose:

"What are you and that girl of yours doing here? She is just like you—both fools; and fools are not fit to live. Oh, you needn't be afraid for the boy; he's bad enough off as it is. What did you make him with a crooked back for? Don't you know better? I'll teach you better!" He stooped for a stool, and swung it across the room.

Margareth sprung to her feet. She had heard that a firm eye could quell wild beasts and maniacs; hers should cow this raging demon in her brother. Her blood boiled in indignation against him.

"Rufus!" she cried, in such a voice that he

looked toward her; and, fixing her eyes on his, she held his gaze and went firmly toward him.

Looking fixedly at her, his jaw fell and he shrank back. She moved on, and without diverting her gaze suddenly seized both his wrists. Then, looking still into his eyes, she gently pressed him backward—back through the door he had entered, back into the hall, softly back toward his own room, her hands grasping his, her eyes on his, their chests and faces not two feet apart. If the door of his room should not be open! But, thank God! it was open. Back, step by step, in profound silence, until they reached his bed. She pressed his yielding figure down; she lifted his hands and hers to his chest and bore him against his pillow. Then she spoke:

“Rufus, lie there, and do not move until you are better.”

Rufus made this extraordinary reply:

“Madge, you vision, your eyes are black; I thought they were gray. They are black! Awful black! Fearful black! Black as ink! Black as jet!”

Backward, looking at him still, the girl withdrew until she could close and lock the door between them.

For an hour, if any one had listened, Rufus would have been heard in tones of profound conviction repeating, “Your eyes are black!

Fearful black! Black as ink! Black as jet!" The impression of those eyes which he had supposed to be a tender gray and had found a terrific black remained with him whenever he became intoxicated. Once let Margareth fix his gaze and he yielded, lost entirely in a consideration of her eyes. The iniquities of his stepmother in being a fool and bearing Persis in her own likeness and bestowing on the family a crooked boy were forgotten, and while his maze continued Margareth could lock him up. When alone, with no subject for irritation, he thought upon her eyes until he fell asleep. He seldom drank, and when not drinking was genial and generous. More than once he spent his week's wages for a suit for Persis or a dress-pattern for Harriet or something for Margareth, and seldom came in without some trifling thing for little Archie, for whom he felt intense compassion. He lost first one situation and then another by absenting himself on a drinking-spre. When he lost the second, it was within six or seven weeks of his majority, and he said the loss was of no consequence: he should soon have money in hand and did not care to continue to be a clerk; he meant to enter business.

Margareth begged him at once to look up some business or proper investment of his money, so that he would not be tempted to spend by having the little capital in his hands. He always

assented to whatever she proposed, but seldom carried assent into practical act. He was to go to Philadelphia to see his guardian and settle with him, and it was Margareth's ardent wish that he should go with a clear brain and without any traces of dissipation. She secured occupation as far as possible for his idle hours; she remained by him constantly and went out with him in the evenings, developing all her resources of entertaining to hold him by her side, out of reach of dangerous influences.

Rufus felt grateful for her generous care; he was affectionate, and repaid love for love. All that he could do for any one he would do for Margareth; he would not conquer his appetite for her sake, but he would restrain it. He persuaded her to go to Philadelphia with him:

"Come! You'll keep me out of mischief; you'll prevent my spending my all the day I get it; you will enjoy the journey. Get yourself a decent traveling-outfit, and I'll pay you the money back as soon as my guardian settles up. Borrow the cash from Mrs. Benson for a month, and I'll make it right."

No doubt her company would be for his safety, so Margareth went. The journey was delightful; the guardian was a kind man and an honest. He was much pleased with Margareth, and seemed surprised and relieved that his ward had not already hopelessly ruined himself. The

inheritance to be paid was small—only twelve hundred dollars—but the settlement was prompt and accurate.

“Many great fortunes,” said the guardian, “have been built upon a foundation of twelve hundred dollars when well laid in honesty and enterprise. That is enough for any young fellow to handle; if you wouldn’t make your way with that, you wouldn’t with more. Now, if you will stay here and set yourself at work, I can show you how to place that money so as to make a good business-opening for you.”

“You are very kind,” replied Rufus, “and I mean to set up in some line as soon as I have looked about a little; but I think I will go back to Boston: I’m acquainted there now.”

Margareth, on her part, as her brother resolved to return with his money in his own possession, urged him to put it in some place where it could only be drawn out on long notice; she thought that thus there might be a little stay in the tide of recklessness which she foresaw.

“That would never do; I might find something first rate in which I should wish to invest immediately.”

“But if you had the money in a safe bank, it would do.”

“Oh, I’m tired of leading-strings. But I’ll tell you, Margareth: I’ll deposit somewhere and give you some signed checks, and each month

you can fill them out to the amount of my board, and so you'll be safe; and some time when I see a good thing I'll go into it."

"But, Rufus, this is very little money; unless you tie it up in some good business now, it will not last you a year."

"Oh, I won't be so foolish as to be beggared in a year," said Rufus.

Day followed day and weeks grew into months, but Rufus found no occupation—scarcely sought any. Idle walks about the streets, hours at billiards or pool, evenings at the theatre,—these filled in his time; and in all he was abetted, encouraged, by his father. M. Tullius helped his son to waste the remnant of fortune which his dying mother had hoped would build up for him an independence. M. Tullius borrowed little sums constantly, urged Rufus to dine daily at a restaurant; and now that he could procure a little money from Rufus the ex-professor earned nothing at all.

Margareth knew what dining at a restaurant meant: it meant bottles of beer or wine and Rufus to pay the bill. She set herself against it, and there she succeeded. Rufus really loved his sister; for his unpaternal father he had little more than good-natured indifference. Sometimes, when he realized at what a terrible pace he was moving on the downward way, he felt risings of rage against a father whose hand

helped him to ruin rather than drew him back.

The autumn and the winter passed. On a stormy February morning Margareth heard her father proposing to Rufus that they should "drop in on Kelly." Kelly, as Margareth knew, kept a place marked "Pool and Billiards for Drinks;" also at Kelly's might be enjoyed unlimited drinks not won by pool or billiards, and the air was reeking with tobacco-smoke and ringing with oaths. So low had the Latin professor fallen as to propose this resort to his son. With all her heart Margareth opposed the suggestion which she had heard, but father and brother were bent on destruction. She turned to her father:

"You are ruining him; you are destroying the soul of your son. What will you say to his dead mother when you meet her in judgment?"

"Never mind, Madge," said Rufus. "It is a dull day; I'll go this time, and then for a month I'll be as good a fellow as ever you saw. Perhaps I'll turn over a new leaf entirely."

They did not come home to dinner; the afternoon was closing when the younger of the Benson girls rushed up stairs crying,

"Margareth, they are bringing your brother in dead, or something! Hear them! There they come!"

Margareth heard feet stumbling along the encumbered stairs. She threw open her father's room and turned back the clothes from the bed.

"They must bring him here," she said. "Run and get a doctor, if they have none."

Harriet dropped into a chair crying and wringing her hands as Rufus was carried in, white, unconscious, his hair and clothes clotted with blood.

Margareth had no tears to shed; it was hers to act.

"Help me undress him," she said to the policeman who carried Rufus by the shoulders, "and order those others away, please. I have sent for a doctor."

The policeman cleared the room and the halls, helped Margareth put Rufus properly in bed, and then aided her to bathe his face and head in hot water. The man looked on amazed as the girl calmly washed the ugly wound in the head and then, taking a comb and a pair of scissors, cut Rufus's hair close, making all ready for the surgeon.

"Confound it!" said the man in blue; "a miss of your wit and pluck deserves a better office. They got into a quarrel about a game of pool, and some one struck him over the head with a bottle. Only wonder is it did not kill him on the spot. Now here's your doctor."

“Will he live?” asked Margareth, when the examination was over.

“We must make a fight for it, but you know there are very heavy odds against a drinking-man. However, he is young.”

It was late when M. Tullius came in. Harriet had taken the children and gone to bed in Margareth’s room; the girl watched alone by her unconscious brother. She took her father by the hand and led him to the couch:

“See there! Who is responsible for that?”

“Not I, Margareth; I tried to get him away from there.”

“Also you tried to get him to go there. It is easier to lead men into evil than out of evil. He may—probably will—die.”

“You see, Margareth,” mumbled M. Tullius, who had heard of the disaster and taken refuge from remorse in drinking, “they quarreled. I saw there was a low, noisy set coming in, and I went off, telling Rufus to come, or to go home.”

“But you first took him to a place frequented by low, noisy, quarrelsome people; the result is that in his youth, when he might be all that is good, he may die a violent death.”

“Plena vita exemplorum est,” replied M. Tullius, sedately.

The next day he was sober and in a different mood:

“I know you are blaming me, Margareth—I

am to blame—but you cannot condemn me as I condemn myself. Do you think I don't see where I have fallen, and from whence? Do I not think that but for me my son might be happy and good and honorably placed, that you might be the ornament of refined society? Have I not resolved, feared, fallen? The world is one great snare to men of my make; there is a net spread at the corner of every street. Law should help, not hunt down, men who, like me, are weak." He was well skilled in throwing on society and law the responsibility for his own misdeeds.

He remained at home and nursed his son, who was oscillating like a pendulum between life and death, one while all the chances swinging far into the pulseless chills and darkness of death, again young vigor making strife for itself, and the rebound going into the warmth and conscious strength of reviving life.

At the end of the first week Mrs. Quincey came in:

"Well, I didn't know why I left Washington so early as the first of March. All manner of little things seemed to point me home—a fence to be set up, a morsel of painting, some trees to trim and set out, a dozen little nothings calling me away from the capital before Congress rose. But as soon as I saw Mrs. Benson below I knew where I was needed, and you see the Lord knew too. Margareth, if you'll empty my basket—

some apples and potatoes from my own place, a glass of jelly I made last fall, some pork I pickled myself—and then dress those two children and put their clothes in the basket, I'll take them to my house till your brother gets better. Archie will pick up with me; he needs to be fed on new milk and corn bread. You may say what you will about his back, but his face grows more beautiful every day. He looks like a little angel."

"And he acts like one," said Margareth, taking the child in her lap to put on clean clothes for his journey. "There never was a sweeter little man than Archie."

"I'm not a angel—no," said Persis, bustling into her clean dress and apron; "I don't want to be angels. I'm growing up so I can cook an' scub an' make pie for Lady."

Mrs. Quincey carried off the children, and in the silence, unbroken now by the small shrill voices, the battle for life went on. Victory was declared for life at last; the fever passed away, the brain ceased its wandering.

"I've made you lots of trouble, poor Madge! and pretty nearly was done for this time. The governor's been very faithful waiting on me: I knew a good bit more than I seemed to. Madge, my pockets?"

"Yes; I looked after them: you were not robbed. I found your bank-book and twenty

dollars in cash. Your account at bank stands just six hundred dollars, Rufus. Half your all gone in seven months, my poor boy! Can we not do better?"

"Yes, I ought to, but how can I? The governor's in the same case. I think he tries. I heard him groaning and moaning and cursing himself in Latin and English nights when he was here alone with me. Why, Madge, there are the restaurants all selling liquor, the hotels and their bars, the saloons and the bucket-shops, the drug-stores, the groceries. If you sail by Scylla, you fall into Charybdis. Think how it is: it is lawful to make liquor—lawful to put all manner of poison in it, too, I suppose: it's protected by law—lawful to sell it, lawful to buy it, lawful to drink it; and yet drinking it you commit suicide, which is unlawful; you beggar yourself, break up families, murder other folks. Ah! there is a screw loose somewhere, Margareth."

"If you are too weak to resist temptation, you must get out of the reach of it," said Mrs. Quincy when she came in one day and Rufus continued to her his threnody. "You are living the wrong kind of life altogether. Your hot young blood and strong muscles demand exertion, exercise, an active out-of-door life. Caged behind a counter or shut up in the close, warm air of stores and saloons, you get wild for some excitement, and you find it in drinking. There

are places where no liquor is allowed, and you need to find one of them and invest what little you have in something that will afford you support in an active out-of-door life for you and your father both to work at. It is too late for your father to think of support in the old learned ways; he must go to work with his hands. The children would be better off in the country."

"We haven't enough to go West and buy and stock a farm, and we don't know anything about farming," said Rufus; "but I'm sick of all this, and I'd go gladly, and get at hard work gladly, for Margareth's sake, if I could only find a free place in the open air."

"I know I shall think it out if I set at it," said Mrs. Quincey; "I always do think out what I lay my mind to. My son says, 'Mother, you're a wonderful thinker on every-day affairs.' I will go home and talk it over with Thomas Henry. Now, you laugh, but I'm in earnest. You don't know how much good talking it over with Thomas Henry does me. It gives me a chance to discuss out loud, and, with him sitting bolt upright on a chair looking at me, I don't feel so foolish as I would talking to myself. Besides, if I talked to myself, the neighbors might think me going crazy, but no one objects to my talking to my cat. You see, when I talk over a plan with Thomas Henry, I have a chance to hear my own views and array my arguments.

Then I must reply for Thomas Henry ; so polite a creature would, of course, reply, and, as he is very intelligent, he would speak excellent sense if he spoke at all. Therefore it puts all sides of the question, all objections, all improvements, clearly before me when I discuss with Thomas Henry. We are an excellent congress : he is the Lower House, I am the Upper House. Our members are elected for life ; at the end of every discussion we always reach an agreement ; we never waste time ; we never are bribed ; our aim is to see exactly what is right ; and I am always the Speaker. Now, after a few days, when I get light on this subject, I will come back and tell you all about it. I make sure I'll reach a good idea after a while."

CHAPTER X.

"ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE."

"As one pursued by word and blow
Still dreads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head."

"I'VE made it out," cried Mrs. Quincey, rushing into the abode of the Rolands and sparing all ceremony of knocking; "I knew I would. And, really, it was all along of Thomas Henry. Thomas Henry is more than fond of macaroons. Well, I said to him the other evening, when I had tucked Persis and Archie into bed, 'Thomas Henry, take your seat in the arm-chair; I must consult with you.' Then I laid it all out plain how some friends of mine must leave the city, and the new home they must choose must have no whisky allowed in it; must not be too far off, on account of traveling expenses; must be cheap to live in; must have some work open to all the family; must have some very low-priced property; must be among honest, decent, industrious people. Just there Thomas Henry winked his eyes, and I knew what he meant. 'Quite right you are, Thomas Henry,' says I. 'What other kind of people

would I be likely to find in a place where they enjoy prohibition?’

“Well, I talked the whole affair over with Thomas Henry until quite late, and we arrived at no conclusion. So I said, ‘We will make this bill the first order of the day for to-morrow, Thomas Henry,’ and he appeared quite content; but, being tired with applying his mind so severely to one point, he came to me and as plain as preaching—*good* preaching, I mean—he asked for macaroons. Going to the box to get him one, very naturally I thought of Mrs. Webb, where I bought them. Mrs. Webb keeps a cake-shop in our town, and she came from Welby Haven, down here on the coast; and as I thought of Mrs. Webb and our frequent conversations I remembered she told me that hers was a prohibition county, and also that she spoke highly of the people as all friendly and quiet, eating their own bread, as the apostle enjoins. Also I minded that she told me that property was cheap and living sure to be made, as the sea is no niggard to them that follows it. So I said, ‘Thomas Henry, you were quite right to remind me of Mrs. Webb; to-morrow I shall call in Betty Prigg to mind the children, and do you look well after Betty Prigg herself while I go and have a word with Mrs. Webb. Now, if you have finished your macaroon, sit on your mat while I have worship and ask a blessing on my visit to Mrs. Webb.’

“Next day I went to see Mrs. Webb, and I laid out the whole thing to her while we had a cup of tea and some currant-bun in the room back of her shop. Mrs. Webb remarked to me, ‘Mrs. Quincey, you have come to the right place at the right time.’ Then she proceeded to tell me that a cousin of hers, who had lived down at Welby Haven on account of his parents, now that they were dead was coming up to Boston to go into a wholesale fish-house. He has to dispose of a fishing-boat which she says is ‘cat-rigged.’ What that may be I do not know, but it struck me it was some kind that would be agreeable to Thomas Henry, though he has really unreasonable objections to the sea, while I admire water in any of its forms. Also the boat, she said, was one of the very best there, and there goes with it a share of a fourth in a fish-house on the shore, and also a house to live in which the cousin had for sale. The house is very old and very small: it has one big room below, and two small ones above; but it is weather-tight and has a bit of solid ground about it, being built on a knoll in a salt marsh, and the last house in the village in that direction. There is also a little boat for going about the creek that winds through the marsh, where one can catch clams, crabs and scollops. The fishing-boat has a little skiff that goes with it. Mrs. Webb says any two men can make a first-rate family-

living down there fishing. For this summer you could hire a fisher of the place to teach you the coast and how to sail a boat and how to fish.

“If you settled to go at once, you would be at the very beginning of the fishing-season, which lasts all summer in bluefish, bass, blackfish, flounders and some cod. Mrs. Webb said no doubt Margareth could get the district school—if not this year, next—and it pays thirty dollars a month and is in sight of the house I mentioned; and there, you see, is a chance for Persis to get schooling. She said, too, that on a bluff and a point were fifty handsome cottages and a hotel where summer visitors lived, and that she was sure Harriet could get sewing and so on from them, and from the regular inhabitants there, because all live in ease and there is no lack of comfort, as all the money goes in honest needs, and not in whisky-drinking. I quite took to all that Mrs. Webb explained to me, and she sent her cousin to see me the next day. We talked it all over, and Thomas Henry listened; and I saw he approved, for he winked his eyes and crimped his paws and waved his tail.”

“But did Thomas Henry approve the *price*?” asked practical Margareth.

“He ought to, so I’ve no doubt he did. The price of the new boat is two hundred dollars;

the fishing-apparatus and share in the fish-house, fifty dollars; the house on the marsh is two hundred dollars; to get moved will cost you fifty at the most. The house and boat will always be salable property, and they will enable you to get a comfortable living in a healthy, honest way. If you prosper, you can buy or build another, better house and buy another fishing-boat. Moreover, Mrs. Webb's cousin says he will take all the fish you ship him, at the regular market price. Now, since others live and thrive on the fishing, I don't see why you should not.”

