

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### HENRY BECOMES A GUEST AT THE MANSION BY FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

It was natural that the first business which presented itself to be done after the departure of Mrs. Sanderson, should be the reinstatement of my social relations with the Bradfords, yet how it could be effected without an invitation from them I could not imagine. I knew that they were all at home, and that Henry and Claire had called upon them. Day after day passed, however, and I heard nothing from them. The time began to drag heavily on my idle hands, when, one pleasant evening, Mr. Bradford made his appearance at The Mansion. I had determined upon the course to be pursued whenever I should meet him, and after some common-place conversation, I said to him, with all my old frankness, that I wished to open my heart to him.

"I cannot hide from myself the fact," I said, "that I am in disgrace with you and your family. Please tell me what I can do to atone for a past for which I can make no apology. Do you wish to see me at your house again? Am I to be shut out from your family, and shut up here in a palace which your proscription will make a prison? If I cannot have the respect of those whom I love best, I may as well die."

The tears filled my eyes, and he could have had no doubt as to the genuineness of my emotion, though he made no immediate reply. He looked at me gravely, and hesitated as if he were puzzled as to the best way to treat me.

At length he said: "Well, Arthur, I am glad you have got as far as this—that you have discovered that money cannot buy everything, and that there are things in the world so much more

precious than money, that money itself is good for nothing without them. It is well, at least, to have learned so much, but the question with me is: how far will this conviction be permitted to take practical hold of your life? What are your plans? What do you propose to do to redeem yourself?"

"I will do anything," I answered warmly and impulsively.

"That is very indefinite," he responded, "and if you have no plans there is no use in our talking further upon the subject."

"What would you have me do?" I inquired, with a feeling that he was wronging me.

"Nothing—certainly nothing that is not born of a principle. If there is no higher purpose in you than that of regaining the good opinion of your friends and neighbors, you will do nothing. When you wish to become a man for manhood's sake, your purpose of life and work will come, and it will be a worthy one. When your life proceeds from a right principle, you will secure the respect of everybody, though you will care very little about it—certainly much less than you care now. My approval will avail little; you have always had my love and my faith in your ability to redeem yourself. As for my home it is always open to you, and there is no event that would make it brighter for me than to see you making a man's use of your splendid opportunities."

We had further talk, but it was not of a character to reassure me, for I was conscious that I lacked the one thing which he deemed essential to my improvement. Wealth, with its immunities and delights, had debauched me, and though I craved the good opinion of the Bradfords, it was largely because I had associated Millie with my future. It was my selfishness and my natural love of approbation that lay at the bottom of it all; and as soon as I comprehended myself I saw that Mr. Bradford understood me. He had studied me through and through, and had ceased to entertain any hope of improvement except through a change of circumstances.

As I went to the door with him, and looked out into the

night, two dark figures were visible in the middle of the road. They were standing entirely still when the door was opened, for the light from the hall revealed them. They immediately moved on, but the sight of them arrested Mr. Bradford on the step. When they had passed beyond hearing, he turned to me and, in a low voice, said: "Look to all your fastenings to night. There is a gang of suspicious fellows about town, and already two or three burglaries have been committed. There may be no danger, but it is well to be on your guard."

Though I was naturally nervous and easily excited in my imagination, I was by no means deficient in physical courage, and no child in physical prowess. I was not afraid of anything I could see; but the thought of a night-visitation from ruffians was quite enough to keep me awake, particularly as I could not but be aware that The Mansion held much that was valuable and portable, and that I was practically alone. Mr. Bradford's caution was quite enough to put all my senses on tension and destroy my power to sleep. That there were men about the house in the night I had evidence enough, both while I lay listening, and, on the next morning, when I went into the garden, where they had walked across the flower-beds.

I called at the Bradfords' the next day, meeting no one, however, save Mr. Bradford, and reported what I had heard and seen. He looked grave, and while we were speaking a neighbor entered who reported two burglaries which had occurred on the previous night, one of them at a house beyond The Mansion.

"I shall spend the night in the streets," said Mr. Bradford decidedly.

"Who will guard your own house?" I inquired.

"I shall depend upon Aunt Flick's ears and Dennis's hands," he replied.

