while talking at the door. Mr. Bradford liked me, I knew, and he had spoken well of me to her. What would come of it all? So, with the same visionary hopefulness that characterized my father, I plunged into a sea of dreams on which I floated over depths paved with treasure, and under skies bright with promise, until Monday morning dawned. When the early breakfast was finished, and my father with unusual fervor of feeling had commended his family and himself to the keeping and the blessing of heaven, we started forth, he and I, hand in hand, with as cheerful anticipations as if we were going to a feast.

CHAPTER II.

I VISIT AN OGRESS AND A GIANT IN THEIR ENCHANTED CASTLE.

"THE MANSION" of Mrs. Sanderson was a long half-mile away from us, situated upon the hill that overlooked the little city. It appeared grand in the distance, and commanded the most charming view of town, meadow and river imaginable. We passed Mr. Bradford's house on the way—a plain, rich, unpretending dwelling—and received from him a hearty good-morning, with kind inquiries for my mother, as he stood in his open doorway, enjoying the fresh morning air. At the window sat a smiling little woman, and, by her side, looking out at me, stood the prettiest little girl I had ever seen. Her raven-black hair was freshly curled, and shone like her raven-black eyes; and both helped to make the simple frock in which she was dressed seem marvelously white. I have pitied my poor little self many times in thinking how far removed from me in condition the petted child seemed that morning, and how unworthy I felt, in my homely clothes, to touch her dainty hand, or even to speak to her. I was fascinated by the vision, but glad to get out of her sight.

On arriving at The Mansion, my father and I walked to the great front-door. There were sleeping lions at the side and there was a rampant lion on the knocker which my father was about to attack when the door swung noiselessly upon its hinges, and we were met upon the threshold by the mistress herself. She looked smaller than ever, shorn of her street costume and her bonnet; and her lips were so thin and her face seemed so full of pain that I wondered whether it were her head or her teeth that ached.

"The repairs that I wish to talk about are at the rear of the house," she said, blocking the way, and with a nod directing my father to that locality. There was no show of courtesy in her words or manner. My father turned away, responding to her bidding, and still maintaining his hold upon my hand.

"Arthur," said she, "come in here."

I looked up questioningly into my father's face, and saw that it was clouded. He relinquished my hand, and said: "Go with the lady."

She took me into a little library, and, pointing me to a chair, said: "Sit there until I come back. Don't stir, or touch anything."

I felt, when she left me, as if there were enough of force in her command to paralyze me for a thousand years. I hardly dared to breathe. Still my young eyes were active, and were quickly engaged in taking an inventory of the apartment, and of such rooms as I could look into through the open doors. I was conscious at once that I was looking upon nothing that was new. Everything was faded and dark and old, except those things that care could keep bright. The large brass andirons in the fireplace, and the silver candlesticks on the mantel-tree were as brilliant as when they were new. So perfect was the order of the apartment—so evidently had every article of furniture and every little ornament been adjusted to its place and its relations—that, after the first ten minutes of my observation, I could have detected any change as quickly as Mrs. Sanderson herself.

Through a considerable passage, with an open door at either end, I saw on the wall of the long dining-room a painted portrait of a lad, older than I and very handsome. I longed to go nearer to it, but the prohibition withheld me. In truth, I forgot all else about me in my curiosity concerning it—forgot even where I was—yet I failed at last to carry away any impression of it that my memory could recall at will.

It may have been half an hour—it may have been an hour—that Mrs. Sanderson was out of the room, engaged with my

father. It seemed a long time that I had been left when she returned.

"Have you moved, or touched anything?" she inquired.

"No, ma'am."

"Are you tired?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What would you like to do?"

"I should like to go nearer to the picture of the beautiful little boy in that room," I answered, pointing to it.

She crossed the room at once and closed the door. Then she came back to me and said with a voice that trembled: "You must not see that picture, and you must never ask me anything about it."

"Then," I said, "I should like to go out where my father is at work."

"Your father is busy. He is at work for me, and I do not wish to have him disturbed," she responded.

"Then I should like a book," I said.

She went to a little case of shelves on the opposite side of the room, and took down one book after another, and looked, not at the contents, but at the fly-leaf of each, where the name of the owner is usually inscribed. At last she found one that apparently suited her, and came and sat down by me, holding it in her lap. She looked at me curiously, and then said: "What do you expect to make of yourself, boy? What do you expect to be?"

"A man," I answered.

"Do you? That is a great deal to expect."

"Is it harder to be a man than it is to be a woman?" I inquired.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because it is," she replied almost snappishly.

"A woman isn't so large," I responded, as if that statement might contain a helpful suggestion.

She smiled faintly, and then her face grew stern and sad; and

she seemed to look at something far off. At length she turned to me and said: "You are sure you will never be a drunkard?"