“It is the very thing,” cried Rufus, joyfully—
 “safe and pleasant. I love the sea and fishing. Margareth, we'll do it. My money will cover all, and give us one hundred still in hand. I dare say, if you and Harriet get at that old house, you'll make it quite snug and homelike, and we can put on a little paint or paper or whitewash. I say, Madge! you can keep school, and your mind will be easy, and we may build up a business. Who knows? Oh to be rid of this horrible, hateful, tempting, terrible city!”

Mrs. Quincey came, and came again; she went in and out of the Rolands' home daily. Her bonnet with its frills and multitudinous bows, her yellow fur cape with all its swinging tails, her cheery, rugged, wrinkled face, made her grotesque as a Chinese or a Hindu god, but not the less a cheery, hopeful tutelary saint of

the almost ruined home. She brought Mrs. Webb and Mrs. Webb's cousin; she planned and promised; and at last the bargain was made on the original terms, so that by the middle of March all was prepared for a flitting.

The bustle of moving, the joy of change, the possession of property more tangible than paper bills, awoke the manhood in Rufus. Long sickness had enforced long sobriety, so that he was in a normal condition for action and improvement. Margareth grew confident in those busy days. M. Tullius had also been stayed a little in his downward career; he too gave signs of better things. He quoted from Horace, Plautus, Virgil and Cicero concerning the sea—their terms not complimentary in general, it is true, but the words were high and stirring and shed a splendid light of poetry across the hoary waves.

Harriet and M. Tullius went down to Welby Haven with the Lares and Penates, and in a few days Margareth, Rufus and the children followed them.

The new home stood alone on the salt marsh, an eighth of a mile from any other house; a causeway stretched to it from the high-road. Not a tree nor bush was near it, but around it brooded neither barrenness nor desolation, for the rank vegetation of the marsh-lands surged to its very door. The house had never been painted, but seventy-five years of sun and wind

and salt mists rolling in from seaward had given it a soft, mellow tint like newly-riven Melbourne slate. The building was low, with a high-pitched roof. Facing toward the causeway it had a squat door and two narrow windows, which, with the gable sloping steeply back, gave it the look of some enormous skate or crab cast out of the waves and lying blinking and panting on the edge of the land. Twice every day the sea rose, and the waters filled the tortuous channels through the marshes until they brimmed with floods of silver, crimson or gold under the glory of the sky. Then the waters retreated toward the main, and there was to be seen only the rank growth of sedge and rush and salt grass and rustling reeds, undulating under the breeze with slow sweeping motions learned of the waves.

In the heart of this salt marsh the fugitive family lived severed from the world.

The spring came early there, wooed by soft breezes from the deep. Along the causeway clung strange plants, and over the rippling grasses swung countless dragon-flies of sapphire hue, and sea-birds screamed and floated low or poised and gazed at intruding humanity, angry remonstrance in the birds' round orange-rimmed eyes.

Hitherto, Margareth had grown mentally by books; she had also grown in physical stature; she had grown by hard proofs in graciousness

and in the grace of God. Now, for the first time, she was placed in the profound silences near the great heart of Nature. The new sense of art awoke within her; she grew in poetry and passion; her nature rounded to the fullness of its completion; her thoughts took wider range now. She had burst the shackles of the cities, the limitations of narrow habit; to her, now, eternity and immortality and human destinies and the broad march of Providence through the centuries came in new strength and fullness. She seemed to get room to think, room to exist largely and fully. To her, when she marked how the land lost itself in the sea and the ocean in the sky, came deep realizations of the earth-life losing itself in the heaven-life, the heaven-life broadening and losing itself in the infinite glory of God. All the petty cares, the vexations, the bitter mortifications, of her circumstances, fell away from her heart. She thought and worked for her home as before, but in a more free and joyous spirit. There was no longer danger that she would be narrowed or crushed by fate: now she would conquer fate.

That summer seemed all brightness and promise. Her brother and father, freed from temptation and interested in their new life, were out from early morning until evening with their boat and the fisherman. Persis and Archie grew and learned to laugh, their playhouse

was now so grand and so full of treasures. When they crossed the causeway and went along the main-road to the shore, Margareth pushing Archie in a wicker cart that Rufus had bought for him, the sea afforded them, in shells and dried dulce, in pebbles, crabs, chains of conchs' cradles and skate-egg rattles, toys far more absorbing than the accumulated stores of Mrs. Benson.

The new life and energy of the family failed to inspire Harriet: she had grown stouter, stronger; her color had come back; she looked a very different woman from the one Margareth had found, wan and weeping, on a sick-bed; but she was in a state of chronic and fretful discontent. She never uttered this before M. Tullius or Rufus; it was only to Margareth that she disclosed her inmost soul—a soul without depths, troubled, shallow, complaining. Far and wide along the uplands swelling back from the sea could be seen the white, modest, comfortable homes of the hereditary inhabitants, each home, with its various outbuildings, looking a thrifty little village in itself. These moved Harriet's gnawing envy. The villas of the summer residents—villas ornate in porches and bay-windows, gorgeous paint, finials, crestings and stained glass—did not disturb Harriet: they were beyond her taste or her craving; but in the mistresses of the farm-cottages she saw what she would wish herself to have been. They had their

Sunday gowns and bonnets, their bountiful tables, their neighborly friendships, their carryall or rockaway drawn by a pair of stout farm-horses wherewith to go in state to church or make a progress for shopping.

“If I had been wise,” Harriet would say to Margareth as they sat on the doorstep with their sewing, “I might have been just as well off. In marrying your father I was just looking for something quite out of my reach and that would not suit me. Suppose he had got back among his learned and stylish set? I shouldn't have enjoyed it much better than I have all this slaving and misery that I have had.”

“Don't lose heart,” said Margareth, kindly; “we may be able to do better for you soon. Things are much better now than they were. If the fishing turns out well for a year or so, we can sell this place and build a good house near the others. You kept up courage well; don't lose it now.”

“I'm sick of keeping up courage. I keep thinking of what I have lost, or might have had. You are very good to me, but I'm not your kind; I know you never think or care about what I do. I'm afraid of your brother, though he is civil and is supporting us all; for it was his money got us here. I know your father don't care for me, and any married woman wants to be cared for and regarded and respected

as more than a bit of furniture. Persis is well enough : she is a strong, pretty child one needn't be ashamed of, and soon she will be a help in the house ; but there's Archie. Of course I love him, as he's my child, but it is pretty hard for a mother not to look forward to her son being a support and credit to her. He will always be a weight instead of a help. I'm sick of 'tending children. I don't believe I ever had much natural fancy for them."

Then Margareth recalled that even her father had felt that mother-love itself might be a frail, unreliable love unless deepened and strengthened by the indwelling grace of God.

With such dissatisfaction in regard to her lot, Harriet could not be expected to give warm welcome to the babe that came in September. Happily, few infants have so cool a greeting. M. Tullius regarded the new-comer with a quiet wonder at its audacity in appearing in an overfull house ; Rufus remarked that he "had no idea little kids were so ugly, and if it cried he might be counted out of the family, for he should not stay to hear it ;" Persis said "she'd rather have a doll ;" Archie gave a deep sigh and his pretty mouth drooped as he silently resigned his cradle to the stranger.

"It seems," said Harriet, "as if work and worry would never end. It may be all well enough for people who can hand a child over

to a nurse to be well looked after, but my luck is very different."

Margareth pitied her, but still more she pitied this small unoffending girl for whom there was no refuge save the cabin in the marshes—not even shelter in a mother's heart. She sat by the fire with the babe on her knees. The children were up stairs, both in Margareth's bed now; M. Tullius and Rufus were late at the fish-house. Margareth wondered if every human soul came to earth accompanied by a guardian angel, and if that angel's brow grew sad when the child got no greeting. What long, rough ways must these small feet tread, and what hard tasks were waiting these soft, wrinkled hands!

Welcome or unwelcome, the child looked the image of peace. Rufus never heard the cries which he had declared should exile him: the baby neither wailed nor laughed. As the weeks passed on the small white face gained a still, statuesque, remarkable beauty. The child sat erect on one's knee or pillowed up in bed or cradle, looking on all about with grave receptive eyes, as if understanding and judging all, and its expression had a divine calm. Harriet slowly grew reconciled to the little one, though never fond of it. The child preferred Margareth, and there was a likeness between the gracious face of the young woman and the placid loveliness of the babe, though Margareth's beauty was thoroughly

human, while the little stranger seemed rather like a spirit for the time become palpable.

Margareth had secured the district school for that winter, and daily went off at eight o'clock, taking Persis with her. The church was more than a mile distant. Sometimes she could persuade Rufus to go with her, but he went, rather, for the walk through the woods, sweet with scent of pine and juniper and lit here and there by holly-berries or wreaths of checkerberry or flaming wing of some startled bird, than for any Sabbath-keeping or hunger for truth. Unhappily, the rule was that the fishing-boat was out all day Sunday as on other days.

But the church and the Sabbath were wells in the desert to Margareth. October closed on a Sabbath, a sacramental Sabbath, in the old country church. The congregation was of fishers and seafaring folk. The white-haired, bronzed elders sat awed and patient around the white-covered table; they were unlearned fishermen, like some of the first heralds of the gospel. The church was full of hardy, weatherbeaten faces; among them, like violets springing up at the roots of gnarled oaks, were wide-eyed, round-faced children. There were the quiet, submissive features of the old, their gaze set wistfully forward to pierce the secrets of that land whither so many of their kin had passed to the majority. They listened, and were still. For this hour, at

least, they were lifted from the common facts of life and walked the realm of faith. And when word and prayer were ended, they rose with one accord and burst into the familiar strains of "Martyrs." Then, subdued by the quiet of the hour, the mystic symbols, the unuttered pledge of the spirit to holier living, they moved quietly along the aisles and out into the sunshine.

Around the church lay camped the host of the dead of that community—the dead of a century and a half: the congregation without was greater than the congregation within. These men, who as sailors and fishers had spent nearly all their lives upon the deep, were anchored here at last; these women, who had watched for their coming, wept at storms, trembled when the wind rose "and darkness was upon the face of the deep," watched and waited no more, but were for ever laid beside their loved ones.

Margareth went home by way of the beach. The sun was setting; a crimson sky stooped to a purple sea. The winds and waters seemed chanting an old-time refrain: "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens;" it domes the earth, and stoops to humanity on every hand. "Thy judgments are a great deep," in storm and calm, in vengeance and benediction, wide, mysterious, far-reaching, life-giving, like the sea.

CHAPTER XI.

UPON THE SANDS.

“ A tract of sand,
And some one walking there alone
Who moved for ever in a glimmering land
Lit by a low large moon.”

TWO years and more had passed. The third summer came to Margareth living still in the cottage on the marshes. The days were long and bright; the breath of the sea came salt, bracing, inspiring; the woods were full of the wealth of summer; life and beauty palpitated over all the wide sweeps of swaying green where wound the narrow channels of the sea; the water scintillated and the sands sparkled and glittered in the sun. All the world renewed its life and fullness, but once more the curse had fallen on the home and heart of Margareth. The evil thirst had risen again in M. Tullius and his son, and they had helped each other to gratify the fatal appetite.

There was no hope now that the little home on the marsh should be exchanged for something better on the solid land. If the Siren were not cast away on the rocks in some sudden gale, if

the very best of the fishing were not neglected, if the price from the wholesale dealer were not all dissipated,—Margareth might be thankful. When two or three claimants stood eager for the public school, it was easy to bestow it on one who was not likely to have a drunken father or brother lounging in, the one insisting on delivering an exhaustive address on the particles *ut* and *ne*, the other making excited and singular remarks about the teacher's eyes. Margareth had held her little kingdom only one winter—not long enough to fix upon her the manners or methods of the schoolmistress. Then she fell back into her shadowed home again, looking, in her abundant life and beauty, as unfit for that narrow and graceless abode as a tall serene lily would look out of place in a thicket of brambles. Yet the lily would breathe beauty and perfume wherever it grew, and so Margareth filled her fallen home with her ministries.

Her best times were when the boat was safely off to the fishing-grounds and Harriet was busy at her sewing on the machine, and Margareth could take the three children and some light work of trimming or embroidery for the nearest dry-goods store and go far off along the sands, often remaining the whole day, picnicking with her little ones in the shadow of some dismantled fishing-boat drawn up on the shore to moulder away. Such a boat, lying over on its side, its

keel covered with barnacles and eaten by teredo, its steeply-tilted deck affording precarious footing to the adventurous Persis, the door of its abandoned cabin swinging on one hinge, the broken stump of its mast and its great iron-bound rudder hinting tales of storm and disaster, its hold still retaining the sharp odor of fish that had therein been brought to shore, and every crevice and corner full of bleaching skeletons of fish—strange transparent bones of squid, parti-colored scallops and polished carapaces of crabs with crooked and multiplied claws still adhering,—here was a world of joy and wonder, not only to the children, but to Margareth.

In these two years, with their full draughts of bitterness, and also with their cups of sweetness, Margareth had learned much about the world of waters; she knew its treasures, its dangers, its romances. In the cottages near them were old sea-captains living on former gains and loving to tell stories of the sea; the simple country-folk about had some books, and were not loath to lend them; a village two miles away had a rather large free library. From all these sources Margareth had gathered knowledge of the sea and its inhabitants. She had learned ballads of the sea, and she used to chant them in a low, sweet monotone to which the plash of the billows on the shingle was accompaniment. She had learned, too, to manage the small boat, or

punt, which they kept for the channels in the marshes. Often she took the children out in this, and Harriet if she would go. When they went out in the punt, they gathered from the bountiful waters luxuries for their table which in cities belong only to the rich. When the tide was falling, creeping along in the punt they would come to light spots gleaming up in the dark water, showing where the blue-crab had thrown white sand as he worked under the mud; then down went the long handle with the iron cup or scoop and up came the crab, while the children shouted with admiration and carefully drew up their feet on the seats to keep out of the way of the uncanny claws of the sprawling tidbit. Out along the channel to the verge of the shore, and there the black bank kept oysters, and as the tide fell Persis and Margareth raked them out, either to carry home or to roast upon the shore. What joy to tie up the punt and go dangerously tiptoeing along a tongue of half-submerged rocks, and, leaning over, almost losing balance, to behold in the crannies the sharp nose, the many-lensed eyes erected on stems or eye-pegs, the long lightly-waving antennæ, the huge unequal hand-claws folded—a lobster! And now a successful hook with the mackerel-gaff, and he is flung back upon the rock. But we will forget the methods whereby he is prepared for dinner.

And here, where the waves have come heavily in, the scallops are rolled up in hundreds along the shore. The fluted shells are crimson, orange, red, brown, striped, rayed, pearly-white, painted with an infinite variety in color and design. As they open, between the waved outlines of the shells is a pellucid veil of orange, dotted regularly and delicately with a row of indigo spots, and within this dainty veil and the soft membranes the thick, round, ivory-white "thumb" beloved by epicures. Or here in the sand behold a little hole which Persis insisted was made by pushing in a slate-pencil. But the hole was the breathing-place of the razor-shell; and if hoe or spade followed him fast enough, up he must come, to be delicious when baked, and to leave his polished brown shell with its tinted pearl lining as a choice toy for the children.

There on the shore the incubus of the family curse was thrown off, and no one could so forget the sordid miseries of the daily real in quaint tales of the half-unreal as could Margareth, when, bending with the three child-heads above a crab's hole, she told them of the housekeeping going on below the sand—of flies and gnats and ladybugs laid up for beef and poultry in that underground kitchen, of the crab moiling away at his parlor and his bedroom, his store-closet and passage-ways, when the tide had come rolling over his head and the rush and trampling of

the waves were between him and the living world. And finally, under the shadow of the worn-out boat, they would all sit upon the sand, and the baby Stella would fall asleep lying on the skirt of Margareth's blue-flannel frock, and Archie would prop himself content against her knee, and Persis, kneeling and letting sand run swiftly through her fingers, would lead off the conversation :

“Lady, long ago the Indians had huts made of bark all set along the hills where the rich people's houses are to-day? And the little boys shot the gulls and the ducks and the alewives with arrow-bows? Lady, where do you suppose the seals are that used to play on the rocks?”

“Far north; they love the cold. When the water is warm, they swim away. They are far up, where the green and deep-blue icebergs float and rock along the sea, and the tops gleam like church-spires built of glass and marble, and all along the land the broken edges of the glaciers shine like the walls of heaven. Persis, just like the walls of heaven.”

“And the old white seal that snorted on the rock: he was the grandfather of all, you think, Lady? And the fat dark ones that made a noise like calves after the sun was down: they were the children, you think? And when the father-seal and mother-seal said, ‘Come, children; it is getting too warm here,’ then they all went off.

They had no cars to pay, no trunks to pack, no good clothes to make, no lunch to get ready; they went right on along the sea, the old grandfather first, and the fathers and mothers coming after, and all the dark shiny-skinned little children swimming behind. It must be all very funny, Lady."

"But don't you think it very wicked for the crabs to get up on their toes and fight and bite off one another's hands?" said Archie. "And there was the crab we found with his shell all crooked from a bite, and there was the scallop with the hump: they were just like me."

"You will be all right some day, little man."

"And you will see it—see me all straight and pretty?"

"I shall see it," said Margareth, nearly all of whose hopes were of blessings garnered in the land that lies very far off.

"Lady," said the observing Persis, "there's a man looking at us."

Margareth lifted her eyes. They were on the highest ridge of a tongue of beach, on the one side the open sea, on the other the entrance to the channel, which, with its narrow and tortuous manifoldings, went in and out of the marshlands for miles. Across the channel, seated on a bit of jetsam in the shape of a wooden cage known as a "lobster-pot," was a young man in knickerbockers and hose of deep blue, a white

flannel shirt with blue lacings, a wide-brimmed felt hat, from the back of which floated, for further protection from the sun, a parti-hued silk kerchief. On one knee he precariously maintained a box of water-colors and a small glass of water; various brushes were stuck like a clerk's pens behind his ears; he had a large plaque of drawing-paper in his hand and was busy making a picture, whether of the wreck with the group in its shade, or of the curve of the bay with the red buoy, the covey of small boats moored to wait the return of the fishing-craft, could not be told. He noticed that he was discovered, and lifted his hat; then, steadying his box of colors, he shouted,

“I'm caught here. I think it must be four or five miles back the way I came. I did not know of this creek-mouth cutting the shore here. Is there any one you would allow to take me over in that little boat?”