Our little city had greatly changed in ten years. The first railroad had been built, manufactures had sprung up, business and population had increased, and the whole social aspect of the place had been revolutionized. It had entirely outgrown

its unchanged police machinery and appointments, and now, when there was a call for efficient surveillance, the authorities were sadly inadequate to the occasion. Under Mr. Bradford's lead, a volunteer corps of constables was organized and sworn into office, and a patrol established which promised protection to the persons and property of the citizens.

The following night was undisturbed. No suspicious men were encountered in the street; and the second night passed away in the same peaceable manner. Several of the volunteer constables, supposing that the danger was past, declined to watch longer, though Mr. Bradford and a faithful and spirited few still held on. The burglars were believed by him to be still in the city, under cover, and waiting either for an opportunity to get away, or to add to their depredations. I do not think that Mr. Bradford expected his own house to be attacked, but, from the location of The Mansion, and Mrs. Sanderson's reputation for wealth, I know that he thought it more than likely that I should have a visit from the marauders. During these two nights of watching, I slept hardly more than on the night when I discovered the loiterers before the house. It began to be painful, for I had no solid sleep until after the day had dawned. The suspense wore upon me, and I dreaded the night as much as if I had been condemned to pass it alone in a forest. I had said nothing to Jenks or the cook about the matter, and was all alone in my consciousness of danger, as I was alone in the power to meet it. Under these circumstances, I called upon Henry, and asked as a personal favor that he would come and pass at least one night with me. He seemed but little inclined to favor my request, and probably would not have done so had not a refusal seemed like cowardice. At nine o'clock, however, he made his appearance, and we went immediately to bed.

Fortified by a sense of protection and companionship, I sank at once into a slumber so profound that a dozen men might have ransacked the house without waking me. Though Henry went to sleep, as he afterwards told me, at his usual

hour, he slept lightly, for his own fears had been awakened by the circumstances into which I had brought him. We both slept until about one o'clock in the morning, when there came to me in the middle of a dream a crash which was incorporated into my dream as the discharge of a cannon and the rattle of musketry, followed by the groans of the dying. I awoke bewildered, and impulsively threw my hand over to learn whether Henry was at my side. I found the clothes swept from the bed as if they had been thrown off in a sudden waking and flight, and his place empty. I sprang to my feet, conscious at the same time that a struggle was in progress near me, but in the dark. I struck a light, and, all unclad as I was, ran into the hall. As I passed the door, I heard a heavy fall, and caught a confused glimpse of two figures embracing and rolling heavily down the broad stairway. In my haste I almost tumbled over a man lying upon the floor.

"Hold on to him—here's Arthur," the man shouted, and I recognized the voice of old Jenks.

"What are you here for, Jenks?" I shouted.

"I'm hurt," said Jenks, "but don't mind me. Hold on to him! hold on to him!"

Passing Jenks, I rushed down the staircase, and found Henry kneeling upon the prostrate figure of a ruffian, and holding his hands with a grip of iron. My light had already been seen in the street; and I heard shouts without, and a hurried tramping of men. I set my candle down, and was at Henry's side in an instant, asking him what to do.

"Open the door, and call for help," he answered between his teeth. "I am faint and cannot hold on much longer."

I sprang to the door, and while I was pushing back the bolt was startled by a rap upon the outside, and a call which I recognized at once as that of Mr. Bradford. Throwing the door open, he, with two others, leaped in, and comprehended the situation of affairs. Closing it behind him, Mr. Bradford told Henry to let the fellow rise. Henry did not stir. The ruffian lay helplessly rolling up his eyes, while Henry's head

dropped upon his prisoner's breast. The brave fellow was badly hurt, and had fainted. Mr. Bradford stooped and lifted his helpless form, as if he had been a child, and bore him up stairs, while his companions pinioned his antagonist, and dragged him out of the door, where his associate stood under guard. The latter had been arrested while running away, or the approach of Mr. Bradford and his posse.