"Never," I replied.

"Nor a gambler?"

"I don't know what a gambler is."

"Do you think you could ever become a disobedient, ungrateful wretch, child?" she continued.

I do not know where my responding words or my impulse to utter them came from: probably from some romantic passage that I had read, coupled with the conversations I had recently heard in my home; but I rose upon my feet, and with real feeling, though with abundant mock-heroism in the seeming, I said: "Madame, I am a Bonnicastle!"

She did not smile, as I do, recalling the incident, but she patted me on the head with the first show of affectionate regard. She let her hand rest there while her eyes looked far off again; and I knew she was thinking of things with which I could have no part.

"Do you think you could love me, Arthur?" she said, looking me in the eyes.

"I don't know," I replied, "but I think I could love anybody who loved me."

"That's true, that's true," she said sadly; and then she added: "Would you like to live here with me?"

"I don't think I would," I answered frankly.

"Why?"

"Because it is so still, and everything is so nice, and my father and mother would not be here, and I should have nobody to play with," I replied.

"But you would have a large room, and plenty to eat and good clothes to wear," she said, looking down upon my humble garments.

"Should I have this house when you get through with it?" I inquired.

"Then you would like it without me in it, would you?" she said, with a smile which she could not repress.

"I should think it would be a very good house for a man to live in," I replied, evading her question.

"But you would be alone."

"Oh no!" I said, "I should have a wife and children."

"Humph!" she exclaimed, giving her head a little toss and mine a little rap as she removed her hand, "you will be a man, I guess, fast enough!"

She sat a moment in silence, looking at me, and then she handed me the book she held, and went out of the room again to see my father at his work. It was a book full of rude pictures and uninteresting text, and its attractions had long been exhausted when she returned, flushed and nervous. I learned afterwards that she had had a long argument with my father about the proper way of executing the job she had given him.

My father had presumed upon his knowledge of his craft to suggest that her way of doing the work was not the right way; and she had insisted that the work must be done in her way or not done at all. Those who worked for her were to obey her will. She assumed all knowledge of everything relating to herself and her possessions, and permitted neither argument nor opposition; and when my father convinced her reason that she had erred, she was only fixed thereby in her error. I knew that something had gone wrong, and I longed to see my father, but I did not dare to say anything about it.

How the morning wore away I do not remember. She led me in a dreary ramble through the rooms of the large old house, and we had a good deal of idle talk that led to nothing. She chilled and repressed me. I felt that I was not myself,—that her will overshadowed me. She called nothing out of me that interested her. I remember thinking how different she was from Mr. Bradford, whose presence made me feel that I was in a large place, and stirred me to think and talk.

At noon the dinner-bell rang, and she bade me go with her to the dining-room. I told her my father had brought dinner for me, and I would like to eat with him. I longed to get out of her presence, but she insisted that I must eat with her

and there was no escape. As we entered the dining-room, I looked at once for my picture, but it was gone. In its place was a square area of unfaded wall, where it had hung for many years. I knew it had been removed because I wished to see it and was curious in regard to it. The spot where it hung had a fascination for me, and many times my eyes went up to it, as if that which had so strangely vanished might as strangely reappear.

"Keep your eyes at home," said my snappish little hostess, who had placed me, not at her side, but *vis à vis;* so afterward, when they were not glued to my plate, or were not watching the movements of the old man-servant whom I had previously seen driving his mistress's chaise, they were fixed on her.

I could not but feel that "Jenks," as she called him, disliked me. I was an intruder, and had no right to be at Madame's table. When he handed me anything at the lady's bidding, he bent down toward me, and uttered something between growling and muttering. I had no doubt then that he would have torn me limb from limb if he could. I found afterward that growling and muttering were the habit of his life. In the stable he growled and muttered at the horse. In the garden, he growled and muttered at the weeds. Blacking his mistress's shoes, he growled and muttered, and turned them over and over, as if he were determining whether to begin to eat them at the toe or the heel. If he sharpened the lady's carving-knife, he growled as if he were sharpening his own teeth. I suppose she had become used to it, and did not notice it; but he impressed me at first as a savage monster.

I was conscious during the dinner, to which, notwithstanding all the disturbing and depressing influences, I did full justice, that I was closely observed by my hostess; for she freely undertook to criticise my habits, and to lay down rules for my conduct at the table. After every remark, Jenks growled and muttered a hoarse response.

Toward the close of the meal there was a long silence, and I became very much absorbed in my thoughts and fancies

My hostess observed that something new had entered my mind—for her apprehensions were very quick—and said abruptly: "Boy, what are you thinking about?"

I blushed and replied that I would rather not tell.

"Tell me at once," she commanded.

I obeyed with great reluctance, but her expectant eye was upon me, and there was no escape.