“Persis, you could paddle across,” said Margaret.

Persis was not seven, but she had grown large and strong; she made no ado about clambering into the boat and paddling with one oar across the twenty yards of water to the other side.

The artist grasped the bow and pulled the little craft against the sand:

“Bravo, little water-woman! Now I'll take you back to your mamma.”

“ ‘Mamma’! That’s Lady. Mammams do not have curly rings on their hair and dents in their faces like that.”

“ Eh? Why, I thought mammams were the most beautiful beings in creation.”

“ What kind have you seen? None of the children at school have a mamma as pretty as Lady. Are you going to show me the picture you made? Why me! there we all are by the boat. Only I guess you’d better not let Lady see that.”

“ And why not? Would she criticise it?”

“ Eh? I don’t know that long word. Only her eyes got pretty black when she saw you making pictures here. Rufus is dreadful ’fraid of Lady when her eyes are black.”

“ I must look out, then. See here! do you understand? This is a quarter of a dollar for ferry-money, and you need not mention the picture. You understand?”

“ Oh, I know,” said Persis. “ Are you going to row across?”

“ Allow me to thank you for the boat,” said the stranger, stepping ashore and landing Persis with a flying leap. “ May I sit here on the sand a little while? I believe Welby Haven is one of the summer resorts where no one stands much on ceremony, as every one is understood to be eminently respectable. I am Alex Denham, at your service, from the first cottage in line on the

cliff. I think I have not had the pleasure of meeting you at any of the cottages."

"I do not live in one of them," said Margareth, lifting her eyes from her work; "I live in the small house on the marsh."

Alex Denham lifted himself up to look across the level:

"At least, you have there solitude and the surrounding sea. I did not know they took boarders out there."

"They do not," said Margareth, with a flush; "it is my home." But with the words came a sudden anguish and sinking of soul, realizing how little of the real home was there.

"I beg a million pardons. Hearing these children call you 'Lady,' I took you for a stranger."

"I am their half sister; it is their own name for me."

"A very natural name, surely," said Denham, with a bow. He fixed his eyes on Stella, who was lying back against Margareth's lap, her little arms clasped over her head. "I think I never saw so beautiful a child in my life," he said, admiringly—"a true artist's ideal, a study in gold and pearl. I wish I might paint her portrait. Would you allow it?"

"No; I think not," answered Margareth.

"Do reconsider that decision. I never had so lovely a model of a child's head. Think! It

might make my fortune. I am always looking for the theme which, properly carried out, will secure that splendid end." He said this with the easy laugh of one whose fate had always been fair and fortune made ready to his hand. Then he added more earnestly, "I can understand that a beautiful woman should refuse to have her portrait painted for the general public: she may prefer to keep her loveliness sacred to the shrine of home; but the beauty of a little child like that seems to me part of the heritage of the world. I think any one would be better for looking at such serene innocence, such unruffled peace. I wonder if there are any storms in this world that would disturb that little soul?"

"There certainly will be, if she stays long on earth," said Margareth, looking down on her small sister.

"And—she may not stay. Would you not like to have her picture if you should lose her? May I not come over to the house on the marsh to-morrow and make a study of her for an hour or so?"

"It would be absolutely impossible," said Margareth, firmly.

"Would it be equally impossible for me to have the child at my studio? I have a little studio in the tower, if so one may call that wooden appendage on the corner of our house."

To make acquaintance with the cottage-people

on any terms was the last thing Margareth desired. By birth she was of their station in life, so also by education; but the sins of her house had thrown her far out of the range of fortunate, happy, independent people. She said briefly, though courteously,

“It would be quite as impossible.”

But this youth was nothing if not persistent. When his mother had denied him anything, he had sought for it again in a variety of forms and methods until he achieved success. He climbed up on the wreck and surveyed the scene of action.

“Let us agree on neutral ground,” he said, finally. “Midway between our house and yours I see that tree of learning, that foot of Mount Parnassus, the public school. It has a deep porch guarded by two wings. Will you let this energetic little maid bring my sitter over there to me to-morrow at ten? I can paint there very well, and the children will be safe. I am sure you would be glad of a copy of the picture?”

Yes, Margareth would be glad of the picture: she loved little Stella, and had a presentiment that the child would have “brief life here for portion.”

“I will send her there at ten,” she said. “It is time to take the children home.” She moved toward the boat.

Alex Denham hastened to lift Archie in.

“I think I handle oars better than I do a paint-brush,” he said; “I wish I might row you home. I never have been able to find a boat on this crooked channel; it must be a true summer dream to glide along over this dark water, with these long rustling grasses almost touching you on either side.”

Persis did not wait for her sister to decline.

“Yes, come in, do!” she cried; “and while you row I will look at your pictures, and I’ll paint a little out of your box.”

The artist stepped into the boat and took up the oars, but Margareth put an emphatic stop to the artistic intentions of Miss Persis by establishing her in the little seat at the bow and reminding her that a certain strip of hemming which formed her daily task was not finished. Persis took her needle and went to work.

“You are very obedient,” said Denham, looking over his shoulder at the child.

“I’m in the habit of ’beying Lady,” said Persis, sedately.

He looked at “Lady.” Lady was established on the seat in the stern of the boat, Stella beside her, her tiny hands folded in her lap and her deep-blue eyes following now the ripples in the water sent back from the blunt bow, now some flight of sea-birds disturbed among the marshes. Archie, on a cushion at Lady’s feet, leaned back against her knees. The artist won-

dered whence those faces of rare, refined beauty had come to that desolate slate-hued house among the salt grasses. They were not of the native seaside population, certainly. The quiet repose that marked all but little Persis, the reticence and dignity of even these younger ones, seemed to have behind them the culture and reserve of the city.

“What are you thinking of?” Denham asked Archie, not venturing to break the silence which Margareth evidently chose.

Archie was looking toward the sky.

“I was thinking of the sky,” said he, “and who lives there.”

“And who does?” asked Denham.

“God, and—and Cicero,” said Archie.

“What on earth do you know about Cicero?” cried Denham.

“Lady talks about God,” replied Archie, “and father talks of Cicero.”

Evidently, Alex Denham had fallen in with an exceptional family. When he reached home, he told his mother eagerly about the rarely lovely child whose portrait he would begin the next day.

“I want you to come down to the schoolhouse and see them,” he said. “The eldest child is as quaint as a little Dutch picture, but this baby is worthy of Fra Angelico. In fact, the little thing is such an unusual study that in

looking at her I think I failed to realize how beautiful the grown-up sister was, and with such exceedingly refined manners and sweet voice. I really did not do her justice in the tribute of admiration."

"No doubt that was quite as well," said his mother.

CHAPTER XII.

A FISHER-MAID.

“This earth is rich in man and maid
With fair horizons bound ;
This whole wide earth of light and shade
Comes out one perfect round.”

THREE o'clock on a June morning, a subtle promise of day growing across the world. The moon, which three hours before had been gallant and golden, was now a wan disc of pearl sinking slowly out of sight. Coming from every direction, but converging upon one place—the low black line of the pier—across the wide meadows dark shadows moved, brushing the dews from the tall salt grass that rose and fell in gentle undulations under the soft north-west wind. By turns each dark figure was lit as by a glow-worm clinging to its side, where the glimmer of dying moon or growing day focused upon each fisher's dinner-pail. From the shadowy mass of the pier black dots detached themselves and crept out to the fishing-fleet, that, white and still, rested like a flock of snowy swans on the shivering, crisping sea.

From one of the great houses that crowned the

nearest hill came a lithe youth wearing a close velvet cap and a Mexican poncho. He bounded along as one going, not to accustomed toil, but to some new pleasure. His boat shot like an arrow from pier to fleet, and he shouted down into the cabin of the *Pixie*,

“Hoh, there, Burgham! Asleep yet?”

“You there, Mr. Alex? Trust you for waking a man up,” cried Burgham as Denham made fast the small boat and clambered aboard the *Pixie*.

Then did Burgham emerge from his cabin, and with sleeves rolled to his shoulders he plunged arms and head into the water as he hung perilously over the side of the *Pixie*, and so treated himself to “a swasher,” as he called it; coming forth from which, and after a furious use of brown towel, revived and glowing, he surveyed the waking world.

“If there ain’t the Siren a-shaking of herself out!” said Burgham. “I never thought Roland’s boat would get off this morning, when Roland hisself and son was in such a state last night. It beats my understanding.”

“I’ll sail the *Pixie* to the shoals,” said Denham. “You get your breakfast, Burgham.”

The fleet was now all awake. Each white bird spread a snowy wing; the water rippled up against its breast, and each skimmed away along the brightening waters.

Alex had put his poncho and lunch-basket at the foot of the mast; leaning on the tiller, holding the main-sheet well in hand, intent on the wind, that breathed now gently, now rose in little puffs, he perceived one boat gaining on him.

“I say, Burgham!” he called into the cabin; “that Siren is forging ahead of us.”

“Ay,” responded Burgham, “the Siren is the fastest sailer in the fleet, if so be she is well handled; but how they makes it out, after the state of last night, passes my understanding.”

Burgham and son were in the cabin, fully under Alex's eye. Son sat flat on the floor, his legs extended, a plate between them, and a goodly pile of buttered bread in a pan at his side. Burgham, on his knees beside a brazier of glowing coals, watched the grilling of a bluefish, while he also sniffed the aroma of a steaming pot of coffee. The fragrance of fish and coffee rose up to Alex and mingled with the keen salt air like incense to Neptune wafted from some homely floating altar.

“I say, Burgham!” cried Alex, quite in a frenzy; “it's a girl sailing the Siren!”

“Oh, ay! that explains it: Margareth's taken things in hand.”

Alex brought the Pixie abreast of the Siren, and two or three rods off. Leaning against the tiller of the Siren was a Junonian maiden, her blue flannel dress opening in a sailor collar at

her white throat, golden hair wound round and round her head, the main-sheet held well in a shapely hand whose snow the salt winds of the coast had never been able to roughen or darken, her eyes fixed seaward and herself nobly oblivious of the admiring Alex.

“I say, Burgham!” said Alex, softly, into the cabin; “a perfectly stunning girl!”

“Ay,” said Burgham, his mouth full of blue-fish; “old Roland’s daughter. Live, you know, in that little house ’way out alone on the west ma’ash.”

“‘Old Roland’s daughter’! She?” cried Alex; then, ambition waking up, “I believe I can make the Pixie pass her.”

A pressure on the tiller, a pull on the main-sheet, eye toward a capful of wind that was crisping the sea; then a little light like that of the rising morning gleamed in the girl’s grave eyes, a small shade of a smile stole over the lovely face, and the white hands tightened a bit on sheet and tiller, while the Siren shot half a length ahead; and Alex understood not only that he would not pass by, but that he was likely to lose this beauteous vision altogether if he grew too bold. He lifted his cap, and the Pixie fell off a little.

“She? Drunken Roland’s daughter?” he whispered, inquiringly, to the cabin.

“Ay, and sister to Rufus, just as drunken as

Roland. Something born in them two's veins. But Roland's no common fish. They do say that he was a gentleman and college-bred and can talk Latin yet, sir. I don't doubt it; for when he has had a little too much—as happens often—I've heard him roll out words that sounded full and grand as the sweep of waters. His first wife—people say the mother of these two—was a lady and died heartbroke. He's married again, to a plain woman; she lives heartbroke with a brood of little ones. Margareth's the main-stay; though, as for calling her by her *name*, there's not a man along the coast would get out so much as the M of it to her face."

"In that case," said Alex, "we should not discuss her."

The Siren and the Pixie anchored near together, and fishing began.

"From the dives into yon cabin," said Burgham, "I conclude Roland has got his rum aboard."

Son and Alex were pulling in bluefish at either side of the boat; Burgham, seated near Alex's feet, was cleaning fish.

"I thought you had prohibition along here?" said Denham.

"So we have, but, so long as within a hundred miles of us there's license, people among us get liquor and sell it. He buys of a woman named Mehan; she sells on the sly."

“Well, why isn't she prosecuted?”

“Oh, *she's* had her 'rested twice,” pointing with his thumb toward Margareth.

“And didn't that stop it?”

“No. First time the magistrate happened to be her landlord. The Mehan pays good rent; he considered the charge not proven. Next time witnesses against Mehan were shown to be a lying lot, and a doctor—her next neighbor—testified his place overlooked hers and he never see no signs of selling. But the doctor, as it happened, bought whisky by the bar'l to use in his practice; an' his practice was to sell to the Mehan.”

“So prohibition, it seems, is worth nothing?”

“Not so fast, Mr. Denham; it's worth consid'able. It has kep' him sober three months at a time. Now, what I draw from them premises is these conclusions: Prohibition is what we want; local prohibition is worth something, but general prohibition is what we has to have, to be effectual. You see, sir, I may keep my hands well an' my lungs sound; but if so be I has rheumatiz in my feet, I'm an uncomfortable man. The 'postle deals that out quite handsome about if one member suffer all the members suffer with it; which might be a prohibition parable. In my view, if them two men don't mind their fishin' better, there'll be some kind of prohibition passed in that boat by Miss Margareth in a very little time.”

Alex, catching numerous bluefish, had noticed that Margareth was remonstrant; now he saw her drop her lines, step swiftly into the cabin, come out with a jug and fling it into the sea.

A little hum of laughter and applause went round the moored fleet. It seemed to hurt the girl, for she flushed crimson and her eyes fell. Her father sprang toward her with a loud oath and upbraiding, while her brother, with a face of fury, caught up a pair of leaden oarlocks and was aiming them at her head. Like a flash Alex seized an oar and whirled it round, prepared to strike down the miscreant's arm, when the senior Roland suddenly changed sides, took his son by the throat, flung the oarlocks into the cabin, and said fiercely,

“Touch her if you dare!”

The boats relapsed into quiet, except for the plunging and struggling of the newly-caught fish. Margareth kept her back carefully turned to the Pixie; Alex believed that the girl was crying as she fished. For his life he could not help watching her. He compared her with all other women he had seen, and found her the most fair. He thought how changed her life might be if taken from that lonely cabin in the salt marshes and placed honorably at his mother's right hand. He wondered how the world would go if in these days an enamored youth could go to his parents and say, as did Samson, “Get this

woman to my wife, for she pleaseth me." And yet no doubt the parents might make the old-time answer: "Is there never a woman among all thy people, that thou goest to take a wife of the Philistines?"

Alex sighed. He considered his mother on the one hand, old drunken Roland on the other, his sister and this inebriated Rufus Roland brought together by a family tie. Never, never! Yet Alex could not take his gaze from fair Margareth, nor go home until the fish were sold at the wharf, the fleet rested once more for the night, each white bird with folded wing, and Margareth had gone over the causeway to that cabin set on the one firm spot in that oozy, palpitating marsh.

After that, Burgham said he "never did see a young gentleman work so hard for pleasure as Mr. Denham," and he noticed, too, that the Pixie and the Siren kept singularly close together.

Alex grew restless and took a fancy to walks after nightfall, and then that gleam from the salt marsh drew him on, on, over the causeway, until through the curtainless window he could see Margareth, after the day's toil, sitting in the low rocker by the driftwood fire on the wide hearth, always a child on her knee and one or two hanging about her chair, a gentle and womanly presence, a norm of peace in that desolate dwelling—Margareth the still storm-centre there,

however the tired stepmother clattered at her work in one corner or Roland and Rufus wrangled or shouted or mended nets and lines in another.

"It seems to me," said Burgham to Alex, "that she's sort of driven to the wall and making her last stand. This going out to the fishing is something new. I never see a girl that could do everything like this one."

He was looking at the Siren dropping anchor and at Margareth pulling on a pair of heavy gloves preparatory to fishing.

"It seems to me the last thing a young lady would care to do," responded Alex, "after a try of a day or two at it, for fun."

"Not much fun in *her* life," said Burgham. "However, you see, there's one thing she won't do, and that's clean the fish; Rufe does that. Any ways, I s'pose they wouldn't let her, for, bad as they are, they're proud of her."

"They ought to be. I don't see how it has all come about."

"I asked my second cousin, and she explained some things to me, seeing I noticed you was interested."

"I'm not interested at all, except as an artist and as a temperance-man," said Alex, virtuously.

"It was along of the temperance I asked," said Burgham, stolidly. "She tells me Rufe and Miss Margareth are only half brother and

sister. Roland used to be a Latin professor. Hardly believe it, would you? Well, after one fall and another, they finally fled here because it was prohibition, and Rufe had a little money and bought out a fisherman who was going away. Not at all a bad fellow, that Rufus. He makes the last stepmother and her little ones welcome to all he has, and he's powerful fond of his sister."

"I should say so! Going to throw an oar-lock at her head!"

"That was because he was in liquor and her eye was off him; usually, she rules him with a look. And Roland has not been in the habit of being loud in his drink. But these things are sure to get worse as they go on. Last year was a bad year for fishing; we none of us made much. This year the Rolands had a new sail to get, and some new tackle, so that took up all their cash in hand; and the two have taken more to drink of late, having found some of Satan's own agents to help 'em to their ruin. On account of the girl, they don't bring the drink home, and, instead, they put it in the boat, and in place of fishing they drank themselves drunk; and days went by without their bringing home more fish than to do the family. That's why she came out—to keep 'em up to the mark and save the little ones from starving. She had the school one winter, but plenty 'round here want

it—it's a fair berth—and a stranger with such relations rambling in on her didn't have much chance. The stepmother is a fretty creature, always whining what a pity it was she married this Mr. Roland. Seems to me, if any one's got a right to fret, it is the girl, who isn't any wise responsible for the sins of her father and brother or for her stepmother's lot of children; and she is just spending her life on 'em. This is a queer world, Mr. Alex; and I vow I never see a finer shoal of fish than the one that's coming this way. Look at 'em! See the tails! See the foam flyin'! Whoop, there!"