Depositing his burden upon a bed, Mr. Bradford found another candle and came down to light it. Giving hurried directions to his men as to the disposition of the arrested burglars, he told one of them to bring Aunt Flick at once from his house, and another to summon a surgeon. In five minutes the house would have been silent save for the groanings of poor old Jenks, who still lay where he fell, and the screams of the cook, who had, at last, been wakened by the din and commotion.

As soon as Henry began to show signs of recovery from his fainting fit we turned our attention to Jenks, who lay patiently upon the floor, disabled partly by his fall, and partly by his rheumatism. Lifting him carefully, we carried him to his bed, and he was left in my care while Mr. Bradford went back to Henry.

Old Jenks, who had had a genuine encounter with ruffians in the dark, seemed to be compensated for all his hurts and dangers by having a marvelous story to tell and this he told to me in detail. He had been wakened in the night by a noise. It seemed to him that somebody was trying to get into the house. He lay until he felt his bed jarred by some one walking in the room below. Then he heard a little cup rattle on his table—a little cup with a teaspoon in it. Satisfied that there was some one in the house who did not belong in it, he rose, and undertook to make his way to my room for the purpose of giving me the information. He was obliged to reach me through a passage that led from the back part of the house. This he undertook to do in the stealthy and silent fashion of which he was an accomplished master, and had reached the staircase

that led from the grand hall, when he encountered the intruder who, taking him at once for an antagonist, knocked him down. The noise of this encounter woke Henry, who sprang from his bed, and, in a fierce grapple with the rascal, threw him and rolled with him to the bottom of the staircase.

I could not learn that the old man had any bones broken, or that he had suffered much except by the shock upon his nervous system and the cruel jar he had received in his rheumatic joints. After a while, having administered a cordial, I left him with the assurance that I should be up for the remainder of the night and that he could sleep in perfect safety. Returning to my room I found Aunt Flick already arrived, and busy with service at Henry's side. The surgeon came soon afterwards, and having made a careful examination, declared that Henry had suffered a bad fracture of the thigh, and that he must on no account be moved from the house.

At this announcement, Mr. Bradford, Henry and I looked at one another with a pained and puzzled expression. We said nothing, but the same thought was running through our minds. Mrs. Sanderson must know of it, and how would she receive and treat it? She had a strong prejudice against Henry, of which we were all aware. Would she blame me for the invitation that had brought him there? would she treat him well, and make him comfortable while there?

"I know what you are thinking of," said Aunt Flick sharply, "and if the old lady makes a fuss about it I shall give her a piece of my mind."

"Let it be small," said Henry, smiling through his pain.

The adjustment of the fracture was a painful and tedious process, which the dear fellow bore with the fortitude that was his characteristic. It was hard for me to think that he had passed through his great danger and was suffering this pain for me, though to tell the truth, I half envied him the good fortune that had demonstrated his prowess and had made him for the time the hero of the town. These unworthy thoughts I thrust from my mind, and determined on thorough devotion to the

companion who had risked so much for me, and who had possibly been the means of saving my life.

It seemed, in the occupation and absorption of the occasion, but an hour after my waking, before the day began to dawn: and leaving Aunt Flick with Henry, Mr. Bradford and I retired for consultation.

It was decided at once that Mrs. Sanderson would be offended should we withhold from her, for any reason, the news of what had happened in her house. The question was whether she should be informed of it by letter, or whether Mr. Bradford or I should go to her on the morning boat, and tell her the whole story, insisting that she should remain where she was until Henry could be moved. Mr. Bradford had reasons of his own for believing that it was best that she should get her intelligence from me, and it was decided that while he remained in or near the house, I should be the messenger to my aunt, and ascertain her plans and wishes.

Accordingly, bidding Henry a hasty good-morning, and declining a breakfast for which I had no appetite, I walked down to the steamer, and paced her decks during all her brief passage, in the endeavor to dissipate the excitement of which I had not been conscious until after my departure from the house. I found my aunt and Mrs. Belden enjoying the morning breeze on the shady piazza of their hotel. Mrs. Sanderson rose with excitement as I approached her, while her companion became as pale as death. Both saw something in my face that betokened trouble, and neither seemed able to do more than to utter an exclamation of surprise. Several guests of the house being near us, I offered my arm to Mrs. Sanderson, and said:

"Let us go to your parlor: I have something to tell you."

