

neath them. He knew they were not actuated by manly aims, and that they had no sympathy with those who were thus actuated. They studied no more than was necessary to avoid disgrace. They intended to have an easy time. They were thoroughly good-natured among themselves, laughed freely about professors and tutors, took a very superficial view of life, and seemed to regard the college as a mill through which it was necessary to pass, or a waiting-place in which it was considered the proper thing to stop until their beards should mature.

The society of these men had no bad effect upon me, or none perceptible to myself for a long time. Braced by them as I was, Mr. Mullens made no headway against me; and I came at last to feel that my position was secure. With the corrective of Henry's society and example, and with the habit of daily devotion unimpaired, I went on for months with a measurable degree of satisfaction to myself. Still I was conscious of a gradually lowering tone of feeling. By listening to the utterance of careless words and worldly sentiments from my new companions, I came to look leniently upon many things and upon many men once abhorrent to me. Unconsciously at the time, I tried to bring my Christianity into a compromise with worldliness, and to sacrifice my scruples of conscience to what seemed to be the demands of social usage. I had found the temptation for which I had sought so long, and which had so long sought without finding me, but alas! I did not recognize it when it came.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### MY FIRST VISIT TO NEW YORK, AND MY FIRST GLASS OF WINE.

RELYING upon my new associations for the preservation of my social position, now that my history had become known in the college, it was necessary for me to be seen occasionally with the set to which I had been admitted and welcomed. This apparent necessity not unfrequently led me to their rooms, in which there were occasional gatherings of the fellows, and in one or two of which a surreptitious bottle of wine was indulged in. Of the wine I steadily refused to be a partaker, and it was never urged upon me but once, when Livingston interposed, and said I should act my own pleasure. This made the attempt to carry on my double life easier, and saved me from being scared away from it. There was no carousing and no drunkenness—nothing to offend, in those modest symposia—and they came at last to wear a very harmless look to me, associated as they were with good fellowship and hospitality.

Walking one day with Livingston, who fancied me and liked to have me with him, he said: "Bonnicastle, you ought to see more of the world. You've been cooped up all your life, and are as innocent as a chicken."

"You wouldn't have me anything but innocent would you?" I said laughing.

"Not a bit of it. I like a clean fellow like you, but you must see something, some time."

"There'll be time enough for that when I get through study," I responded.

"Yes, I suppose so," he said, "but, my boy, I've taken it into my head to introduce you to New York life. I would like to show you my mother and sisters and my five hundred

friends. I want to have you see where I live and how I live, and get a taste of my sort of life. Bradford and your aunt are all very well, I dare say, but they are a little old-fashioned, I fancy. Come, now, don't they bore you?"

"No, they don't," I replied heartily. "The best friends I have in the world are in Bradford, and I am more anxious to please and satisfy them than I can tell you. They are very fond of me, and that goes a great way with such a fellow as I am."

"Oh, I understand that," said Livingston, "but I am fond of you too, and, what's more, you must go home with me next Christmas, for I shall leave college when another summer comes, and that will be the last of me, so far as you are concerned. Now you must make that little arrangement with your aunt. You can tell her what a splendid fellow I am, and humbug the old lady in any harmless way you choose; but the thing must be done."

The project, to tell the truth, set my heart bounding with a keen anticipation of delight. Livingston was the first New York friend I had made who seemed to be worth the making. To be received into his family and introduced to the acquaintance of his friends seemed to me to be the best opportunity possible for seeing the city on its better side. I was sure that he would not willingly lead me into wrong-doing. He had always forborne any criticism of my conscientious scruples. So I set myself at work to win Mrs. Sanderson's consent to the visit. She had become increasingly fond of me, and greedy of my presence and society with her increasing age, and I knew it would be an act of self-denial for her to grant my request. However, under my eloquent representations of the desirableness of the visit, on social grounds, she was persuaded, and I had the pleasure of reporting her consent to Livingston.

I pass over the events of the swift months that made up the record of my first year and of the second autumn of my college life, mentioning only the facts that I maintained a respectable position in my class without excellence, and that I visited home twice. Everything went on well in my aunt's family

She retained the health she had regained; and Mrs. Belden had become, as her helper and companion, everything she had anticipated. She had taken upon herself much of the work I had learned to do, and, so far as I could see, the family life was harmonious and happy.