From that day Alex Denham went no more with the fishing-fleet. He saw that Burgham noticed his interest in Margareth, and he felt that it was unfair that the girl and her sorrows should be discussed in a way which she would resent if she knew of it, although every word was one of sympathy and respect.

"Alex," said his mother to him one evening as he came up the porch-steps, "it seems to me you walk a great deal along that causeway. You have just come from there."

"I know it, mother; that girl's face and story haunt me. Why cannot all girls live in peace as my sister does? Now, there is a girl just as young, as sensitive, as beautiful, making the hardest kind of a fight for mere existence and buried out there in a hut on a swamp."

“And it will not make the fight any easier if a young stranger begins to haunt the purlieus of her home.”

“I only go after nightfall, when no one sees me,” pleaded Alex. “It makes such a picture! It is a rough room with great beams overhead, and a wide chimney. They burn driftwood, and usually the fire makes the only light in the interior. The salt soaked into the fuel makes the flames send out shoots of green and blue. There, right in the circle of light, sits that elder sister, and on her knee that angel of a child, and at her feet the poor little crooked boy with the lovely face, and, brisk and sturdy, near by, that little Dutch maid, Persis, forming the link between this fine beauty of the group and the ordinary, careworn, discontented face of the housewife, who works in a slow, discouraged way at whatever she is doing. Even the two men are studies. The brother is a young Hercules, busy sometimes at lines, nets or oars, sometimes lying his length on the floor with his hands under his head. And the father, the ex-professor, is very careful to clean himself up when he comes home, and I’ve seen him straighten himself and march about the room with his hand on his hip and the airs of a lord.”

“And would they, in their last retreat from the world and the shame heaped upon them—would they be glad to know that a stranger,

with motives artistic or otherwise, stood without with the entire domestic scene under his eye?"

Alex flushed hotly in the covering twilight:

"No! No!"

"Then, as you are a gentleman, your own conviction precludes your going there again."

"You make things uncommon hard for a man sometimes, mother."

"Or do I set you face to face with honor, which demands a sacrifice? *Noblesse oblige, mon fils.*"

"But it is so pitiful, mother! and the happy should help the unhappy, the strong the weak. Suppose you make some errand there. You always know what to do for people."

"The difficulty here is that the chief want of these sufferers is to be let alone. However, I can try it."

Mrs. Denham made the venture, and found only Harriet at home.

"Oh yes, Harriet could do some sewing—supposed she would be glad to have it; though whatever was done never amounted to bettering things. But Persis must go for and take the work, and any directions must be in writing; for one thing Margareth is set on is to have no one coming here, man, woman or child. I'm sorry—it is hard on me—but there is no contradicting Margareth: she is the one last hope of us all."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COTTAGE ON THE MARSHES.

“Calm and still light on yon great plain,
That sweeps, with all its autumn-bowers,
And crowding farms, and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main.”

CUT off from the joys of the fishing-banks and prohibited from evening walks along the black channels of the marshes, Alex Denham felt that life was empty and unmeaning. His sister laughed at him, and opined that he wanted a new business and was training for the part of Hamlet. His mother thought he really should be more industrious. He was a restless youth, and compensated himself for his privations by taking long walks about the country.

Coming home from one of these on an afternoon, he was passing the neat white cottage of a widow named Mrs. Falconer when he heard a small, clear voice that sounded familiar, and discovered Archie Roland playing with corn-cobs on the end of Mrs. Falconer's piazza. A great desire to build cob-houses filled Alex's soul; he presented himself boldly to Archie as a mate,

and, sitting on the edge of the porch, constructed such splendid towers and palaces, such houses and barns, that Archie burst into unaccustomed joy.

“Who brought you here?” asked Alex of Archie.

“Persis did, but Lady is coming after me when the boat gets in. I often come here to play cobs.”

Alex resolved to remain in Archie's society until the boat got in, if it took all night.

Presently, Mrs. Falconer came out with a glass of milk for her small guest, and was much surprised to see a second visitor, who treated her to an elaborate bow:

“Mrs. Falconer, I think?”

“Yes, and I'm sure this is Mr. Denham, from the Bluff? Do come in, sir.”

“Thanks! I am enjoying my cob-houses very much with our little friend, but I am consumed with envy of his glass of milk. I have walked to Gray Point and back: won't you treat me also to a glass of milk?”

Mrs. Falconer was duly flattered by this appeal to her hospitality:

“But do come in, sir, and take it in my cool sitting-room, resting in my big chair. To Gray Point and back! I declare! What won't you young gentlemen do for amusement?”

Alex concluded that he had better be resting

hidden in Mrs. Falconer's sitting-room than openly sitting on the porch when Archie should be called for. He accepted the big chair and the milk—for, like other young men, he was not averse to being waited on—and then, taking Archie on his knee, he began to tell him marvelous tales of things that he was supposed to have seen, until Archie's face was a constant wrinkle of laughter and Mrs. Falconer had to pause to get her breath.

“Well, indeed!” cried Mrs. Falconer; “there'll be no lack of laughing and good spirits where you may be, sir. I often note the young summer-people from the cottages going by here on their pleasurings, laughing so gay. Why, they'll go ride all day, jouncing about in a heavy wagon, making the most fun of it, and coming back covered with dust or drenched with rain.”

“They call that *pleasure*, you know, Mrs. Falconer.”

“Law, yes! though where the pleasure is I can't see. I don't notice you along with them much of late?”

“The pleasure is in the doing what is unusual, I suppose. No, I have not been with them lately; I've been elsewhere. Also, I got rather sick of the whole subject of amusement when I felt how little of it there is in some people's lives—the very ones, too, that one would consider most worthy of happiness.”

“Ah, yes! And you’ve been fishing a good bit. Mr. Burgham was telling me how you went out constant, and then stopped.”

“It was time I stopped, if Burgham’s been talking,” said Alex, testily.

“Oh, not that, by any means! Mr. Burgham’s a very good man, and a prudent, and a kind-feeling. Besides, he wouldn’t talk to any one but me: I’m his second cousin. And then he knows I set by Miss Roland as if she were my daughter.”

The temptation to talk of Margareth was not to be resisted:

“Very few people could boast of such a daughter.”

“She has done a daughter’s part by me, at all events,” said Mrs. Falconer, getting out her knitting and arranging herself for a talk. “One wouldn’t quite know how she could find time for anything outside of her own home.—Archie, my man, don’t you want to go to the hen-house and see if you can find an egg in the yellow hen’s nest? If you get one, you shall have it for supper.”

“I want the egg,” spoke up Archie, “but I don’t like to get it. The hen don’t want me to have it; she cries like anything when I take the eggs away.”

“Oh no!” said Alex, quickly, zealous to get rid of Archie, who was evidently in the way of

Mistress Falconer's revelations. "You are all wrong there, Archie; she's not crying, she's laughing."

"'Laughing'? Sure?" queried Archie.

"Yes, indeed! That's the way hens laugh. I've been acquainted with hens all my life. She laughs loud because she likes you to get the eggs."

"Then I'll go," said Archie, trotting off.

"If you don't beat all!" cried Mrs. Falconer to her guest. "Well, he's gone. I wouldn't mention his mother before him. She works hard and is a good-enough woman in her way, but a kind of selfish heathen, after all. Those children would never have known a text or a hymn or a prayer if it had not been for Miss Margareth. She's just as burdened for their good as if they were her own children. Then her brother Rufus is only a half brother to her, but full sister could not be better to him. She taught our school here one winter, and a pity she couldn't have kept it; the children never learned so much in a year, and they got more sensible and better manners, and she taught them so many things about birds and flowers and bugs and shells and fishes. Why, it was amazing how they learned about the habits of things, and to call things by their right names. Miss Roland's a very fine-eddicated young lady: she reads French books as easy as she does English; and

she's a great reader, too, and gets books wherever she can. I've noticed a vast difference in this world between people in the matter of making the best of their lot in life. If some people cannot have all they want and the best of everything, they set themselves down all in a heap and don't try for anything. There's others that make the most of what they have and don't waste strength in fretting for what they haven't got. They'll make a gaining cause out of a losing cause. Now, my husband was a soldier, and he read a heap of books about military men; and he used to say that some of the greatest generals were those that knew how to make the best of a defeat. He named William of Orange among that kind, and said he'd make as much out of a defeat as another would out of a victory. Sometimes it is so in spiritual things 'also.

“ But I'm a great hand to run on; I meant to tell you how good Miss Roland was to me. She is the best nurse I ever saw in my life. You needn't tell me Florence Nightingale is better, for I wouldn't believe it. I had a fever and a sore throat over a year ago. The doctor said it was catching, and people here thought it was; there was a good bit of it going about. I thought I wasn't going to get anybody to nurse me, and maybe I would not, only in came Miss Roland and volunteered. She said she had no fear of infection, and in her opinion those with-

out fear were safe. Also, she said catching diseases depended much on the care of the sick-room, and she knew how to take right care. Her stepmother let Mrs. Wagstaff into the whole story, and she told me. The stepmother didn't want her to come—not for fear Miss Roland would catch the sickness, but lest she'd bring it home; so Miss Roland said she'd stay right here till danger was over. Her brother said neighbors was neighbors and ought to help each other, and her father said an old woman like me ought not to be abandoned; but her stepmother made a fuss at being left alone to do everything. And—would you believe it?—in two days she sent that little Archie and his bits of duds here, saying he cried all the time for 'Lady' and she couldn't do for so many. I don't accuse her of wishing he'd catch the sickness. Any ways, none of them did, and they lived here with me for three weeks, and I came to love them like my own. It was not done for money or aught like that—never a penny. It was just that good Christian spirit that makes its possessor love others as if they were brethren."

"It was very beautiful and courageous," said Alex, warmly.

"'Courageous'! I should say so! But Margareth Roland has that high spirit she don't know how to be afraid of anything. I never see any one with such good solid courage as she

has. They say a conscience void of offence casts out fear, and I fancy that's her case."

"I should imagine that such a person as her stepmother must be rather wearing on her," suggested Alex.

"She don't stop to think whether she's wearing or not; she just takes her as she is, so long as she's got her. That is Margareth Roland's style. The family would all go to pieces if she did not stand by and manage for them. Such a housekeeper I never did see, making the best of everything all in such a calm, quiet way. And, as for economy, I just wish she'd go give a few lessons to the county commissioner and the State legislature, that they do say is wasting funds shameful and piling up the taxes. She'd tell 'em what economy is."

"Lady! Lady!" piped a small voice outside; "I've got an egg in each pocket. Come in, Lady!"

The next minute, led by Archie, who held by her dress, Margareth appeared in the doorway. She had on a blue dress of some thinner stuff than her flannel fishing-gown, and carried swinging by its strings her wide straw hat, which she had removed when she reached the porch. Perhaps, if she had known that Mrs. Falconer had a guest, she might have taken Archie home from the gate without coming in; as it was, she sat down in the chair Alex had the happiness of

vacating in her favor, and in a few minutes they fell into a lively talk. An hour passed like a minute to Alex; he could say,

“When she made pause I knew not for delight,
Because with sudden motion from the ground
She raised her lovely eyes, and filled with light
The interval of sound.”

When she was talking with Mrs. Falconer, he occupied his mind with telling over to himself those virtues which the old lady had declared the girl to possess—education, courage, common sense, piety, self-sacrifice, cheerfulness, economy, nursing, housekeeping. What a galaxy of gifts and graces! Was ever any one so graced before? Alex was sure not.

“Come, Archie,” said Margareth; “this is too long a visit. I must take you home.”

Alex rose as promptly as if she had summoned him. When they reached the gate, he swung Archie up on his broad shoulder:

“Now, my little man, you shall have a ride home. Some one has said that little people on giants’ shoulders see farther than giants; so now, small as you are, your eyes are higher than mine can go.”

“It was old Fuller who said that,” remarked Margareth. “In his *Church History*.”

“So it was,” said Alex. “And so you have read old Fuller?”

“Some of his works—his *Worthies* and his

History. I like that quaint old style of reading."

"So do I, but the taste is not common. I often read it for subjects—themes for pictures. If you love reading, you must often be at a loss here. Now, I have a whole armful of things we have finished with—very good things, too, if they *are* Seasides, some of them. There's *Louise of Prussia*, and *The Marriages of the Bonapartes*, and Jane Carlyle's *Letters*, and Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, and Green's *History of the English People*, and Macaulay's *Lays*. I'll send them over to you if you will let me."

Margareth was about to decline and murmur something about the public library, but the truth was she had not had a book for a fortnight and her mind was in a starving state; so her eyes flashed with pleasure at the suggested feast.

"Persis shall meet me at the schoolhouse tomorrow morning and get them," said the wary Alex.—"Hey, Persis! will you keep another tryst with me?"

Persis was a shrewd infant. She generally managed to arrive whenever she saw Alex, because he contrived errands for her which resulted in a plentiful supply of quarter dollars in her little pockets. Of this store she was discreetly reticent to Margareth, but she confided it to Harriet and out of it procured the desire of her heart, gay hair-ribbons and striped stockings. Miss

Persis, therefore, was not likely to meet Alex's proposals less than halfway; she responded promptly:

"I'll be there by six o'clock."

"Better make it ten," said Alex, taken somewhat aback.

Alex sometimes boasted about being a swift walker: his pedestrian gifts would not have been guessed from his method of getting over ground with Archie on his shoulder and Margareth at his side. He talked about flowers and botany, and strove very hard to get an invitation to go out in the marsh-channel in the little boat. He sat on the fence where the causeway opened through the Wagstaff farm, and repeated the whole of Read's poem of "Drifting." That led to talk about foreign lands, and he told her how he had seen Naples and climbed Vesuvius. On this he might have enlarged indefinitely had not the inopportune Persis declared that she heard the supper-bell and, seeing no further prospect of subsidies, rushed off to get her tea. The others came up the causeway more deliberately. Halfway, Margareth stopped:

"Will you give me Archie now, Mr. Denham? He can walk from here."

"May I not carry him farther?"

"If you please, no."

"And may I come to-morrow and bring you some flowers?"

“No,” said Margareth, looking down; “it is impossible. My life must be more shut up than that of other people, Mr. Denham, and I would rather no one came out here.”

Alex placed Archie upon the ground and, lifting his hat, walked swiftly away. He was so foolish as to feel cross. Some people whose lives have gone easily are apt to feel cross when they cannot have their own way.

Meanwhile, Margareth went home swinging her hat by the strings, the cool evening air playing through the silken rings of hair on her brow. She had had a very pleasant afternoon; it was charming to find some one to talk with—some one who had read the books she loved, who enjoyed scenery, poetry and flowers, who had traveled and observed. She idly wondered what it must be like to lead a life easy and free of care like that of Alex Denham. Youth must needs have its relaxations; even in mature age, the bow, as Horace sings, cannot be always bent even by the god Apollo. Hard as was her lot, it was only fair to take a change where she found it and give an hour to the companionship of youth, high spirits and hope. Still, such entertainment might be dangerous, and she would not indulge in it again. God had set her a task and appointed her a lot in life, and she must not make it, by painful contrasts, more irksome than need be. She led Archie into the house. Per-

sis had given a false alarm: the fishers were not up from the beach, and supper was not ready.

Harriet stopped her work now and again and looked cautiously but closely at Margareth, who sat down by the window and picked up little Stella. Finally, Harriet went up to her and began in a hurried, complaining tone:

“I see how it is, Margareth! Young people are always looking out for their own chance in life. Not that I ever had mine, though everybody else does. I see how it is; I saw you talking on the causeway with that young gentleman. You wouldn't let him come to the house; I don't wonder. No doubt you are ashamed of the place and of me. But it doesn't make it any better if you see him in other places. What shall we do if you forsake us? Of course you'd never look at any of us again if you made a new home for yourself—at least, you'd forget me and mine: we're nothing to you. But it is not fair to leave us alone; my children will starve, and I never can please your father, and, as for Rufus, you know I'm as 'fraid as death of him; and if you go off and leave him to himself, he'll commit murder some day.”

“Hush, Harriet,” said Margareth, quietly; “don't say any more. I do not intend to leave you.”

“You will if you get a chance; any one would.”

“Not if that one had a sense of duty. My duty is plain.”

“And you really will not forsake us and leave me alone to do for your father and Rufus?”

“I really will not.”

Harriet went back to her cooking. She had heard the words of Margareth, but could scarcely believe them. The weak nature could not comprehend the strong one. The strong nature understood the weak one, but compassionated it. Margareth never thought to upbraid or condemn Harriet for her feebleness. Her experience of life had taught her not to look for very many noble qualities in souls which were not reinforced by spiritual strength.

That little cottage on the marshes was destined to be the scene of some curious developments of human nature.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE FALLING RAIN.

“And one, a full-fed river, winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder bending low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.”

THERE came a three days' south-west storm in the last of July which kept the fishing-fleet at its anchorage. The night after it ended Alex took his fated walk along the causeway. When he reached the point where the causeway bridged the channel, he saw, in the gray twilight, Margareth standing in the small, rotten, cranky punt, an oar in her hand, preparing to cast off.

“Miss Roland! Miss Margareth! Where are you going, alone?”

“Father is off; he wandered somewhere away on the marsh hours ago. I just found it out. He was angry at Rufus. And see! it is a flood-tide; the marshes will be all under water. I must find him. He will be drowned.”

“You are not going alone,” cried Alex, leaping to her side.

“Two pair of oars will be better than one,”

answered Margareth, setting her teeth. "I know where to go; I'll call the way, Mr. Denham."

Two pair of oars struck the water with a will. The moon hung low above the black flood that had rolled far inland over the marshes and was crawling and lapping up and down among the sedge.

"Margareth," cried Alex, "this is a frightful life for a girl like you. Leave it all; shake free of it; choose a lot for yourself."

"Women cannot choose," replied Margareth; "things are chosen for them. But I wish—I often wish—I could know," she cried, angrily, "whether my lot is chosen for me by God or by Satan. It must be the will of God that I work for and protect my own, and yet, if it were not for that demon of rum, I should have no such tasks as this of to-night."