We went up-stairs, Mrs. Belden following us. When we reached the door, the latter said: "Shall I come in too?"

"Certainly," I responded. "You will learn all I have to tell, and you may as well learn it from me."

We sat down and looked at one another. Then I said: "We have had a burglary."

Both ladies uttered an exclamation of terror.

"What was carried away?" said Mrs. Sanderson sharply.

"The burglars themselves," I answered.

"And nothing lost?"

"Nothing."

"And no one hurt?"

"I cannot say that," I answered. "That is the saddest part of it. Old Jenks was knocked down, and the man who saved the house came out of his struggle with a badly broken limb."

"Who was he? How came he in the house?"

"Henry Hulm; I invited him. I was worn out with three nights of watching."

Mrs. Sanderson sat like one struck dumb, while Mrs. Belden, growing paler, fell in a swoon upon the floor. I lifted her to a sofa, and calling a servant to care for her, after she began to show signs of returning consciousness, took my aunt into her bed-room, closed the door, and told her the whole story in detail. I cannot say that I was surprised by the result. She always had the readiest way of submitting to the inevitable of any person I ever saw. She knew at once that it was best for her to go home, to take charge of her own house, to superintend the recovery of Henry, and to treat him so well that no burden of obligation should rest upon her. She knew at once that any coldness or lack of attention on her part would be condemned by all her neighbors. She knew that she must put out of sight all her prejudice against the young man, and so load him with attentions and benefactions that he could never again look upon her with indifference, or treat her with ever constructive discourtesy.

While we sat talking, Mrs. Belden rapped at the door, and entered.

"I am sure we had better go home," she said, tremblingly.

"That is already determined," responded my aunt.

With my assistance, the trunks were packed long before the boat returned, the bills at the hotel were settled, and the ladies were ready for the little journey.

I had never seen Mrs. Belden so thoroughly deposed from her self-possession as she seemed all the way home. Her agitation, which had the air of impatience, increased as we came in sight of Bradford, and when we arrived at the door of The Mansion, and alighted, she could hardly stand, but staggered up the walk like one thoroughly ill. I was equally distressed and perplexed by the impression which the news had made upon her, for she had always been a marvel of equanimity and self-control.

We met the surgeon and Mr. Bradford at the door. They had good news to tell of Henry, who had passed a quiet day; but poor old Jenks had shown signs of feverish reaction, and had been anxiously inquiring when I should return. Aunt Flick was busy in Henry's room. My aunt mounted at once to the young man's chamber with the surgeon and myself.

Aunt Flick paused in her work as we entered, made a distant bow to Mrs. Sanderson, and waited to see what turn affairs would take, while she held in reserve that "piece of her mind" which contingently she had determined to hurl at the little mistress of the establishment.

It was with a feeling of triumph over both Henry and his spirited guardian, that I witnessed Mrs. Sanderson's meeting with my friend. She sat down by his bedside, and took his pale hand in both her own little hands, saying almost tenderly. "I have heard all the story, so that there is nothing to say, except for me to thank you for protecting my house, and to assure you that while you remain here you will be a thousand times welcome, and have every service and attention you need. Give yourself no anxiety about anything, but get well as soon as you can. There are three of us who have nothing in the world to do but to attend you and help you."

A tear stole down Henry's cheek as she said this, and she reached over with her dainty handkerchief, and wiped it away as tenderly as if he had been a child.

I looked at Aunt Flick, and found her face curiously puckered in the attempt to keep back the tears. Then my aunt

addressed her, thanking her for her service, and telling her that she could go home and rest, as the family would be quite sufficient for the nursing of the invalid. The woman could not say a word. She was prepared for any emergency but this, and so, bidding Henry good-night, she retired from the room and the house.