My vanity was piqued by the reflection that Henry had achieved better progress than I, and was much more generally respected. He had gradually made himself a social center without the effort to do so, and had pushed his way by sterling work and worth. Nothing of this, however, was known in Bradford, and we were received with equal consideration by all our friends.

For months the projected holiday visit to New York had shone before me as a glittering goal; and when at last, on a sparkling December morning, I found myself with Livingston dashing over the blue waters of the Sound toward the great city, my heart bounded with pleasure. Had I been a winged spirit, about to explore a new star, I could not have felt more buoyantly expectant. Livingston was as delighted as myself, for he was sympathetic with me, and anticipated great enjoyment in being the cup-bearer at this new feast of my life.

We passed Hellgate, we slid by the sunny islands, we approached the gray-blue cloud pierced by a hundred shadowy spires under which the city lay. Steamers pushed here and there, forests of masts bristled in the distance, asthmatic little tugs were towing great ships seaward, ferry-boats crowded with men reeled out from their docks and flew in every direction, and a weather-beaten, black ship, crowded with immigrants, cheered us as we rushed by them. As far as the eye could see, down the river and out upon the bay, all was life, large and abounding. My heart swelled within me as I gazed upon the splendid spectacle, and in a moment, my past life and all that was behind me were dwarfed and insignificant.

As we approached the wharf, we saw among the assemblage of hacks and their drivers—drivers who with frantic whips endeavored to attract our attention—a plain, shining carriage,

with a coachman and footman in livery on the box. The men saw us, and raised their hats. The footman jumped from his place as we touched the wharf, and, relieved by him of our satchels, we quietly walked through the boisterous crowd, entered the coach, and slowly took our way along the busy streets. To be thus shut in behind the cleanest of cut-glass, to recline upon the most luxurious upholstery, to be taken care of and shielded from all the roughness of that tumultuous out-door world, to be lifted out of the harsh necessities that made that world forbidding, to feel that I was a favored child of fortune, filled me with a strange, selfish delight. It was like entering upon the realization of a great, sweet dream.

Livingston watched my face with much secret pleasure, I do not doubt, but he said little, except to point out to me the more notable edifices on the route. I was in a city of palaces—warehouses that were the homes of mighty commerce and dwellings that spoke of marvelous wealth. Beautiful women, wrapped in costly furs, swept along the pavement, or peered forth from the windows of carriages like our own; shops were in their holiday attire and crowded with every conceivable article of luxury and taste, and the evidences of money, money, money, pressed upon me from every side. My love of beautiful things and of beautiful life—life relieved of all its homely details and necessities—life that came through the thoughtful and skillful ministry of others—life that commanded what it wanted with the waving of a hand or the breathing of a word—life that looked down upon all other life and looked up to none—my love of this life, always in me, and more and more developed by the circumstances which surrounded me, was stimulated and gratified beyond measure.

At length we drew up to a splendid house in a fashionable quarter of the city. The footman opened the door in a twinkling, and we ran up the broad steps to a landing at which an eager mother waited. Smothered with welcoming kisses from her and his sisters, Livingston could not immediately present me, and Mrs. Livingston saved him the trouble by calling my

name and taking my hand with a dignified cordiality which charmed me. The daughters, three in number, were shyer, but no less hearty in their greeting than their mother. Two of them were young ladies, and the third was evidently a school-girl who had come home to spend the holidays.

Livingston and I soon mounted to our room, but in the brief moments of our pause in the library and our passage through the hall my eyes had been busy, and had taken in by hurried glances the beautiful appointments of my friend's home. It was as charming as good taste could make it, with unlimited wealth at command. The large mirrors, the exquisite paintings, the luxurious furniture, the rich carvings, the objects of art and *vertu*, gathered from all lands, and grouped with faultless tact and judgment, the carpets into which the foot sank as into a close-cropped lawn, the artistic forms of every article of service and convenience, all combined to make an interior that was essentially a poem. I had never before seen such a house, and when I looked upon its graceful and gracious keepers, and received their gentle courtesies, I went up-stairs with head and heart and sense as truly intoxicated as if I had been mastered by music, or eloquence, or song.