"Consider, Margareth," said Alex; "all this might be changed. You could fly from the shadow of that curse and find a home of peace, of beauty, of comfort—of all that you would love. You could—"

"Mr. Denham," said Margareth, "will you understand that such words only make bitterer to me a lot that I can never leave nor change? You remember the woman in the Bible who said, 'I dwell among my own people'? I shall always dwell with mine because they need me. It is only left for me to do my duty."

On, on, over the uprising, weltering blackness.

“Father! father! father!” Margareth’s call rang through the night.

“Ho! Ho-o-o! Roland! Roland! Hallo!” shouted Denham above the flooded marshes. Suddenly catching, over his shoulder, a sight of that sad and most lovely face, he cried, “Margareth, how can you endure it?”

“Only,” said Margareth, “by thinking how small a part is time of eternity.”

Time! eternity! To these two still struggling in time bore down a hulk just wrecked upon the eternal shore. A dull thud at the bows, and Margareth was on her knees grasping the breast of the old fishing-coat, and so holding her father’s dead face above the black water. Denham was kneeling by her on the instant, but it was impossible to get that heavy inert body into the crazy boat; the only thing was to fasten it by a rope to the bows, so that the head and chest should be above water, and thus they worked back to the causeway. Denham rowed alone; Margareth sat with her face on her knees. At the causeway he summoned help, and soon the fisher-folk gathered to their assistance. Then Margareth spoke with a pitiful decision:

“Mr. Denham, will you clearly understand me? Do not come near me nor help me in any way; I cannot bear it. These others will do all I want.”

Thus shut out from offering help, or even sympathy, all the next day, which was raw and misty, Denham paced the veranda of his home and kept the house on the marsh in sight with a glass. By three o'clock he saw, from the gathering of a few men and the arrival of a low cart, that the burial must be about to take place. Crossing the hill, he stood in the shadow of the country schoolhouse, which the doleful funeral cortege must pass.

It came. Oh, most pathetic poverty! Wrinkled, gray, limping, shabby, profoundly sad, walked first a superannuated minister of the neighborhood, a man who out of suffering had gathered boundless store of sympathy—his sole wealth, but wealth that he could carry out of this world; then a lean, one-eyed horse dragging the old blue cart. The horse now hesitated and stood almost still, and anon lunged forward in a series of plunges, threatening to fall upon and overset the aged minister. On the cart was the coffin, covered with a damp black pall. Then came Margareth, walking all alone, suggesting to Alex that her brother was too intoxicated to come out and unsafe for the stepmother to leave alone with the children. Then came five or six neighbors in their oilskin coats and caps. Thus the procession, going half a mile inland to the lonesome free burial-ground.

Denham followed afar off. He marked Mar-

gareth, in her blue-flannel dress and old blue cloak, following her dead, and he felt a strange shame of his own warm and handsome garments, while he dared not go forward and even wrap her in his poncho to protect her from the mist that was settling and drizzling like rain. Following thus, now on to the open grave, and the pine coffin is let down; the old minister utters a prayer—for patience, perhaps—while the mist changes to rain and drips over Margareth's golden hair. The grave is filled in, and the girl, slowly turning, looks her lowly friends in the face and says clearly,

“I thank you that you have helped me to bury my dead out of my sight.”

The men bowed their heads, and then turned away.

The little gray preacher took Margareth's hand reverently in his:

“My daughter, yours is a grievous lot, but ask for grace to say, ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.’”

“Yes,” said Margareth, “I must say that. If I fail of faith in God's love, what have I left?”

“Parson,” said the owner of the cart, “the weather's growin' worse, and your lame leg don't git you over the ground very fast. S'pose I give you a lift home on the cart?”

So the shabby little man rode off in the cart that had brought the coffin, and Margareth re-

traced her way alone across the fields with the saturated grass bending low.

At the causeway, Denham, who was still following, seized her desperately by the cloak :

“Margareth, must this be? Can I never help you?”

“Mr. Denham,” replied Margareth, her eyes on the ground, “once for all I beg you to let me go on my way unhindered, for between you and me there is a great gulf fixed, and it is my part to go on and do my duty as I find it waiting for me day by day.”

So she hurried from him into the cabin, where by the fire sat the new-made widow, weeping not so much from bereavement as from miserable discouragement.

“Margareth, she cried, desperately, “I know it all, I see it all! I see how that young man haunts you. You will be leaving us. No wonder! You can live like a lady, like your mother's kin, and we—I and these poor little children—we have no claim on you.”

“You have this claim on me—that you need me,” said Margareth, gently, kneeling on the hearth to warm her chill hands and dry her wet hair before the blaze. She took out the pins, and the golden flood rolled over her shoulders and glittered in the flame-light.

Archie stole up to her and began to stroke the silken softness. Stella, slipping between her sis-

ter's arms, leaned against her breast and patted her face with her little dimpled hands. Persis hung up the wet cloak and looked for dry shoes. There was consolation in the ministrations of these children for whom she was making a sacrifice of her present and her future.

Denham, meanwhile, went home to his mother and told her all his story.

"Sometimes," he said, "I really hate myself that I do not go and fairly force her away from those dismal surroundings into a fitter life."

"How do you know that it would be fitter?" said his mother. "Is anything ever more fit than that which God has chosen for us? Is anything higher than duty, nobler than self-sacrifice?"

"That may be her side of it," answered Alex; "but when I look at mine, it seems that perhaps I am held back by social pride, by dislike of her surroundings. I feel like the disgraceful old fellow in *Pilgrim's Progress* who liked Mercy, but not 'her conditions.' What a cruel contrast it seems!—on our side all safety, luxury, peace; on hers, that drunken brother, the faded step-mother, that brood of impoverished little ones."

"Be sure, my son, that no woman was ever happier for marriage when to marry she deserted a manifest duty. No man is better off for possessing a wife whom he has persuaded for his sake to abandon duty and natural ties. If we would look at things squarely, we should not

often find duties conflicting. Then, too, your feelings may be all the glamour of sympathy or the idle whim of a summer leisure-hour. We had agreed some time ago that you and your sister would do well to spend the winter in Berlin; I wish you would make your preparations to leave at once."

A week later Margareth received a parcel containing a portrait of little Stella, a water-color sketch or two and a few books; with these Alex Denham's card, and the words, "I am leaving for Berlin. Good-bye. May Heaven bless you!"

But Margareth had scarcely time to think over the words or the gift; her care for Rufus absorbed her. When his father was brought home drowned, Rufus had become greatly excited, and had drank heavily of liquor which he had concealed in a jug in the marsh near the house. He blamed himself for his father's death because Roland had gone out on the marshes after an altercation he had had with his son concerning the nets. Usually, the two had been quiet and civil toward each other, but with constant drunkenness the temper of M. Tullius became more irritable, while Rufus was by his early indulgence in drink breaking his naturally kindly disposition as well as weakening his iron strength.

The more of a wreck Rufus became, the more

Margareth pitied him. To the kindness of a sister she added the tenderness of a mother, such as she felt toward the three children of Harriet. There was a certain generosity about Rufus that touched her. He never demanded anything for himself because all the poor little property was his; he never objected if Margareth could get possession of the money for a consignment of fish and spend it on the household; he could never be so cross nor so drunk as to give an evil look to Archie, whom he called always "poor little chap," nor to Stella, whom he named "Angel." Just now he seemed completely broken down, and accused himself of being the cause of his father's death.

"Who got the whisky, you or father?" asked Margareth.

"He did."

"And did you offer him any, or urge him to drink that night?"

"No; I told him he'd better not—better leave it till we got on board the Siren. Fact was, Margareth, I didn't mind for us grown-up ones, but somehow I couldn't bear him to be taking too much where the poor little chap and Angel were. The little lad has enough hard luck on his own account, and Angel looks straight through you. I felt ashamed for him before the children."

"I cannot see that the dispute over the nets

amounted to much ; I suppose it would not have arisen or been noticed only for the drinking."

"And then, you see, when he went out, I felt mad that he had helped himself; and I helped myself, and so I got too dull to notice his danger from the rising water or to go out and help you save him."

"I had help. It was too late. I think he had stumbled into the channel. We must leave him with God, Rufus. We have nothing more to do for the dead. We have only to ask God to give us courage and patience that we do not lament too much that which we cannot help. But you know for the living there is hope—and danger. For you, Rufus, there is something to be done. Let us help each other. I will go out with you in the Siren; I will stay with you constantly if you will only try and break off this habit that is killing you. You are burning up your life, Rufus."

"And you don't blame me and think I killed father?"

"I really feel that you had nothing to do with it."

"Well, then, Madge, I'll make one more try, for your sake. That wretched jug is empty, and I won't get it filled. But you cannot go out in the Siren; it won't do. It was bad enough when there were two of us in it and you only went to keep us straight, but you cannot do a

man's work among the fish. I'll hire a boy, and we'll do the best we can."

If Rufus would keep free of the liquor, Margareth saw that it would be much better for her to desert the Siren and the fishing. The long hours tossing in sun and wind on the sea, the flapping and the smell of the fish, had no attractions for her. She preferred never to see "Lone-Bird Shoals" again. Still, she must do something; the fishing, in the hands of Rufus and a hired-boy, would not be very profitable, with the boy to pay. She applied for the district school; it had already been promised to a young girl of Lynn.

"I wish, Miss Roland," said Trustee Wagstaff, "that you had it—I really do. It's against my principles engaging what we may call foreign talent, when we have home talent. But this young lady's uncle is on the committee. Howsumever, Miss Roland, if anything should occur—which it is not likely there will—then I'll call your application to mind."

The partial reforms, the spasmodic returns to sobriety, of an inebriate who has some conscience left, are like the flattering symptoms of improvement and the brief awakenings of strength in a consumptive, luring the patient and his friends to a happy hope. When after indulgence has come satiety, when in the reaction of depressed spirits the voice of conscience and the moanings

of remorse are heard, then there are "grief and hatred" toward the besetting sin and a sudden turning from it. If there were also a "true sense of sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ," there would be permanent reform.

All along the unhappy course of her father's life Margareth had looked for his restoration; she had planned, striven, hoped, believed, until that fatal moment when came that thud on the bow of the punt and the consciousness of that lifeless body borne up the channel on the strong black rising of the moonlit main.

Since the hour when in falling mist she stood by that grave in the wet and weed-grown potter's field she had not dared to recall her father. She could not venture to follow him in thought beyond the threshold of the other life. She knew that if she fixed her mind on him, cherished his memory and yet could get no gleam of light upon it, the weight of grief would crush her and she would no longer be able to stand up in valiant defence of the living. It is hard for the old to forget or to put pain out of mind. Long strain of years on the emotions produces inelasticity, and we sink under the crushing force of sorrow that cannot be cast off. But, in the bounty of God, it is otherwise with youth. If not, in the progress of events half the children of humanity would be unfitted for their battle

before it had well begun. The very coursing of young vigor in the veins, the strong filling of the lungs, the joy in existing, the energy of well-nourished muscle, help to cast off sorrow. If Margareth's mother had lived to go out in the punt that night and come home with that terrible burden in its wake, it would probably have sealed her death; but her daughter passed through it, and presently life in all its fullness revived.

This return of hope was aided by the transient reform of Rufus. For a while he was all that his sister desired him to be.

"We'll come to better things, Margareth," he said, one evening, as they two wandered along the sands; "I will make some money now. We'll help the poor little chap to an education; he has brains, that little fellow, like his father. See how he has learned to read. We'll have a better house, and the weight shall be lifted off your shoulders before it makes them stoop. And we'll buy a lot in the cemetery at the village and move *him* over there, with a good stone—'Professor,' and all that, on it, you know. We'll come 'round."

That was one of the attractive things about Rufus: he was always planning for others rather than for himself; and in that he was so different from his father, who had always thought first of himself.

“You know,” began Rufus, again, “the little old preacher was having a try at me the other day, and he made it out that there was no hope for a man unless he repented and forsook sin, and I told him repentance wasn’t so necessary if a body forsook. He said one must confess and repent and forsake if God was to show him mercy. Now, it seemed to me that, as God is so great, he might be sorry for us poor wretches and show mercy, any way. I say, Margareth: don’t you want God to show me mercy on any terms?”

“I want God to show you mercy on his own terms, for I am sure those are the only terms that would be creditable to his government and suitable to you. I want God to give you what is called ‘repentance unto life’—a repentance in which you will hate sin and mourn it, and fly to Christ for pardon and strength. If you had that, I know you would be safe, and only so. But how much I wish it, Rufus, is only to be told in the words of the old-time intercessors: ‘If not, now I pray thee blot me out of thy book;’ ‘I could wish myself accursed for my brethren according to the flesh.’”

CHAPTER XV.

THE WRECK OF THE SIREN.

“Then the maiden clasped her hands and prayed
That savèd she might be,
And she thought of Christ, that stilled the waves
On the Lake of Galilee.”

IT was a warm evening late in September, and a group of fishermen were sitting on the end of the Welby Haven pier.

“So Rufus Roland’s broke loose again?” said one. “I thought, after his father went off so sudden, he was going to reform. He kept quite steady till this last three weeks.”

“What I’d like to know,” said a second, “is where he gets his whisky.”

“I can tell you, Buff,” said Burgham: “he gets it of Miss Eliza Topples, who keeps the ‘Welby Junction House,’ who wears a silk gown, an ostrich-feather, a gold chain and rings enough for the weddin’-outfit of a Hindu idol. Yes, he gets it of Miss Eliza Topples, who has jugs down in her cellar, to sell on the sly, whereby she enlarges her profits. When American women in the latter end of the nineteenth century,

in an enlightened community, sell themselves to do such soul-and-body-everlastin'-destroyin' work as that, don't trouble yourself to try and impress on my mind the doctrine of total depravity: it's proved clear. Don't go for historic evidence as to the wickedness of savage Indians, nor for medical testimony along of Chinese lepers, nor for no allusions to the wicked ways of the Dark Ages: here's a thing as beats them completely hollow, as I'm a teetotaller."

"Good for you, Burgham!" said an old man. "I don't hold to setting the laws at defiance; I don't say what ticket I voted: all I say is we've got a law and we ought to see it carried out. When 'Liza Topples was 'rested on charge of breakin' laws and sellin' whisky, then, if we have got any back-bone in our county, she'd ought to have bin' fined and her license to keep public-house revoked."

"What riles me," said Burgham, "is her bein' 'lowed to sing in a church choir."

"That's 'cause she's got a good sopranner voice," said Buff. "Screeches right up to the top of the heap."

"Well, if she had all the voices that's down in the books—sopranner and alto and tenor and bass—I say, if she's not a good woman, she oughtn't to be 'lowed to sing in the choir. Choir-singin' is a part of worship, and the Lord don't want to be worshiped by no lyin'. The

idee of 'Liza Topples, who is doing her level best to extend the kingdom of Satan, standing up there behind the parson, facin' the congregation, and singin',

“‘I love thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of thine abode’!

I call it downright blasphemy. The Lord should be worshiped with the spirit and the understandin' as well as with the organs of the throat. I don't deny I like the singin' in a church, and oftentime I drop in to listen where I knows there's good music; but I say, if we can't have good, reasonably pious Christians in the singin', let's even go so far as not to have any singin'. I tell *you*, it goes to my heart more to hear my old mother, whose voice, never being much to speak of, is now cracked and quiverin'—it goes to my heart more to hear her sing,

“‘Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast,
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest,'

when I know she means it, lives by it, is goin' to die by it and eternally enjoy what she's singin' about, than all the highfalutin quilly-quaverings 'Liza Topples could strike out in a year of Sundays. Now, there's little Mary Snow. She ain't much more *voice* than a chippy-bird—a lit-

tle wild, flutterin', chirpy note; but when I heard her one evenin' a-singin' to herself,

“‘By cool Siloam's shady rill
How sweet the lily blows!’

why, it stirred me right up, because it was the very picter of the good religious little creature herself. If I ever overhaul Parson Tucker convenient, I'll make bold to mention what appears to me to be a screw loose in his choir.”

“That's all very true,” said Buff; “but if 'Liza don't sell, somebody else will. There's always a market where there's buyers. If Rufe Roland wants whisky, he'll be sure to get it somehow.”

“Confound it!” said one fisher; “if making the county prohibition won't save a man, what will?”

“Try making the whole country so,” said Burgham.

“Don't you see, sir?” said Buff. “Rufe's got a craze—just as much a maniac as ever filled 'sylums. He was born with a taste; it runs in the blood—whole generations, sir. It tells.”

“Whatever it is, it's going to ruin the whole lot of them. He can't go out alone in the Siren, and he can't get any one to go with him. Week before last he threw his boy overboard, and this week he hit the man he hired a black eye, and he'll get no others to hire out with him.

The Welby Haven fishermen won't stand that kind of fooling."

"Yes, and now to-day his sister's gone out with him. I have a fear it will be her death. Even if she can keep him down so he will not injure her—but that will play out some time as he gets more violent—why, some day, if a sudden gust or a black squall rises, the brother, if drunk, can play the fool to hinder her bringing in the Siren. She'll capsize, and we'll have two dead bodies floatin' in, and the whole family up there in the cottage left destitute."

"That's so," said Burgham; "and yet there seems no help for it. She couldn't get the school, and this is a plain little place and not much sewing to be had. No one else can go out with Rufus and make him do a day's work; and unless the fish are caught and sold, all those little children and their unlucky mother must go hungry and destitute in the winter cold that is coming on. They have not laid up anything much this summer, I'll be bound; and now, if they can't get the last take of the bluefish and the best run of bass, why what will become of them? Market's pretty good now for bluefish, and flounders never fetched so fair a price."

Although Burgham had turned the conversation upon bluefish and flounders, he still had Margareth's case at heart; and one afternoon, when sure that Rufus yet lingered about the fish-

house, he went boldly to his home and asked for him.

‘He’s not in yet,’ said Harriet.

“As I’m come along of fish, maybe the young lady could speak with me as well if she’ll step out,” said Burgham.