When supper was announced, Mrs. Sanderson and I went down stairs. We met Mrs. Belden at the foot, who declared that she was not in a condition to eat anything, and would go up and sit with Henry. We tried to dissuade her, but she was decided, and my aunt and I passed on into the dining-room. Remembering when I arrived there that I had not seen Jenks, I excused myself for a moment, and as silently as possible remounted the stairs. As I passed Henry's door, I impulsively pushed it open. It made no noise, and there, before me, Mrs. Belden knelt at Henry's bed, with her arms around his neck and her cheek lying against his own. I pulled back the door as noiselessly as I had opened it, and half stunned by what I had seen, passed on through the passage that led to the room of the old servant. The poor man looked haggard and wretched, while his eyes shone strangely above cheeks that burned with the flush of fever. I had been so astonished by what I had seen that I could hardly give rational replies to his inquiries.

"I doubt if I weather it, Mr. Arthur; what do you think?" said he, fairly looking me through to get at my opinion.

"I hope you will be all right in a few days," I responded. "Don't give yourself any care. I'll see that you are attended to."

"Thank you. Give us your hand."

I pressed his hand, attended to some trifling service that he required of me, and went down stairs with a sickening misgiving concerning my old friend. He was shattered and worn, and, though I was but little conversant with disease, there was something in his appearance that alarmed me, and made me feel that he had reached his death-bed.

With the memory of the scene which I had witnessed in Henry's room fresh in my mind, with all its strange suggestions, and with the wild, inquiring look of Jenks still before me, I had little disposition to make conversation. Yet I looked up occasionally at my aunt's face, to give her the privilege of speaking, if she were disposed to talk. She, however, was quite as much absorbed as myself. She did not look sad. There played around her mouth a quiet smile, while her eyes shone with determination and enterprise. Was it possible that she was thinking that she had Henry just where she wanted him? Was she glad that she had in her house and hands another spirit to mould and conquer? Was she delighted that something had come for her to do, and thus to add variety to a life which had become tame with routine? I do not know, but it seemed as if this were the case.

At the close of the meal, I told her of the impression I had received from Jenks's appearance, and begged her to go to his room with me, but she declined. There was one presence into which this brave woman did not wish to pass—the presence of death. Like many another strongly vitalized nature hers revolted at dissolution. She could rise to the opposition of anything that she could meet and master, but the dread power which she knew would in a few short years, at most, unlock the clasp by which she held to life and her possessions filled her with horror. She would do anything for her old servant at a distance, but she could not, and would not, witness the process through which she knew her own frame and spirit must pass in the transition to her final rest.

That night I spent mainly with Jenks, while Mrs. Belden attended Henry. This was according to her own wish; and Mrs. Sanderson was sent to bed at her usual hour. Whenever I was wanted for anything in Henry's room, Mrs. Belden called me; and, as Jenks needed frequent attention, I got very little sleep during the night.

Mrs. Sanderson was alarmed by my haggard looks in the morning, and immediately sent for a professional nurse to at-

send her servant, and declared that my watching must be stopped.

Tired with staying in-doors, and wishing for a while to separate myself from the scenes that had so absorbed me, and the events that had broken so violently in upon my life, I took a long stroll in the fields and woods. Sitting down at length in the shade, with birds singing above my head and insects humming around me, I passed these events rapidly in review, and there came to me the conviction that Providence had begun to deal with me in earnest. Since the day of my entrance upon my new life at The Mansion, I had met with no trials that I had not consciously brought upon myself. Hardship I had not known. Sickness and death I had not seen. In the deep sorrows of the world, in its struggles and pains and self-denials, I had had no part. Now, change had come, and further change seemed imminent. How should I meet it? What would be its effect upon me? For the present my selfish plans and pleasures must be laid aside, and my life be devoted to others. The strong hand of necessity was upon me, and there sprang up within me, responsive to its touch, a manly determination to do my whole duty.

Then the strange scene I had witnessed in Henry's room came back to me. What relations could exist between this pair, so widely separated by age, that warranted the intimacy I had witnessed? Was this woman who had seemed to me so nearly perfect a base woman? Had she woven her toils about Henry? Was he a hypocrite? Every event of a suspicious nature which had occurred was passed rapidly in review. I remembered his presence at the wharf when she first debarked in the city, his strange appearance when he met her at the Bradfords for the first time, the letter I had carried to him written by her hand, the terrible effect upon her of the news of his struggle and injury, and many other incidents which I have not recorded. There was some sympathy between them which I did not understand, and which filled me with a strange misgiving, both on account of my sister and myself; yet I knew that she and Claire were the closest friends, and I had never re-

ceived from her anything but the friendliest treatment. Since she had returned, she had clung to his room and his side as if he were her special charge, by duty and by right. One thing I was sure of: she would never have treated me in the way she had treated him.