"I was thinking," I said, "that I was confined in an enchanted castle where a little ogress lived with a gray-headed giant. One day she invited me to dinner, and she spoke very cross to me, and the gray-headed giant growled always when he came near me, as if he wanted to eat me; but I couldn't stir from my seat to get away from him. Then I heard a voice outside of the castle walls that sounded like my father's, only it was a great way off, and it said:

'Come, little boy, to me,
On the back of a bumble-bee.'

Then I tried to get out of my chair, but I couldn't. So I clapped my hands three times, and said: 'Castle, castle, Bonnicastle!' and the little ogress flew out of the window on a broomstick, and I jumped up and seized the carving-knife and slew the gray-headed giant, and pitched him down cellar with the fork. Then the doors flew open, and I went out to see my father, and he took me home in a gold chaise with a black horse as big as an elephant."

I could not tell whether amazement or amusement prevailed in the expression of the face of my little hostess, as I proceeded with the revelation of my fancies. I think her first impression was that I was insane, or that my recent fall had in some way injured my brain, or possibly that fever was coming on, for she said, with real concern in her voice: "Child, are you sure you are quite well?"

"Very well, I thank you, ma'am," I replied, after the formula in which I had been patiently instructed.

Jenks growled and muttered, but as I looked into his face

I was sure I caught the slightest twinkle in his little gray eyes. At any rate, I lost all fear of him from that moment.

"Jenks," said the lady, "take this boy to his father, and tell him I think he had better send him home. If it is necessary, you can go with him."

As I rose from the table, I remembered the directions my mother had given me in the morning, and my tongue being relieved from its spell of silence, I went around to Mrs. Sanderson, and thanked her for her invitation, and formally gave her my hand, to take leave of her. I am sure the lady was surprised not only by the courtesy, but by the manner in which it was rendered; for she detained my hand, and said, in a voice quite low and almost tender in its tone: "You do not think me a real ogress, do you?"

"Oh no!" I replied, "I think you are a good woman, only you are not very much like my mother. You don't seem used to little boys: you never had any, perhaps?"

Jenks overheard me, pausing in his work of clearing the table, and growled.

"Jenks, go out," said Mrs. Sanderson, and he retired to the kitchen, muttering as he went.

As I uttered my question, I looked involuntarily at the vacant spot upon the wall, and although she said nothing as I turned back to her, I saw that her face was full of pain.

"I beg your pardon," I said, in simplicity and earnestness My quick sense of what was passing in her mind evidently touched her, for she put her arm around me, and drew me close to her side. I had unconsciously uncovered an old fountain of bitterness, and as she held me she said, "Would you like to kiss an old lady?"

I laughed, and said, "Yes, if she would like to kiss a boy."

She strained me to her breast. I knew that my fresh, boyish lips were sweet to hers, and I knew afterwards that they were the first she had pressed for a quarter of a century. It seemed a long time that she permitted her head to rest upon my shoulder, for it quite embarrassed me. She released me at length,

for Jenks began to fumble at the door, to announce that he was about to enter. Before he opened it, she said quickly: "I shall see you again; I am going to have a talk with your father."

During the closing passages of our interview, my feelings towards Mrs. Sanderson had undergone a most unexpected change. My heart was full of pity for her, and I was conscious that for some reason which I did not know she had a special regard for me. When a strong nature grows tender, it possesses the most fascinating influence in the world. When a powerful will bends to a child, and undertakes to win that which it cannot command, there are very few natures that can withstand it. I do not care to ask how much of art there may have been in Mrs. Sanderson's caresses, but she undoubtedly saw that there was nothing to be made of me without them. Whether she felt little or much, she was determined to win me to her will; and from that moment to this, I have felt her influence upon my life. She had a way of assuming superiority to everybody—of appearing to be wiser than everybody else, of finding everybody's weak point, and exposing it, that made her seem to be one whose word was always to be taken, and whose opinion was always to have precedence. It was in this way, in my subsequent intercourse with her, that she exposed to me the weaknesses of my parents, and undermined my confidence in my friends, and showed me how my loves were misplaced, and almost absorbed me into herself. On the day of my visit to her, she studied me very thoroughly, and learned the secret of managing me. I think she harmed me, and that but for the corrective influences to which I was subsequently exposed, she would well-nigh have ruined me. It is a curse to any child to have his whole personality absorbed by a foreign will,—to take love, law and life from one who renders all with design, in the accomplishment of a purpose. She could not destroy my love for my father and mother, but she made me half ashamed of them. She discovered in some way my admiration of Mr. Bradford, and managed in her own way to modify it. Thus it was

with every acquaintance, until, at last, she made herself to me the pivotal point on which the world around her turned.