When Margareth appeared, he faced about and walked down the causeway with her at his side. He thought he could speak better if he were not driven to look into the depths of her sorrowful eyes.

“What’s wrong?” asked Margareth, who had fallen into a habit of feeling that something must always be wrong.

“Why, nothing very much in pertic’lar,” said Burgham; “only— Well, some of us fishin’-folks is a good bit uneasy over your going out in that boat to the shoals.”

“The Siren is a very good boat,” said Margareth.

“None better; but here’s autumn days and autumn squalls, and strong arms and steady brains may be needed.”

“I have a steady brain and my brother has strong arms.”

“Ay, that’s true; but the arms an’ the brains should belong to the same body, if so be they’d be sure an’ pull together. In a sudden emergency, you see, cross-purposes might make all the difference between life and death.”

Margareth walked slowly on without making any reply.

“I hope you don’t take our interference to heart,” said Burgham. “We’re family-men, most of us, and we have women-folk at home—that renders us more considering on women’s account, maybe—and if I speak out, it is like a father. Miss Roland, can’t you let out the boat to some fisher? Even on halves you’d be likely to get more than now.”

“It is not *my* boat; it is my brother’s. All that we have is his. He never seems to think of it in that way, but it is so, and I could not rent the boat. If I did, it would only make matters worse. Rufus would have nothing to do, and it might complete his ruin. I’m always looking for him to reform. I hoped he had, a little while ago.” Tears rose in her eyes and rolled slowly over her cheeks.

Burgham was greatly moved:

“Well, miss, strong diseases need strong measures. Couldn’t you get him shut up somewhere just for a bit—till he got reformed? I’ve known it to work well. I’ve known men to put themselves in such places. My wife had a cousin, a master marble-cutter: he had an arrangement with his foreman. ‘Maunders,’ he says, ‘if ever I break out, you’ll put me in a hack and take me off to the Waxley Reform Home, if you have to call in a policeman to help. That’s orders.’

So Maunders used to take him off, and he'd come out quiet and keep solid maybe a whole year."

"But he broke out again. And then it cost money, and we have no money. And there is no such home near here."

"I've known men to be cured completely. Couldn't you persuade your brother to go to one of those places for a year or so?"

"He has no money to expend that way. And then, when he is sober, he thinks he will never be otherwise; and when he has been drinking, he would not listen to such a proposal. There is no way that I can see, Mr. Burgham, but just to let things go on as now they are going."

"I'm afraid the Siren will come to grief with you in it."

"Let us hope not."

"And we cannot help you any sort of ways? We're all willing."

"You are very kind, but there is no way; do not think of it," said Margareth, firmly.

"At all events, I'll sail my Pixie pretty near your Siren, and you'd better see to it that we keep company as well as possible; and if anything goes wrong aboard your craft, we can lend you a hand. Moreover, miss, I'd proclaim lynch-law to whisky if I was you, and notice where it's kept and fling it out. I'd like to proclaim lynch-law to the breakers of the law that sell it; only trying to kill one evil with another is not

law or gospel. However, some of us are going for 'Liza Topples again before the courts and stop off her selling. Still, there are always some as is ready to make gain of their fellows' sins and weaknesses."

They had stood talking at the end of the causeway.

"There's no more to say," said Burgham; "only look out for sudden squalls *of any kind*, and don't carry too much sail. The Siren's got a lot of canvas for her sized hull; and when you've got an idee that you know what to do and are sailing her right, why go ahead with it, miss, on your own opinions. I think you sail her remarkable well, and a cat-rigged craft is not hard to manage if you've a cool head and a quick eye, and understand the boat and the coast and the manners of the wind in these parts."

Burgham had given all the advice that occurred to him, and he started off up the high-road. Margareth stood waiting for Rufus, whom in the gathering dimness she saw coming up the foot-path.

"Who was that?" asked Rufus.

"Burgham."

"And what did he want?"

"He thinks it is not safe for me aboard the Siren."

"You're not safe anywhere with me, Margareth," said Rufus, with a sigh.

“Who was that man?” asked Harriet, uneasily, as the two came into the house.

“Mr. Burgham,” said Margareth.

“I don’t remember any such family about here.”

“No; his family live at West Balhead.”

“Is—is he a married man?” asked Harriet

“Yes, he is!” cried Margareth, sharply.

“What a thing it is to be a fool and have few ideas!” growled Rufus, half aloud, in the towel whereon he was wiping his face. Then his wrath gathered, and he walked up to Harriet: “That Mr. Burgham is a fisher here, and a very decent man; I am a fisher here, and not a decent man; but my sister Margareth is a lady and has never done anything to alter her station in life. Moreover, I don’t know what claim any of us have on Margareth, that she must sacrifice herself to us and our wretched affairs. We are asking too much of Margareth, and she has been so generous to us that we have come to take as a right what she yielded out of goodness. For my part, I cannot see what she stays with any of us for, when she might do better by herself.”

Harriet shrank away, quite cowed by this outburst.

Margareth, however, led Rufus to his seat by the table.

“I stay with you all,” she said, softly, smoothing his cheek with her hand, “because I love

you all, and I do not leave you because I should not be happy if I were away from you all when you need me. In the family one cannot stand or fall alone."

"That's so," said Rufus, grimly. "I've proved it, and seen it proved, that if one of the family takes to falling, he drags all the rest down."

Surely these were not exhilarating family discussions; it took all Margareth's energy and all her power of calling out wit and simplicity from the three children to smooth over matters and secure moderate cheerfulness for the evening.

The equinox opened with a sudden heavy gale. Storms had brooded and threatened for some days, but the run of fish was fine, and the fleet repaired, as usual, to the shoals. Then the threats of storm ceased, the sun came out hotly, the wind died into a calm, and the fishers prognosticated that when the day's "take" was over they must help themselves home with sweeps or oars. The fish were coming up as fast as lines could pull them in, all the hooks at once bringing up prey in some casts; the glittering heaps were flapping and tumbling and thrashing off scales that flew about like flat sparkling hail; no one stopped to clean the booty: that could be done later. A low black bank of cloud gathered in the north-east, then rose and formed a cone, then whirled and broadened at the top and

spread into a tree, then swept into the zenith and shadowed all the sky. The waters turned a dull purple and heaved uneasily, breaking into long lines of foam. The work at the shoals stopped; lines were reeled up, anchors were taken in and sails were shaken out.

"Get in as quickly as you can," shouted Burgham to the Siren. "There's a stunning squall coming up. Take a deep reef in your sail and keep close to me."

"What's the fool talking about?" cried Rufus, who had been drinking, having had a bottle concealed in his shirt-pocket. "Let him sail *his* boat; we'll sail *ours*. Leave this shoal! Why, we'll make five dollars more in the next twenty minutes. Keep close to him and reef! The Siren will run past him like shot, and he says 'reef' so that we won't get in ahead of him. Oh, I know all about the sharp tricks of these fishermen. There isn't a gentleman in the whole lot of 'em."

"Rufus, they are all going, and we must go. They know what they're about; they understand this coast better than we do. My line is reeled, and I'll see to yours while you get up the anchor at once."

"I'll be hanged if I go now!"

"Oh yes, you will go—for my sake. You don't want to frighten me or make me unhappy? Come, now, be quick, Rufus."

“That’s the plague of girls! always getting scared. I’ll go out with a man next time, you see,” answered Rufus, sulkily, as he hoisted the anchor.

Margareth attended to his line, and then proceeded to see to the sail, which was hoisted or lowered by a patent adjustment.

“Zounds!” shouted Rufus, turning about furiously. “Who’s captain of this boat, Burgham or me? I vow if you haven’t gone and left in a great reef, so we’ll crawl in at the heels of the Pixie! Here! I know how to sail the Siren, if I don’t know another thing.” He pushed his sister from her place; he had not often spoken or behaved so roughly to her. Keeping his eyes away from hers, with a jerk he ran up the sail to the full extent of its canvas.

The wind had come hurling down upon the sea, and as Rufus leaned on the tiller and let out the main-sheet the Siren shot off like a racer on a smooth course, foam flying from her bows, her head stooping to the sea, the wind swaying and bending her burdened mast.

“Rufus, larboard, larboard!” shrieked Margareth.

Rufus instinctively obeyed, and just in time to rush by instead of into the Pixie—a narrow escape from sinking both boats.

Burgham, catching his breath after his close shave from ruin, leaped on his little deck, and,

clasping his arm about the mast to steady himself, eyed the flying Siren.

"She'll lose her mast or capsize," he cried. "In this gale with a madman in command! It's just as I said: the girl cannot do one thing with him."

At this instant Rufus mismanaged the tiller and the main-sheet, drawing the sheet in instead of letting it run loose, and the Siren went over—in a moment was completely capsized.

"On there!" screamed Burgham, snatching a pair of sweeps to help his boat to the scene of disaster. "Save the girl first!"

But as the Pixie came up to the wreck the head of Rufus rose just to the surface of the water, and Burgham's wiry grasp seized and drew him in; he flung him in a heap on the fish, and in a second, kneeling at the bow, had both his brawny arms about the unconscious form of Margareth. When the girl first rose to the surface, though nearly stunned by a blow from one of the loose oars, she had instinctively turned on her back and floated, but with each wave rolling over her face.

Burgham's boat bore to the shore two senseless forms which he was vainly striving to restore to consciousness. They were carried to the nearest house to receive the earnest care of the community.

Next morning the fragments of the Siren and the dead fish that had been her cargo strewed the

beach. Rufus heard this as, supported on Buff's arm, he slowly followed the arm-chair in which Burgham and others carried Margareth home.

At the news of this final loss Rufus uttered not one word. Harriet cried and wrung her hands, and foretold starvation for herself and her children during the whole day as she waited on Margareth, propped in the large chair by the fire. Rufus sat close to his sister, his head on his hands, still silent. Finally, when Harriet in the evening declared it time for Margareth to go to bed, Rufus rose, and, stooping above the girl, kissed her twice, a pause between the kisses.

"You have been a good sister to me, Margareth," he said, "and you have got very little good by it." Then he went up to his room.

The next morning, when Persis went up late to call him to breakfast, Rufus was gone. He had been in bed, but had risen hours before any of the others were awake, and had swung himself down from his window by a sheet. He had taken away a small bag of clothing, and, though Burgham, in Margareth's behalf, made inquiries, no trace could be gotten of the direction in which he had departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

A QUESTION OF SACRIFICES.

“Let our unceasing, constant prayer
Be, too, for light, for strength to bear
Our portion of the weight of woe.”

IT was an October evening. On one side of the fireplace of the cottage in the marsh sat Harriet; by her, circled by her arm, stood Persis, leaning her head against her mother's cheek; opposite these two was Margareth, holding Archie on her knee and gently caressing the pale face that rested upon her shoulder. These four were all that were now left of the lessening household. That day they had buried Stella, who had suddenly “fallen on sleep.”

“I suppose,” broke out Harriet, querulously, “that you and every one else are thinking I ought to feel more about the child's death and make more fuss about it, but I can't.”

“I do not think so,” said Margareth, quietly; “I think many people err much in excess of grief over the death of young children. A little one like Stella has known only peace and comfort on earth, and without any experience of

tribulation enters into the joy of heaven. I think of such almost with envy: they seem to have gained immortality at—for them—so small a price. They know nothing of struggle, nothing of suffering.”

“I’m sure I cannot see what there was in this world for a child like that,” continued Harriet, in her tone of peevish remonstrance; “every day she lived she would be worse off. What is there before a beautiful girl who grows up and don’t know where she will get a pair of shoes, or perhaps the next loaf of bread? Nothing but mortification and misery. She was just like your side of the house: I could see that—little hands and feet, eyes that look a million miles off, skin like satin. I know what it would have come to: all her craving would have been for books and flowers and pictures and learning, and all her heartbreak because none of these things came in her way. Now, Persis is different; she can take her pleasure in such things as come in her lot. She likes to do and to have common things that there will be some chance of her having. No, I cannot grieve over Stella’s going. We have one left of the delicate, sensitive, easily-hurt kind, and I’m sure I don’t know what ever will become of him.”

Margareth drew little Archie closer in her arms, and the little fellow put up his thin hand and stroked her chin. He felt in some indefinite

fashion that he was at sword's points with fate, and that Margareth was his champion against all the onsets of evil.

"Yes, it is well—very well—not to grieve," said Margareth, speaking more for the sake of the children than for that of their mother. "But I wish you could in thought follow the little child into the beautiful and blessed home into which she has gone, and so get nearer heaven because your little one is there."

"I cannot," said Harriet; "I cannot get any farther than the grave where I know her body is lying. I can see that, but I cannot see anything of heaven or angels or streets of gold or flowers, or any part of paradise. If I had seen her growing up with all the comforts of this life about her and in prospect, if I'd known she could go on and enjoy things that she could get and could get things that she could enjoy, then I would have taken some comfort in her as a happy woman."

"She has all that, and more, now. She will always enjoy what she has and have what she can enjoy; every wish will have full satisfaction. Indeed, I should not say 'wish,' for in heaven wishes will have no time to rise: our God will forestall all our desire. On earth, in the most favorable lot, might come sickness, sorrow, loss, death; into heaven enters nothing that shall offend."

“Yes, I’ve heard it so said,” replied Harriet, “but I’m one of those who keep craving for a portion here below, where one can see it and use it.”

Just then came a step and a knock, and Persis ran to open the door. Trustee Wagstaff entered.

“I hope I’m not intruding,” he said. “It’s a sad time for you—we all feel for you—but business is business, and couldn’t be put off. Miss Roland, that young lady from Lynn has gone back on us about the school: she got a much better offer down South, and she says she is sick of Northern winters, and, moreover, she’s not very strong; and she wants us to let her off from our bargain. If you’ll take the school—it begins Monday, you know—it will be all right, and I’ll telegraph to her in the morning.”

“I shall be very glad indeed to get it, Mr. Wagstaff,” said Margareth.

“I’m glad school’s openin’ again, I’m sure. We don’t have it long enough down here—only from the middle of October to the middle of June. But then we don’t give them any holidays during that time, except a week Christmas. It comes of our being seafaring folk, and, what with the fish and the scallops and the cranberries keeping the children out to pick up a few dollars for themselves, I’m sick of seeing the little shavers wasting so much time. Well, Miss Roland, on Monday morning you’ll take posses-

sion. You'll find a fire made and all ready, only the clock: that loses from twenty to forty minutes every day, and you'll have to keep your eye on it.—Mrs. Roland, my wife said, if it was convenient to you, she'd be obliged if you'd come over and give her a week's help at sewing."

"If I could—" began Harriet.

"You can," said Margareth. "By all means. I can get the breakfast out of the way before school-time, and tea after I get home. Archie is five; he has a right to go to school now, and I know he will enjoy it."

"And, you see," piped up Archie, "I know how to read, and to write my name, and to make a whole lot of figures on my slate."

"You're a smart one, if you *are* little," said Mr. Wagstaff.—"Well, Mrs. Roland, we'll look for you to breakfast Monday."

All this was a ray of good-fortune that turned conversation into cheery channels when the trustee went away. Harriet began to plan how the next day could be spent in making her own and her children's clothing suitable for the next week, and Margareth was sure her thirty dollars a month would afford them all a good living for the school-year.

The week with Mrs. Wagstaff lengthened into two, then three. Harriet explained that she had offered to stay at reduced price to help quilt, and then she stayed longer to aid Mrs. Wagstaff in

trying out lard and making sausage, and in doing other fall work.

Margareth paid very little attention to all this. She was glad Harriet had found something to do, and she saw that the something was having a beneficial effect on her. Harriet brightened up. Her voice lost its whine; she was more brisk; she chatted over the neighborhood gossip. It did not particularly interest Margareth, but it interested Harriet, which was the main thing. Margareth thought the change of work, surroundings, fare, interests, did wonders for Harriet. She revived some taste in her dress, arranged her hair more carefully, spent much of each evening in doing up or mending her clothes, and put little ruffles on her neck and sleeves. This pleased Margareth. It was her theory that all should do the best they could for themselves at all times, and that it was weak and foolish to remit personal cares and let affairs go by default merely because of adverse circumstances. If things were bad in themselves, so much the more reason for not making them worse by neglect and repinings.

“I went over to the town this afternoon with Mrs. Wagstaff,” said Harriet, coming in as Margareth and the children finished their supper; “she asked me to go and help her pick out some buttons for her new dress. I declare, it is nice having a carryall to take you about, instead of

being obliged to stay at home for ever or trail along in the mud on foot. The store was full of people, and there was no end of new goods real cheap. I thought, as long as I was there, I might as well spend part of the money Mrs. Wagstaff owed me in getting me something to be decent in."

"I'm very glad you did," said Margareth.

"I knew you would be," responded Harriet, cordially, sitting down and opening her bundle. "See! I got me this brown stuff for a dress; I hadn't had one for so long I concluded to get it pretty good. It don't pay to buy too cheap things. And aren't these pretty collars? I got three of them. And this white is for two white aprons; if one goes out sewing, one must be decently dressed."

"It is all very nice," said Margareth, quietly.

"And what did you get *me*?" demanded Per-sis the prompt.

"I'll get you something the next time," replied her mother.—"I'm going to get my dress done between now and Sunday," continued Harriet, "because I am to go to church with Mrs. Wagstaff."

"I'm glad of that," said Margareth.

"Oh, won't you take me, please?" said Archie. "I never went to a church, and I want so much to go! I'd sit on your lap in the carriage, and I wouldn't be in the way at all."

“Some other time, Archie,” said Harriet, hastily; “it would not be polite to take you when you were not asked.”

The next day, after school, Margareth walked over to the town and used part of her month's wages in buying flannels for the children, a thick woolen dress for Persis and dark-green cloth to make Archie a little suit and cap.

Archie's new garb was finished by eleven on Saturday night, and on Sunday, when Harriet rode off with Mrs. Wagstaff to go to church at Gray Point, Margareth started for the church at Welby, wheeling Archie in his little carriage along the path through the woods.

Margareth now noticed that Harriet seemed to find more work out than usual, and had also sewing at home; but what she got for it she kept for herself, except buying a hat and coat for Persis. Margareth thought little of the matter; she knew Harriet was of a feeble, narrow nature, and such natures are rather warped than ennobled by sorrow.