Then there came to me, with a multitude of thoughts and events connected with my past history, Mrs. Sanderson's singular actions regarding the picture that had formed with me the subject of so many speculations and surmises. Who was the boy? What connection had he with her life and history? Was she tired of me? Was she repentant for some great injustice rendered to one she had loved? Was she sorrowing over some buried hope? Did I stand in the way of the realization of some desire which, in her rapidly declining years, had sprung to life within her?

I do not know why it was, but there came to me the consciousness that events were before me—ready to disclose themselves—shut from me by a thin veil—which would change the current of my life; and the purpose I had already formed of seeking an interview with Mr. Bradford and asking him the questions I had long desired to ask, was confirmed. I would do it at once. I would learn my aunt's history, and know the ground on which I stood. I would pierce the mysteries that had puzzled me and were still gathering around me, and front whatever menace they might bear.

## CHAPER XIX.

JENKS GOES FAR, FAR AWAY UPON THE BILLOW AND NEVER COMES BACK.

ON returning to the house I found myself delayed in the execution of my determination by the increasing and alarming sickness of the old servant Jenks, and by his desire that I should be near him. The physician, who was called at once, gave us no hope of his recovery. He was breaking down rapidly, and seemed to be conscious of the fact.

On the following morning, after I had spent the most of the night in his room, he requested the nurse to retire, and calling me to his bedside said he wished to say a few words to me. I administered a cordial, which he swallowed with pain, and after a fit of difficult breathing caused by the effort, he said feebly: "It's no use, Mr. Arthur; I can't hold on, and I don't think I want to. It's a mere matter of staying. I should never work any more, even if I should weather this."

I tried to say some comforting words, but he shook his head feebly, and simply repeated: "It's no use."

"What can I do for you, Jenks?" I said.

"Do you know Jim Taylor's wife?" he inquired.

"I've seen her," I replied.

"She's a hard working woman."

"Yes, with a great many children."

"And Jim don't treat her very well," he muttered.

"So I've heard."

He shook his head slowly, and whispered: "It's too bad; it's too bad."

"Don't worry yourself about Jim Taylor's wife; she's nothing to you," I said.

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"Do you think so?—nothing to me? Don't say that; I can't bear it."

"You don't mean to tell me that Jim Taylor's wife is—"

He nodded his head; and I saw that he had not yet finished what he had to say about her.

"Have you any message for her?" I inquired.

"Well, you know, Mr. Arthur, that she's been everything to me, and I'd like to do a little something for her. You don't think she'd take it amiss if I should leave her some money, do you?"

"Oh, no, she's very poor," I said. "I think she would be very grateful for anything you can do to help her along."

His eye lighted, and a feeble smile spread over his wizen features.

"Pull out that little box under the bed," he said. "The key is under my pillow."

I placed the box on the bed, and, after fumbling under his pillow, found the key and opened the humble coffer.

"There's a hundred clean silver dollars in that bag, that I've been saving up for her for thirty years. I hope they'll do her good. Give them to her, and don't tell Jim. Tell her Jenks never forgot her, and that she's been everything to him. Tell her I was sorry she had trouble, and don't forget to say that I never blamed *her*."

I assured him that I would give her the money and the message faithfully, and he sank back into his pillow with a satisfied look upon his face that I had not seen there since his sickness. The long contemplated act was finished, and the work of his life was done.

After lying awhile with his eyes closed, he opened them and said: "Do you s'pose we shall know one another over yonder?"

"I hope so; I think so," I responded.

"If she comes before Jim, I shall look after her. Do you dare to tell her that?" and he fixed his glazing eyes upon me with a wild, strained look that thrilled me.



"I think it would scare her," I answered. "Perhaps you had better not send her such a message."