As I left her, Jenks took me by the hand, and led me out, with the low rumble in his throat and the mangled words between his teeth which were intended to indicate to Mrs. Sanderson that he did not approve of boys at all. As soon, however, as the door was placed between us and the lady, the rumble in his throat was changed to a chuckle. Jenks was not given to words, but he was helplessly and hopelessly under Mrs. Sanderson's thumb, and all his growling and muttering were a pretence. He would not have dared to utter an opinion in her presence, or express a wish. He had comprehended my story of the ogress and the giant, and as it bore rather harder upon the ogress than it did upon the giant, he was in great good humor.

He squeezed my hand and shook me around in what he intended to be an affectionate and approving way, and then gave me a large russet apple, which he drew from a closet in the carriage-house. Not until he had placed several walls between himself and his mistress did he venture to speak.

"Well, you've said it, little fellow, that's a fact."

"Said what?" I inquired.

"You've called the old woman an ogress, he! he! he! and that's just what she is, he! he! he! How did you dare to do such a thing?"

"She made me," I answered. "I did not wish to tell the story."

"That's what she always does," said Jenks. "She always makes people do what they don't want to do. Don't you ever tell her what I say, but the fact is I'm going to leave. She'll wake up some morning and call Jenks, and Jenks won't come! Jenks won't be here! Jenks will be far, far away!"

His last phrase was intended undoubtedly to act upon my boyish imagination, and I asked him with some concern whither he would go.

"I shall plough the sea," said Jenks. "You will find no

Jenks here and no russet apple when you come again. I shall be on the billow. Now mind you don't tell her"—tossing a nod toward the house over his left shoulder—"for that would spoil it all."

I promised him that I would hold the matter a profound secret, although I was conscious that I was not quite loyal to my new friend in keeping from her the intelligence that her servant was about to leave The Mansion for a career upon the ocean

"Here's your boy," said Jenks, leading me at last to my father. "Mrs. Sanderson thinks you had better send him home, and says I can go with him if he cannot find the way alone."

"I'm very much obliged to Mrs. Sanderson," said my father with a flush on his face, "but I will take care of my boy myself. He will go home when I do."

Jenks chuckled again. He was delighted with anything that crossed the will of his mistress. As he turned away, I said: "Good-by, Mr. Jenks, I hope you won't be very sea-sick."

This was quite too much for the little old man. He had made a small boy believe that he was going away, and that he was going to sea; and he returned to the house so much delighted with himself that he chuckled all the way, and even kicked at a stray chicken that intercepted his progress.

During the remainder of the day I amused myself with watching my father at his work. I was anxious to tell him of all that had happened in the house, but he bade me wait until his work was done. I had been accustomed to watch my father's face, and to detect upon it the expression of all his moods and feelings; and I knew that afternoon that he was passing through a great trial. Once during the afternoon Jenks came out of the house with another apple; and while he kept one eye on the windows he beckoned to me and I went to him. Placing the apple in my hand, he said: "Far, far away, on the billow! Good-by." Not expecting to meet him again, I was much inclined to sadness, but as he did not seem to be very much depressed, I spared my sympathy, and heartily bade him

"good luck." So the stupid old servant had had his practice upon the boy, and was happy in the lie that he had passed upon him.

There are boys who seem to be a source of temptation to every man and woman who comes in contact with them. The temptation to impress them, or to excite them to free and characteristic expression, seems quite irresistible. Everybody tries to make them believe something, or to make them say something. I seemed to be one of them. Everybody tried either to make me talk and give expression to my fancies, or to make me believe things that they knew to be false. They practiced upon my credulity, my sympathy, and my imagination for amusement. Even my parents smiled upon my efforts at invention, until I found that they were more interested in my lies than in my truth. The consequence of it all was a disposition to represent every occurrence of my life in false colors. The simplest incident became an interesting adventure; the most common-place act, a heroic achievement. With a conscience so tender that the smallest theft would have made me utterly wretched, I could lie by the hour without compunction. My father and mother had no idea of the injury they were doing me, and whenever they realized, as they sometimes did, that they could not depend upon my word, they were sadly puzzled.

When my father finished his work for the day, and with my hand in his I set out for home, it may readily be imagined that I had a good deal to tell. I not only told of all that I had seen, but I represented as actual all that had been suggested. Such wonderful rooms and dismal passages and marvelous pictures and services of silver and gold and expansive mirrors as I had seen! Such viands as I had tasted—such fruit as I had eaten! And my honest father received all the marvels with hardly a question, and, after him, my mother and the children. I remember few of the particulars, except that the picture of the boy came and went upon the wall of the dining-room as if by magic, and that Mrs. Sanderson wished to have me live with

her that I might become her heir. The last statement my father examined with some care. Indeed, I was obliged to tell exactly what was said on the subject, and he learned that, while the lady wished me to live with her, the matter of inheritance had not been suggested by anybody but myself.