“Margareth,” said Harriet, one evening when they were all sitting about the fireplace, “I think I've had a pretty poor time in my life; and if I'm ever going to better myself, it is time I did so.”

“Oh yes,” replied Margareth, absently, hardly noticing what Harriet had said. She was thinking of Rufus, and wondering what was his lot in

that cold midwinter weather, and whether she ever should see him again.

“Hardly anybody ever had such a poor time as I have,” continued Harriet, letting fall her sewing in her lap. “My mother was weakly, and as a child I had to be helping in the work when I wasn’t at school. Then, when I was a young girl, I had mother to wait on through a long sickness, and my trade to learn. I learned plain dressmaking and boys’ tailor-work. Then, when my mother was dead, pretty soon father took paralysis, and I had him to look to and my house to keep and my trade to follow. You may believe I worked steady and did not see much amusement in those days.”

“Yes, such a life is hard—very hard indeed, Harriet.”

“So I say. Then, when I was alone, doing for myself—no kin in the world of a near kind—that was hard. And then your father came along. Between pity for the case he was in and being flattered by his paying attentions to me, and his style and look and altogether being quite above all I was accustomed to, and the notion I had that I might get into some great place in the world, and my fancy of showing the folks up my way that I knew what I was about and could hold my own,—why, I married him. You know what came after that, Margareth. What a case I was in when you came home!”

“It was very sad,” said Margareth, soothingly.

“And it hasn’t been much better since,” continued Harriet, apparently finding great satisfaction in enumerating past ills. “How I’ve ever gone through all I have, and lived, I don’t know. Three children without a dollar to rear them on, and sickness and losses, and accidents and sudden death! I declare, if I don’t see some comfort pretty soon, I never will, that’s clear. But, Margareth, you’ve been very good to me; I tell everybody no one could have been better. I’d have been dead long ago, and so would my children, if it hadn’t been for you. You have been so kind, so generous!”

“Never mind that; don’t mention it,” said Margareth.

“Yes, I must say I feel it. I always shall feel it, and never forget it, no matter how much better off I may be. And, as you are so kind and sympathizing, Margareth, I make sure you would be always glad of what made me better off, and wouldn’t stand in my way of ever making myself better off.”

“Oh no, surely not,” said Margareth, vaguely, with an idea of mill-work somewhere, or perhaps a dressmaker’s shop. “What do you think of doing?”

“I think—of—getting married.”

“What! What in the world?” cried Margareth, startled into attention.

“And why not?” demanded Harriet, crossly. “I’m not too old: I’m scarce past forty; nor am I too ugly—in some folks’ opinion.”

“And whom do you propose to marry?” asked Margareth.

“Mr. Green, brother-in-law to Mr. Wagstaff; he’s been a widower a year. I met him at Mrs. Wagstaff’s, and she did all she could to bring it about; for he needs some one to see to his place and house. He’s quite well-to-do—a nice farm over at Gray Point. I think it is a good chance for me.”

“I hope so,” said Margareth. “When will you be married?”

“He proposes the tenth of January, and I said it would do very well. I can get ready; I’ve been quietly getting some things together for a while, but you didn’t seem to notice.”

“No; I never thought of it.”

Harriet gave utterance to a little chuckle of self-satisfaction:

“And Mr. Green likes Persis. I’m going to take Persis, you know. She is getting to be a great girl, and she is so smart about the house she will soon be a real help to me.”

“Surely,” said Margareth, blankly; “a child goes with its mother.”

“But there’s—Archie,” said Harriet, hesitatingly; “I don’t know what he’d do without you, Margareth.”

“I shall miss him, little dear!” said Margareth, heartily.

“So I think. And you could hardly stay here all alone, and I know he’d fret himself sick after you. You have always had the care of him since he was born, and you get on with him ten times as well as I do. It seems I ought not to take him away from you.”

Margareth turned a wondering gaze on Archie: she was thinking whether the new father would be kind to him, and whether his mother would be more or less affectionate in her altered circumstances.

“And then, too,” hurried on Harriet, “I hate to go and burden Mr. Green with two of them; it seems over-much. And Archie will never get strong, to be any help on the farm; and he may need a deal of nursing and doctoring, and Mr. Green might not like—”

“What!” cried Margareth, in her seldom-used tone of proud challenge and command. “What! A *mother* marry a man who begins by refusing to receive and love her children?”

“Oh, not that—not that,” said Harriet, alarmed at the flashing black eyes and the black straight brows bent upon her. “He never said *that*. Only, only I thought—I felt—I was sure the child would be so much better off with you, Margareth. And your father always seemed to think you would take care of

Archie, since you know how to educate him, and I don't. And then it's only fair—one for me, and one for you, Margareth. And I'm sure you'll get on well. You have this house and all the things in it. I sha'n't want to take any of them away, Margareth. You see, you will keep the school—I'll get Mrs. Wagstaff to see to that—and you'll be obliged to stay here, for fear your brother should come back. But I cannot risk living with him again, for I'm so deadly afraid of him; but he won't object to Archie."

Margareth walked over to the listening child, who sat in his high-chair by the table playing with jackstraws which she had made him. She gathered him into her strong arms, and, returning to the hearth, said,

"This is my child, for good or ill, for evermore."

But the eyes bent on Harriet were stormy still.

"Oh yes, I knew you'd think well of it," said Harriet, very glad at securing her end and regardless of Margareth's private opinion. "I told Mrs. Wagstaff you'd be sure and keep Archie. Yes, I'll be well fixed over at Gray Point. I rode over there with Mrs. Wagstaff, and Mr. Green showed us all his place. He has a carryall, and a buggy, and three horses, and three cows, and a yard full of all kinds of fowls.

The front room has haircloth furniture and a red ingrain carpet. The bedrooms all have nice rag carpets and green shades, and the kitchen floor is painted yellow. I never saw any house better fitted out with dishes and kitchen-things. There's three very good bedrooms, and a little hall-room for Persis, and he said he shouldn't stand at all about buying a carpet and a cot and a washstand with drawers for that; he calculated to have things proper."

Not a word from Margareth. She looked an irate young Juno, standing with the child pressed in her arms, her brows drawn straight, her eyes flashing fire, her breast heaving with angry scorn.

Of all this Harriet appeared to be oblivious:

"We won't have any wedding; he'll come for me and we'll drive over to the parson's, and Mrs. Wagstaff will take Persis over in her carryall, with her things, in the morning, and they'll get dinner. I won't have to buy Persis anything; he said I could have all his first wife's things for her."

At this practical revelation of Harriet's late courtship Margareth did not know whether to burst into hysteric laughter or hysteric tears. She dropped back in her chair, and concluded neither to laugh nor cry. But the strain on her feelings, happily, was lessened, for Harriet went on:

“Margareth, you have always been so good I can ask you for one thing more. I shall always be grateful and never trouble you again, for I suppose we sha’n’t often see each other—it will be better not to—after I’m married. I haven’t *quite* all I want: I want a gray cloth cloak, and a gray satin bonnet with some red in it to light me up a little, and a few other extras. They will cost me eighteen dollars. You won’t have any expenses hardly—no rent to pay, and fuel enough, as you’re out most of the time. Couldn’t you let me have the eighteen dollars?”

Margareth did not give her time to plead that she ought to give her the money as a return for the bequest of Archie.

“Yes,” said Margareth. “I draw my thirty dollars next week; you shall have eighteen of them.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EBBING OF THE TIDE.

“As in strange lands a traveler walking slow,
In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moonrise, hears the low
Moan of an unknown sea.”

ARCHIE and Margareth were keeping house together. It was the first of March. There was no snow on the ground, but all the trees were bare; the grasses were dry and sere; the long growth of the marsh-lands was stiff and harsh, and rustled sharply as stirred by wind or tide. Archie and Margareth had been home some little while from afternoon school. The fire had been uncovered, and began to gleam brightly. The quaint, poor house was spotlessly neat. The portrait of Stella on the wall, the books on the stand or shelves made by Rufus, the basket of “woman’s work” on the table, even the bright face of little crooked Archie, made the poor place homelike and attractive. Before the fireplace and beneath the table were mats with braided borders; the bed at the farther end of the room was decorated with a white

counterpane and well-starched and frilled pillow-shams: Margareth, pursuing the thrifty plan of Harriet, had an agreement of exchange of sewing and washing with the best laundress of Welby Haven. The sun was shining brightly into the room. Margareth sat in the rocking-chair by the fire, her hands folded in her lap, resting; Archie, his chin just above the window-sill, was looking for matters of interest without, when he suddenly exclaimed,

“Lady, there’s a tarriage! Lady, the tarriage is turning up the tauseway.”

Margareth concluded that at last Harriet might be coming to make her child a visit, as she had not seen him since her marriage. Margareth was thoroughly incensed at Harriet for her heartlessness, but still there was the sound of wheels at the door, and it would be well to rise and greet her guest cordially; she left her place and looked out over Archie’s head.

Before the door stood a coach from Welby Junction, out of which vehicle was cautiously backing a broad expanse of yellow fur with multitudinous swinging yellow tails. Below the fur, numerous black-merino ruffles; above it, numerous black-lace frills. Then something was lifted from the carriage and placed on the ground—a large fish-basket, from the square hole in the lid of which rose the benignant and brindled head of Thomas Henry. But

now Mrs. Quincey was helping some one to alight, a tall, thin, bent form—Rufus.

Margareth dashed from the door and clasped her arms about her brother, then, carefully supporting him, led him to her own seat by the fire and hastily took off his hat, his overcoat, his shoes, and brought him a pair of slippers. It was only when she had him leaning back resting after being thus waited upon, and had provided him with a cup of broth that had been simmering by the fire, that she could find time to say,

“Oh, Rufus, Rufus! are you here at last?” Then she remembered Mistress Quincey. The good dame had brought in her luggage and dismissed the carriage. Margareth caught her by both hands: “It is you who have brought him back to me! What a comfort it is to see your good face once more!”

Mrs. Quincey planted herself on the hearth-rug, her hands on her hips, her lifted elbows spreading out her fur cloak like a pair of great yellow wings. She regarded Rufus:

“So! Here we are. And chirk you look. Home and sea-air will do you good. You stood it first rate, Rufus.—Yes, Margareth, here we are.—Why, Thomas Henry! *Have* I left you in your basket all this time? Pray come here and sit before the fire and make yourself at home, like a well-bred young person.—Yes, Margareth,

I brought our Thomas Henry this time; a little travel is good for us all and improves our minds. I was sure there would be no corrupting influences here to injure Thomas Henry. Your brother is home, my dear. There's been a battle and a victory; I bring you back a hero. Yes, after the manner of men, he has fought with beasts at Ephesus—at least, which is about the same, with temptations in Boston. For if lions and tigers were any worse than the whisky-shops of our day, Mary Jane Quincey would be pleased to know it, that's all. He's fought his battle, he's won his victory. He don't come here over-strong in health, but he's strong in spirit. He has found some things better than bodily health, and among them peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Margareth was turning first to one and then to the other. Drinking in every word she heard, one instant she took away the orator's fur cloak and ruffled bonnet, and the next she relieved Rufus of the cup and spoon.

"I know you want to hear, and I want to tell," said Mrs. Quincey. "You see, when the boat was wrecked and you were nearly drowned, all seemed lost here, and he took a vow not to drink another drop. But he made up his mind to go off and fight his battle out alone and let you have a chance to get on better without him. That was his idea. So he went to Boston, and

he looked and looked for work, and found none, until a man whom he had known offered him a place as bar-tender, and he took it. He worked in the bar, but he never drank a drop; but, his head being clear to observe all the sin and shame and sorrow of the traffic, slowly it came into his mind that mayhap it was a sin to stand and sell it. And that idea grew, till one day— Now, Rufus, you tell that.”

“One day a lad of sixteen came in for liquor. I remembered what I had been at sixteen and how liquor had been my ruin, and I said, ‘Out of this! We’re not allowed to sell to minors.’ The owner of the saloon swore at me and said, ‘Give the fellow his drink; his money’s as good as if he was forty.’ I poured it out mechanically, but as I handed it over I caught the boy’s eye. I could not do it. I said, ‘Boy, that accursed stuff has ruined me. It has destroyed my health, my honor, eaten up my little property, broken my sister’s heart, disgraced my dead mother. It will sink your soul to hell. Never touch a drop of it, so help you God.’ With that the boss flew at me with a great oath and ordered me to leave; so I picked up my portmanteau and two dollars that were due me, and the boy and I went out together. We went to his room—a poor place, but we grew to be friends. He joined a temperance society and got a fair situation. We lived together, and I picked up

what jobs I could. But I was running down badly and could hardly drag about from day to day. One morning I went to the station, to get any little work I might, when I was called by Mrs. Quincey, who asked me to carry her valise—”

“I didn't know him,” broke in Mrs. Quincey, “till, as we got near the street-car, I recognized him. Says I, ‘Rufus Roland, this is you, and you just put yourself aboard that car and come out to my house peaceably with me. If you don't, I'll call a policeman to fetch you along.’ So he came. The second day he broke down completely, and was mighty ill—that was the first of February—but he is better; and as soon as I thought he could stand it I brought him to you, as he was so eager to see you. And here we are. And, Margareth, where are the rest of them?”

“Stella has gone to heaven,” answered a soft voice—the voice of Archie, whom no one had yet noticed, and who had seated himself beside his old friend Thomas Henry.

“Bless the child!” cried Mrs. Quincey, catching him up in her arms for a caress.—“And little Stella is gone?”

“And Harriet is married and has taken Persis with her.”

“I'm glad of it,” said Rufus, in his most positive tones.

With Mrs. Quincey's wrinkled, round, benevolent face smiling at her, and Rufus leaning back in his chair and looking thoroughly happy, Margareth was inspired to see the cheerful side of life. So she told the tale of her stepmother's courtship and marriage settlements in a fashion to make her auditors laugh heartily.

"I suppose you see her pretty constant?" said Mrs. Quincey.

"I have not seen her once since," said Margareth. "But come, I must get supper. I just had some capital corned bluefish sent me."

"And I must unpack my basket," cried Mrs. Quincey. "Margareth, there's some of the finest honey you ever tasted—real mignonette and thyme honey; I took it from my hive before I went to Washington last fall. And here's some jelly that I made before I went. I always leave a fair supply of such notions in my house when I go; they are nice to have to give away. And then, I always think, if I should be brought back sick or dead, how convenient it would be to have them on hand! Did you ever see a prettier roll of butter than that? I churned it this very morning. And these biscuit I baked to-day; your brother has got so spoiled eating my biscuit I don't reckon he'll take to anything else very soon. There can't anybody come up to me in biscuit, Margareth, if I do say it. Now, there's a tongue—a boiled tongue. Pretty, ain't it? I

don't know as I ever see a nicer boiled tongue. Seems made a-purpose to eat."

The plentiful supper was eaten and cleared away, and the little group sat down by the fire, Mrs. Quincey holding Archie.

"And you've been alone here, Margareth, with the little chap, since early in January?" inquired Rufus. "How lonely!"

"It was, rather; but Archie has been a real comfort, and I have been busy. Still, I often wonder what my life all means, and what I am to do with it."

"When a person is fixed just as you are, and is doing the only thing that can be done, it stops a terrible sight of worrying," said Mrs. Quincey. "You see, in such a case, one has just to go on doing each day's work as it comes—living by the hour, as you may say—and trusting the Lord to open the path and portion out the work for the next day. It is not in my mind, Margareth, that the Lord means you to live always in this poor, humble way; he is putting you to school in this to learn the A B C of life. It is a true gift of God to be able to understand people, to sympathize with them, to console them. There's nothing more terrible than a heart hardened by prosperity, and perhaps the Lord is tutoring you in all these troubles, so that when prosperity comes you'll not be injured by it."

"That is a very encouraging way to think of

it," said Margareth. "But now that Rufus is home, and is a Christian man, I feel as if I had all I needed to be happy.—Do you get strong and well, Rufus, and we two will make a winning fight with the world yet."

By six next morning the indefatigable Mrs. Quincey was on her way to the beach, with Thomas Henry trotting at her heels like a pet dog. The good woman stopped and spoke to every one she met, and won the warm regards of every one to whom she spoke. To each one she told the tale of Rufus Roland's return "clothed and in his right mind," and by noon it was known to every one in Welby Haven. Then the sturdy kindness of all those simple fisher-folk and seamen broke forth. One by one the men dropped in to shake Rufus by the hand and welcome him back with encouraging discourse:

"Don't be downhearted over the loss of your boat, Roland; I've known men to lose more than one boat and yet come to own a fleet of five or six. If the Siren's gone, the bass and the bluefish aren't played out. This sea-air will bring you 'round hearty as a bear in no time, and then you can get a boat on shares, or buy one on time, or hire for the fishing this year and buy a boat the next. Oh, you'll find a dozen ways of making your way in the world. Chirk up, man! We'll all stand by you."

But when they went away, one and all shook their heads:

“He’s not long for this world, poor fellow! Well, we must do the best we can for him and his sister. Perhaps he will hold out through the summer.”

The women of the neighborhood came too—not in groups, but first one, then another. All had a warm welcome to give, all had kind words about Margareth; and they came, and came again, two or three callers a day—not merely at first, but all the season. And they came bearing gifts. This one had a custard for which she modestly believed herself famous; that one, new-laid eggs; another, “a fowl just right for cooking,” or a basket of apples, or some pickled fish “morally certain to bring back an appetite,” or a “jar of beach plum preserves fit for a king,” or a “jelly that had cured a brother-in-law when he lay at the very gate of death.” In truth, Welby Haven overflowed in sympathy and kindly gifts.

The only one who never came and never sent anything was Harriet. She seemed to think a complete severance from her late family indispensable.

“To think,” cried the irate Mrs. Falconer, “of how Margareth has worked for her and hers—nursed ’em, helped ’em, kept the little boy or she couldn’t have married Green, bought

her, if you'll believe it, the very bonnet and cloak she stood up to be married in, and now she, with her cream and butter and apples and chickens and new-laid eggs to command, never comes a-nigh them nor sends one token! Not that they're in need: Margareth Roland is one of them that has a hundred and fifty cents in every dollar that passes through her fingers, and Welby Haven is noted far and wide for its goodness to sick folks."