At the dinner-table, for which we made a careful toilet, all these impressions were confirmed or heightened. The ladies were exquisitely dressed, the service was the perfection of quiet and thoughtful ceremony, the cooking was French, the china and glass were objects of artistic study in their forms and decorations, the choicest flowers gathered from a conservatory which opened into the dining-room, breathed a delicate perfume, and all the materials and ministries of the meal were wrapped in an atmosphere of happy leisure. Livingston was evidently a favorite and pet of the family, and as he had come back to his home from another sphere and experience of life, the conversation was surrendered to him. Into this conversation he adroitly drew me, and under the grateful excitements of the hour I talked as I had never talked before. The ladies flattered me by their attention and applause, and nothing occurred to

dampen my spirits until, at the dessert, Mrs. Livingston begged the pleasure of drinking a glass of wine with me.

Throughout the dinner I had declined the wine that had been proffered with every course. It was quietly done, with only a motion of the hand to indicate refusal, and I do not think the family had noticed that I had not taken my wine with themselves. Now the case was different. A lady whom I honored, whom I desired to please, who was doing her best to honor and please me—my friend's mother at her own table—offered what she intended to be a special honor. My face flamed with embarrassment, I stammered out some sort of apology, and declined.

"Now, mother, you really must not do anything of that sort," said Livingston, "unless you wish to drive Bonnicastle out of the house. I meant to have told you. It's one of the things I like in him, for it shows that he's clean and plucky."

"But only one little glass, you know—just a sip, to celebrate the fact that we like one another," said Mrs. Livingston, with an encouraging smile.

But I did not drink. Livingston still interposed, and, although the family detected the disturbed condition of my feelings, and did what they could to restore my equanimity, I felt that my little scruple had been a discord in the music of the feast.

Mr. Livingston, the head of the house, had not yet shown himself. His wife regretted his absence, or said she regretted it, but he had some special reason for dining at his club that day; and I may as well say that that red-faced gentleman seemed to have a special reason for dining at his club nearly every day while I remained in New York, although he consented to get boozey at his own table on Christmas.

We had delightful music in the evening, and my eyes were feasted with pictures and statuary and the *bric-à-brac* gathered in long foreign travel; but when I retired for the night I was in no mood for devotion, and I found myself quarreling with the scruple which had prevented me from accepting the special friendly courtesy of my hostess at dinner.

Wine seemed to be the natural attendant upon this high and beautiful life. It was the most delicate and costly language in which hospitality could speak. There were ladies before me, old and young, who took it without a thought of wrong or of harm. Was there any wrong or harm in it? Was my objection to it born of a narrow education, or an austere view of life, or of prejudices that were essentially vulgar? One thing I saw very plainly, viz., that the practice of total abstinence in the society and surroundings which I most courted would make me uncomfortably singular, and, what was most distressing to me, suggest the vulgar rusticity of my associations.

From my childhood wine and strong drink had been represented to me to be the very poison on which vice and immorality lived and thrived. My father had a hatred of them which no words could express. They were the devil's own instruments for the destruction of the souls and lives of men. I was bred to this belief and opinion. Mr. Bradford had warned me against the temptation to drink, in whatever form it might present itself. Mr. Bird was a sworn foe to all that had the power to intoxicate. When I went away from home, it was with a determination, entered into and confirmed upon my knees, that I would neither taste nor handle the seductive draught which had brought ruin to such multitudes of young men.

Yet I lay for hours that first night in my friend's home, while he was quietly sleeping, debating the question whether, in the new and unlooked-for circumstances in which I found myself, I should yield my scruples, and thus bring myself into harmony with the life that had so many charms for me. Then my imagination went forward into the beautiful possibilities of my future life in The Mansion, with the grand old house refitted and refurnished, with its service enlarged and refined, with a graceful young figure occupying Mrs. Sanderson's place, and with all the delights around me that eye and ear could covet, and taste devise and gather.

In fancies like these I found my scruples fading away, and those manly impulses and ambitions which had moved me

mightily at first, but which had stirred me less and less with the advancing months, almost extinguished. I was less interested in what I should do to make myself a man, with power and influence upon those around me, than with what I should enjoy. One turn of the kaleidoscope had changed the vision from a mass of plain and soberly tinted crystals to a galaxy of brilliants, which enchained and enchanted me.

I slid at last from fancies into dreams. Beautiful maidens with yellow hair and sweeping robes moved through grand saloons, pausing at harp and piano to flood the air with the rain of heavenly music; stately dames bent to me with flattering words; groups in marble wreathed their snowy arms against a background of flowering greenery; gilded chandeliers blazed through screens of prismatic crystal; fountains sang and splashed and sparkled, yet all the time there was a dread of some lurking presence—some serpent that was about to leap and grasp me in its coils—some gorgon that would show his grinning head behind the forms of beauty that captivated my senses—some impersonated terror that by the shake of its finger or the utterance of a dreadful word would shatter the beautiful world around me into fragments, or scorch it into ashes.