"Well, I shall look after her, any way, if I get a chance, and perhaps both of 'em won't go to one place—and—"

What further possibilities ran through the old man's imagination I do not know, for he seemed exhausted, and ceased to speak. I sat for an hour beside his bed, while he sank into a lethargic slumber. At last he woke and stared wildly about him. Then, fixing his eyes on me, he said: "Now's my time! If I'm ever going to get away from this place I must go to-night!"

There was a pathetic and poetic appositeness in these words to the facts of his expiring life that touched me to tears, and I wiped my eyes. Then listening to some strange singing in his ears, he said: "Doesn't it rain? Doesn't it pour? You'll take cold, my boy, and so shall I."

The thought carried him back over the years to the scene in the stable where in agony I knelt, with the elements in tumult above me and his arm around my neck, and prayed.

"Pray again, Arthur. I want to hear you pray."

I could not refuse him, but knelt at once by his bed, and buried my face in the clothes by his side. He tried to lift his hand, but the power to do so was gone. I recognized his wish, and lifted his arm and placed it round my neck. It was several minutes before I could command my voice, and then, choking as on the evening which he had recalled, I tried to commend his departing spirit to the mercy and fatherly care of Him who was so soon to receive it. Having prayed for him it was easier to pray for myself; and I did pray, fervently and long. As I closed, a whispered "Amen" came from his dying lips. "There," he said; "let's go into the house; it's warm there." There was something in these words that started my tears again.

After this his mind wandered, and in his delirium the old passion of his life took full possession of him.

"To-morrow I shall be far, far away on the billow. . . . ."

The old woman will call Jenks, but Jenks won't be here. Jenks will be gone! . . . . This is the craft: up with her sails: down with the compasses: My! how she slides! Run her straight for the moon! . . . . Doesn't she cut the water beautiful! . . . . The sea rolls and swings, and rolls and swings, and there are the islands! I see 'em! I see 'em! . . . . It's just like a cradle, and I can't keep awake. . . . . Oh, I'm going to sleep! I'm—going—to—sleep. . . . . Tell the old woman I bore her no ill will, but I had to go. . . . . I was obliged to go. . . . . Straight along in the track of the moon."

He said all this brokenly, with his eyes closed; and then he opened them wide, and looked around as if suddenly startled out of sleep. Then life went out of them, and there came on that quick, short breathing, unmistakable in its character, even to a novice, and I rose and called the nurse and Mrs. Belden to witness the closing scene.

So, sailing out upon that unknown sea made bright by a hovering glory, with green islands in view and the soft waves lapping his little vessel, escaping from all his labors and pains, and realizing all his dreams and aspirations, the old man passed away. There was a smile upon his face, left by some sweet emotion. If he was hailed by other barks sailing upon the same sea, if he touched at the islands and plucked their golden fruit, if there opened to his expanding vision broader waters beyond the light of the moon, and bathing the feet of the Eternal City, we could not know. We only knew that his closing thought was a blessed thought, and that it glorified the features which, in a few short days, would turn to dust. It was delightful to think that the harmless, simple, ignorant, dear old boy had passed into the hands of his Father. There I left him without a care—in the hands of One whose justice only is tenderer than His mercy, and whose love only is stronger than His justice.

The superintendence of all the affairs connected with his funeral was devolved upon me; and his burial was like the burial of an old playfellow. I could not have believed that

his death would grieve me so. It was the destruction of a part of my home. Now nothing was left but a single frail woman, whose years were almost told; and when her time should be spent, the house would be empty of all but myself, and those whom I might choose to retain or procure.

His remains were followed to the grave by Mrs. Sandersor and myself in the family carriage, and by the Bradfords, with some humble acquaintances. His relatives were all at a distance, if he had any living, or they had left the world before him. The house seemed more lonely after his death than I had ever felt it to be before, and poor Mrs. Sandersor was quite broken down by the event. The presence of death in the house was so sad a remembrancer of previous occurrences of which I had had no knowledge, and was such a suggestion to herself of the brevity of her remaining years, that she was wonderfully softened.

She had, ever since her return, lived apparently in a kind of dream. There was something in Henry's presence and voice that had the power to produce this tender, silent mood, and Jenks's death only deepened and intensified it.