Yes, Welby Haven left nothing to be desired, and its gifts and attentions quite forestalled any need of the recusant Harriet.

Mrs. Quincey stayed two weeks, and when she left had the warmest invitations to visit every house in Welby Haven and stay a week.

Rufus grew a little better and could walk in the sunshine about the solid ground near the cottage and some distance along the causeway. Saturdays and Sundays were happy days, because then Margareth was home from school all the time; but other days went well, for Margareth came home for an hour at noon, and Mrs. Falconer brought her sewing and sat with Rufus every afternoon until school was out, and every morning little Archie was left to take care of him.

Those mornings with Archie were not the least pleasant hours of Rufus's closing life. Margareth left everything convenient for their

comfort—the fire piled up, the drink ready for checking Rufus's cough—and then, when they were alone, Archie dragged his high-chair beside the big rocker of Rufus, and, climbing to his seat, brought his small beautiful face on a level with that of his brother. Good friends, these two brothers—nineteen years between them, the one a wrecked Hercules, the other a little hump-back, neither of them with much of earth-life before him. They understood each other.

“Rufus, you'll see your mother when you get to heaven. Won't you, Rufus? Lady says she's up there.”

“Yes, I'll see her. She went when I was your age, Archie. I remember, before she went, she took me in her arms and kissed me and prayed for me. She'll be very glad to see me, I think.”

“Course! And will she like to see me, Rufus? I'll be all straight, you know. Will she like me? You'll tell her who I am, won't you? Of course, up there, everybody loves all the other bodies, but I'd like some one to know me in particular, Rufus—yes, particular.”

“She will love you, little chap; I make sure of it.”

“And Lady's mother, Rufus. Lady says she used to love you, and Lady knows she will love me very much because Lady does. She'll be glad to see you, won't she?”

“Yes, indeed! There is one more; she will welcome us both.”

“Then, you see, I’ll have two new mothers up in heaven. And I’ll be straight. Do you think I’ll grow there, Rufus? I’d like some time to be as tall as you. Don’t you think, Rufus, it would be very nice if you and I were two tall angels, all in white and very shining, walking through the sky? Will I grow there, Rufus?”

“There’s a verse you will like, little chap; it says:

“Not as a child shall we again behold her;
But when, with rapture wild,
In our embraces we again enfold her,
She will not be a child.”

Yes, I think you will grow, little man.”

“That ’members me of Stella, Rufus. Stella will be up there to see us. I ’most think she’ll be the first one to come flying out to meet us. You know Stella loved you and me, Rufus. Don’t you guess Stella will be the very prettiest of all the little angels up there?”

“It seems as if she must be,” answered Rufus, his eyes on the portrait on the wall.

“And, Rufus, I’ve got something nice in my pocketbook,” said Archie, with importance, tugging out of his pocket a minute pocketbook—one of Rufus’s former gifts to him. He opened it and drew forth a bit of printed paper. “I found it, and I kept it because it was poetry—I

always love poetry—and Lady reads it to me. I could read the words, you know, Rufus, only I can't make a sound *full* for it. You will read it to me, Rufus?"

Rufus unfolded the fragment and read aloud:

“He stood alone, wrapped in divinest wonder;
He saw the pearly gates and jasper walls
Informed with light, and heard the far-off thunder
Of chariot-wheels and mighty waterfalls.

“And, throned within the glittering empyrean,
A golden palm-branch in his kingly hand,
He saw his Lord, the gracious Galilean,
Amid the worship of his myriads stand.”

“There! That's what we'll see. We can't most hear it,” cried Archie, in whose short life earth missed a poet. “I can *feel* just how it looks. Won't you like very much, Rufus, to see the tree that has twelve kinds of fruit and bears fruit every month? I wonder if all the kinds are on at once, or one sort every month?”

“You will find out there, Archie, for you will have a right to eat of it. You know the verse is, ‘They have a right to the tree of life, and shall enter in through the gates into the city.’”

“And there's the sea of glass mingled with fire; I see just how that looks too. I have seen the ocean so, all flat and still, and the bright sparkles deep in it. Don't you think it would be nicer, Rufus, if, some evening when the sky is all red and gold, we could take hold of hands

and walk right in and up—up, right along by all the clouds? Persis says, ‘No; you’d fall,’ and all that. I don’t think Persis knows so *very* much. Seems to me, Rufus, I could walk better up there than down here. Persis don’t want to go there at all. But then Persis is straight and can run, and she likes cows and chickens. Now, I like better the things I see up in the clouds.”

May brought a little reviving of strength to Rufus. Mrs. Falconer came in Mrs. Wagstaff’s buggy and drove him and Archie out a few times. That was unspeakable joy to Archie, who had never had a ride before except in his little wicker carriage.

The school-year, against the brevity of which Trustee Wagstaff railed, seemed interminable to Margareth. She longed to devote herself entirely to Rufus.

This was, no doubt, the happiest period of Rufus Roland’s life. All that neighborly kindness, good nursing, cheerfulness, luxuries, could do to give him ease was done. The battle was fought out. By God’s grace he had conquered, although he died. There were no terrors for the future: there was only peace. He was at rest in Christ, his Saviour. The little cottage on the salt marsh was a fragment of Beulah Land, and its outlook was upon the gates of heaven.

With the middle of June the school closed,

and with a sigh of relief Margareth handed Mr. Wagstaff the key. After that she was beside Rufus all the time. Some one lent him a rolling-chair, so that he could be taken out into the sun and watch the full-sailed ships, sometimes fifty at once in sight along the horizon, or the gulls screaming down the sky, white as driven snow against the blue.

And thus the month of June passed in peace and beauty, while Margareth and her brother walked hand in hand in a solemn joy "the downward slope of death."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALL ALONE IN THE NIGHT.

“ And she saw wingèd wonders move within,
And she heard sweet talking, as they meant
To comfort her: they said, ‘ Who comes to-night
Shall certainly some day an entrance win.’ ”

THE heat of early July brought back the “summer guests” to the cottages on the Bluffs. New paint gleamed in the morning sun; the storm doors and windows were off, and freshly-polished glass reflected the glowing rays; the baskets, boxes, tubs, pots, of geraniums, nasturtiums, coleus and other hardy plants were set in order along terraces and porches. The hotel was in full bustle; the band played once a week in the pavilion; the pleasure-boats were let loose from winter captivity, and, gorgeous in new cushions and awnings, floated as gay as a covey of summer ducks on the bay.

Among the rest, the villa of the Denhams aroused from its winter sleep. The white draperies softly filled and floated out the open windows, the balconies were soon decorated with parti-colored rugs and embroidered table-covers. The baggageman delivered trunks and the gro-

cer's van unladed groceries, and for a day or so the rotating lines at the rear of the house bloomed heavily with red-striped and blue-striped blankets under the spell of a high-turbaned black woman.

One day the mail was brought up and delivered to Mrs. Denham as she stood on the veranda, and she sat down there to read it. The letter first opened was from Alex:

“MOTHER BELOVED: We are coming home. When you get this, we shall be near New York, and we will follow our epistle within three or four days. I think my sister has enough of German accent; if not, she is willing to forego being thoroughly accomplished. And here I dare not decry lest I denounce myself as inartistic, but I know where I could find a face more beautiful than any that these old masters painted. In fact, mother dear, it is of no use! I have no whim or passing fancy for Margareth Roland; she is to me the one woman in all the world—at which statement I know you will not take umbrage, and my sister does not hear it. If Margareth had a dozen unfortunate brothers and fifty little stepsisters, I should not let the encumbrance of the entire lot weigh with me against Margareth herself. If she will speak peaceably unto me, I am a happy man. She never did, but she may after due persuasion. I do not

think I should have difficulty in convincing her of my sincerity, but she is the kind of girl who in present circumstances would be likely to consider this a family affair. Therefore, my dear mother, go and negotiate in my behalf. Do your best for me; and if you find there is no prospect there of my happiness, meet us at New York, and we will go into the Adirondacks until in your society I learn to accept my fate quietly. If you are not waiting for us when the steamer gets in, we will come home.

“Your

“ALEX.”

The young man had made himself clear, and his dutiful mother, after the fashion of American parents, began to consider how best he could have his own way. She lifted her eyes and looked across the levels to that cottage on the marshes toward which her son's thoughts were so persistently turning. Across the causeway she saw winding a funeral train; a chill terror struck her heart. What might this be? Luther, the black factotum of Welby Haven, was busy close at hand trimming up her terraces. She called him:

“Luther, whose funeral is that on the causeway?”

“That will be the burying of young Mr. Rufus Roland. You may mind he was one of the

fishermen here for a couple of years, though not born to that line of life. His boat was wrecked last autumn, and he and his sister just missed being drowned. After that he went off, and no one heard of him all winter. Well, along in March, ma'am, he was brought back by about the queerest old lady ever you saw. She wore a yellow-fur cape with nigh a thousand—more or less—tails a-swinging all around it, and she had a big brindle-cat carried in a basket. I don't reckon there was ever a queerer body here in Welby, but I'll make bold to bet, ma'am, there never was one much better—an old friend of the Rolands, as it came out. Seems the young man ran off determined to reform or die, and so it was he has done both, ma'am. He'd rather broke himself up with hard early drinking, and his father before him was worse; so he had turned over a new leaf, when this old lady found him sick and nursed him a while, and brought him here to his sister. Welby Haven folk ain't any small show when any one is sick among them, ma'am; and if Roland had been son to Queen Vic, he couldn't have had better care. The young lady is just a picture and a chapter; she was like an angel to him. They all say he made a most uncommon good end. That little lame man trottin' along ahead of the hearse, ma'am, he's an old preacher that lives betwixt here and the junction; he's been very attentive

to young Roland, and I've heard say he found a great amount of satisfaction in his state of mind. The young man just dropped off beautiful, like going to sleep. Of course, ma'am," continued Luther, taking an argumentative tone and leaning complacently on the handle of his sod-cutter, "everybody allows that it is better to be in heaven than in this world, but I make a point that there is some folks has so poor a chance for getting on well in this world that it is most uncommon good fortune for them to get safe out of it, and into heaven. One of them was young Roland. There's a great many of us inclined to find fault with the ways of Providence, and fancy, if we had the ordering of here a bit and there a bit, we could make things come out pretty well. The trouble, I take it, would be that our bits wouldn't fit the plan of God's providence for the whole, and in our handling the whole wouldn't come out judgematically. I admire to see how well the Lord knows what he is about in managing matters. I mind, ma'am, when this place up here on the Bluffs was laid out by the company, and the surveyors and the landscape-gardeners was here, I, in my private mind, faulted a good deal their style of doing things, and considered that they planted out their boundary-pegs rather permiscuous, and that I could have taken a ten-foot pole an' laid out a settlement to better effect. That was merely because I didn't

know, and I was too narrer-educated a man to appreciate their doings. However, when it was all done, and the houses rose up, and the curves and corners and circles and avenues got clear, I threw up my hat as high as anybody. I reckon that is about what we'll all come to in the next world, only it will be crowns, not hats, that will be flying there."

"Really, Luther, you can give a capital sermon," said Mrs. Denham, withdrawing her eyes from following the funeral procession, which had now wound out of sight.

"I'm an exhorter in my connection," said Luther, with modesty, squaring off the corner of a sod.

"And who are left in that family now, Luther?"

"There ain't much family left," said Luther; "between death and marrying, they're nigh about gone."

"'Marrying'!" cried Mrs. Denham, once more alarmed.

"Yes, ma'am. Pretty nigh a year ago the father, Professor Roland, he got drowned in the ma'sh; then, just after the wreck, the smallest child just died quiet one day, like as she had suddenly remembered it was time for her to go home; and next thing was the step-mother of this young man—widow to the professor, she was—she up and married a farmer

named Green, living over at Gray Point. You'll be surprised, ma'am, at such doings; but when she concluded, she says cool to Miss Roland that she'd take along with her to her new home the oldest of her children—a spry little girl likely to be some help—and Miss Roland should keep the other child, a little fellow with a twist in his back. I heard that Mrs. Falconer said the widder used all her own earnings and a month school-pay of Miss Roland's in fixing herself out, and off she went and never came back since. She hasn't shown no gratitude to Miss Roland, nor ever come to say a word to this poor sick young man, who had give her and her children equal with himself of all he had. She never called even to see her own child that she forsook. I've come across a grist of small little things when digging in the ground, some of 'em no bigger nor a pin's point, but I never did find nothing so small as some folks' souls; and that's what I tells 'em at our chapel when they let the contribution-box go by while they looks at flies on the ceiling. Yes, ma'am, she went flourishing off, and never come back to look after her own feeble child. There's women *and* women in this yere world, that's sure—asking your pardon, ma'am.”

“And the young lady, then, is not married?”

“She married! Law, ma'am! Who is there round here is a fit match for the like of her?”

Mrs. Denham pocketed her letters and went into the house.

“I reckon the madam’s heard tell of company coming,” said the junior servant to the senior. “She told me to leave that lace I was a-doing up, and she made me get out the best toilette-fixin’s and the down quilt and the new lace curtains, and no end of fancy things, and dress up the spare-room. I warn you she was that particular and so right straight ahead with it I haven’t caught my breath this two hours. And now the madam’s dressing; I went there for some thread, and see her things laid out. There’s her best black-silk dress on the bed, and a lace collar and a diamond pin on the dressing-table, and the madam is doing things up in style, whatever she has in mind; and a handsome lady too, when all’s said.”

Thus Mistress Denham was preparing her panoply of state to sally forth as ambassadress extraordinary for her son.

“Whatever she sets hand to she’ll carry out,” said the senior servant to the junior; but madam quietly ate a state supper alone, and the stage came in and brought her no guests.

Then, as the twilight closed, the two maids, sitting on the steps of the back door, beheld their mistress, a cloud of Shetland shawl about her head and shoulders, her rustling black silk gathered up in one shapely old hand, move out

along the sidewalk by the Bluff villas, and then turn down the hill, where millions of daisies gleamed white in the grass; and so she disappeared at a stately pace.

Across the turnpike and upon the causeway marched Madam Denham. Before her shone a low red star or beacon—the firelight from the cottage on the marshes. The door was closed, but the window was open and uncurtained, for the summer night was warm, though for health and cheerfulness Margareth always kept up an evening blaze in her home among the waters.

As Mistress Denham drew near the cottage, through the open window the entire interior was revealed to her as it often had been to her loitering son. Poor and plain, yet was it a home, and not a habitation merely. Death had passed through there of late—an expected guest; and if he had left loneliness, he had left neither wreck nor desolation. All was peaceful, orderly. The large chair by the hearth had a footstool before it and a stand at one side, and on the stand an open book and a jar filled with water-lilies. This was as Rufus had left it when he fell on sleep, and Margareth could not yet disturb it. On the window-sill was a willow work-basket with a child's coat partly finished in it. In the centre of the room was the large table, and on that a pitcher with a vast bouquet of white

daisies; a spreading pyramid of gold and snow, they rose above the bowed head of Margareth. The hour of unutterable loneliness had come to her. Suddenly over her heart had swept the realization of her silent, forsaken lot—that she stood alone to meet the world. Her brother was gone from her: she could not wish him back, but she was left bereaved of all her kindred; and the strong heart yielded in the silence of the night, and over it swept grief like a fathomless and shoreless sea. There was no one near to offer the platitudes of consolation; she could abandon herself for a little while to sorrow—to the accumulated sorrow of years. She had flung her arms upon the table, then clasped her hands and bowed her head upon them; her golden hair, loosened by its own weight, rolled its heavy masses over her arms; and this gold of her hair and the snow of her hands and bent neck lay under the white and gold of the gathered daisies.

Madam Denham marked the abandonment of the strong, beautiful figure in the lines of the black dress; she saw that bending form shaken with the stormy passion of smothered sobs. So young and so forsaken! All the mother-heart was moved within her. She may have, and she may have not, prepared her plea and chosen words for her present mission; at all events, she never used them. She tapped on the door, and,

as her summons was not heard, she opened it and entered.

Hearing a soft footfall, Margareth turned her head, expecting that this might be Mrs. Falconer, and saw instead Mrs. Denham. She had not time to rise or wonder, for the lady bent over her, laid a soft hand on her shoulder and said, "Margareth, my dear girl, come away from this horrible loneliness. Come home with me and be my daughter;" and then, as Margareth lifted her head, Mrs. Denham laid the letter before her on the table.

The girl read it twice. Then she looked up, a rosy color flushing her cheeks.

"Dear child," said Mrs. Denham, "you will not send me to the Adirondacks? You will be my daughter? I offer you a mother's love."

"Some time—perhaps—" began Margareth, with hesitating words.

"Not some time, but *now*. Come! you have lived in the shadows and seen sorrow too long. Come, my child, and we will strive to make you happy."

"You are good—so good!" said Margareth, gently; "but how can I? See, I am not alone." She rose, and Mrs. Denham saw what had been concealed on the other side of the table—the low cradle in which slept Archie.

Mrs. Denham had quite forgotten the child, but as she looked at the pretty little white face

in its peaceful slumber she seemed to see above it in golden letters on the air, "Whoso receiveth one such little one in my name receiveth me."

"Margareth," she said, "I think both my heart and my home are large enough to shelter this little child. We will make an exchange: I give you my son, and you will give this little one to me."

"Then just as you wish it," said Margareth—"some time, after a while, in a few weeks."

"I wish nothing of the kind," said Madam Denham, with placid insistence; "I mean *now*. My home is ready, my heart is ready. I have been alone up there with my maids, but I will be so no longer. There is nothing for you to do but to come back with me *now*. You can take the little one, turn the key in the door and come with me. It is not far; we can take the child easily."

Margareth did not say another word. She rose, covered the fire on the hearth, closed the windows, took the sleeping child in her vigorous young arms, and over the causeway and across the high-road and up the slope of daisies went the two women, from the cottage on the marshes to the cottage on the height.