I woke the next morning unrefreshed and unhappy. I woke with that feeling of weariness which comes to every man who tampers with his convictions, and feels that he has lost something that has been a cherished part of himself. This feeling wore away as I heard the roar of carriages through the streets, and realized the novelty of the scenes around me. Livingston was merry, and at the breakfast table, which was crowned with flowers and Christmas gifts, the trials of the previous night were all forgotten.

The Livingstons were Episcopalians—the one Protestant sect which in those days made much of Christmas. We all attended their church, and for the first time in my life I witnessed its beautiful ritual. The music, prepared with great care for the occasion, was more impressive than any I had

ever heard. My æsthetic nature was charmed. Everything seemed to harmonize with the order and the appointments of the house I had just left. And there was my stately hostess, with her lovely daughters, kneeling and devoutly responding—she who had offered and they who had drunk without offense to their consciences the wine which I, no better than they, had refused. They could be Christians and drink wine, and why not I? It must be all a matter of education. High life could be devoutly religious life, and religious life was not harmed by wine. My conscience had received its salvo, and oh, pitiful, recreant coward that I was, I was ready to be tempted!

The Christmas dinner brought the temptation. Mr. Livingston was at home, and presided at his table. He had broached a particularly old and choice bottle of wine for the occasion, and would beg the pleasure of drinking with the young men. And the young men drank with him, and both had the dishonor of seeing him stupid and silly before he left the board. I did not look at Mrs. Livingston during the dinner. I had refused to drink with her the day before, and I had fallen from my resolution. The wine I drank did not go down to warm and stimulate the sources of my life, nor did it rise and spread confusion through my brain, but it burned in my conscience as if a torch, dipped in some liquid hell, had been tossed there.

It was a special occasion—this was what I whispered to my conscience—this was the breath that I breathed a hundred times into it to quench the hissing torture. It was a special occasion. What was I, to stand before these lovely Christian women with an assumption of superior virtue, and a rebuke of their habits and indulgences? I did not want the wine; I did not wish to drink again; and thus the fire gradually died away. I was left, however, with the uncomfortable consciousness that I had in no degree raised myself in the estimation of the family. They had witnessed the sacrifice of a scruple and an indication of my weakness. Livingston, I knew, felt sadly about it. It had brought me nothing that I desired or expected.

The days between Christmas and New Year's were packed

with a thousand pleasures. A party was gathered for us in which I was presented to many beautiful girls and their stylish brothers. We visited the theaters, we were invited everywhere, and we often attended as many as two or three assemblies in an evening. The days and nights were a continued round of social pleasures, and we lived in a whirl of excitement. There was no time for thought, and with me, at least, no desire for it.

But the time flew away until we waited only the excitements of New Year's Day to close our vacation, and return to the quiet life we had left under the elms of New Haven. That day was a memorable one to me and demands a chapter for its record.

## CHAPTER XV.

### I GO OUT TO MAKE NEW YEAR'S CALLS AND RETURN IN DISGRACE.

NEW YEAR'S morning dawned bright and cold. "A happy New Year to you!" shouted Livingston from his bed. The call woke me from a heavy slumber into delightful anticipations, and the realization of a great joy in living, such as comes only to youth—an exulting, superabounding sense of vitality that care and age never know.

We rose and dressed ourselves with scrupulous pains-taking for calls. On descending to the breakfast-room, we found the young ladies quite as excited as ourselves. They had prepared a little book in which to keep a record of the calls they expected to receive during the day, for, according to the universal custom, they were to keep open house. The carriage was to be at the disposal of my friend and myself, and we were as ambitious concerning the amount of courtesy to be shown as the young ladies were touching the amount to be received. We intended, before bedtime, to present our New Year's greetings to every lady we had met during the week.

Before we left the house, I saw what preparations had been made for the hospitable reception of visitors. Among them stood a row of wine bottles and decanters. The view saddened me. Although I had not tasted wine since "the special occasion," my conscience had not ceased to remind me, though with weakened sting, that I had sacrificed a conscientious scruple and broken a promise. I could in no way rid myself of the sense of having been wounded, stained, impoverished. I had ceased to be what I had been. I had engaged in no debauch, I had developed no appetite, I was not in love with my