When all was over, and the house had resumed its every-day aspects and employments, I took the little sum that Jenks had saved with such tender care, and bore it to the woman who had so inspired his affection and sweetened his life. I found her a hard-faced, weary old woman, whose life of toil and trouble had wiped out every grace and charm of womanhood that she had ever possessed. She regarded my call with evident curiosity; and when I asked her if she had ever known Jenks, and whether anything had occurred between them in their early life that would make him remember her with particular regard, she smiled a grim, hard smile and said: "Not much."

"What was it? I have good reasons for inquiring."

"Well," said she, "he wanted me to marry him, and I wouldn't. That's about all. You see he was a kind of an innocent, and I s'pose I made fun of him. Perhaps I've had my pay for't."

"Do you know that he has loved you dearly all his life; that he has pricked your name into his arm, and that it was the tenderest and sweetest word that ever passed his lips; that the thought of you comforted him at his work and mingled with all his dreams; that he would have gone through fire and water to serve you; that he saved up money all his life to give you, and that he hopes you will die before your husband, so that he may have the chance to care for you in the other country to which he has gone?"

As I uttered these words slowly, and with much emotion, her dull eyes opened wider and wider, and filled with tears which dropped unregarded from her cheeks. I suppose these were the first words of affection that had been spoken to her for twenty years. Her heart had been utterly starved, and my words were like manna to her taste. She could not speak at first, and then with much difficulty she said: "Are you telling me the truth?"

"I am not telling you half of the truth. He loved you a thousand times more devotedly than I can tell you. He would have worshiped a ribbon that you had worn. He would have kissed the ground on which you stepped. He would have been your slave. He would have done anything, or been anything, that would have given you pleasure, even though he had never won a smile in return."

Then I untied the handkerchief in which I had brought the old man's savings, and poured the heavy silver into her lap. She did not look at it. She only looked into my face with a sad gaze, while the tears filled her eyes anew.

"I don't deserve it: I don't deserve it," she repeated in a hopeless way, "but I thank you. I've got something to think of besides kicks and cuffs and curses. No—they won't hurt me any more."

Her eyes brightened then so that she looked almost beautiful to me. The assurance that one man, even though she had regarded him as a simpleton, had persistently loved her, had passed into her soul, so that she was strengthened for a life-

time. The little hoard and the love that came with it were a mighty re-enforcement against all the trials which a brutal husband and forgetful children had brought upon her.

I left her sitting with her treasure still in her lap, dreaming over the old days, looking forward to those that remained, and thinking of the man who would have asked for no sweeter heaven than to look in and see her thus employed. Afterwards I saw her often. She attended the church which she had long forsaken, with clothes so neat and comfortable that her neighbors wondered where and how she had managed to procure them, and took up the burden of her life again with courage and patience.

She went before Jim.

Whom she found waiting on the other side of that moonlit sea over which my old friend had sailed homeward, I shall know some time; but I cannot turn my eyes from a picture which my fancy sketches, of a sweet old man, grown wise and strong, standing upon a sunny beach, with arms outstretched, to greet an in-going shallop that bears still the name of all the vessels he had ever owned—"the Jane Whittlesey!"

## CHAPTER XX.

### MR. BRADFORD TELLS ME A STORY WHICH CHANGES THE DETERMINATIONS OF MY LIFE.

I HAVE already alluded to the effect which Henry's presence produced upon Mrs. Sanderson. For a few days after her return, I watched with covert but most intense interest the development of her acquaintance with him. Mrs. Belden had been for so long a time her companion, and was so constantly at Henry's bedside, that my aunt quickly took on the habit of going in to sit for an hour with the lady and her charge. I was frequently in and out, doing what I could for my friend's amusement, and often found both the ladies in attendance. Mrs. Sanderson always sat at the window in an old-fashioned rocking chair, listening to the conversation between Mrs. Belden and Henry. Whenever Henry laughed, or uttered an exclamation, she started and looked over to his bed, as if the sounds were familiar, or as if they had a strange power of suggestion. There was some charm in his voice and look to which she submitted herself more and more as the days went by—a charm so subtle that I doubt whether she understood it or was conscious of its power.

Two or three days passed after I had executed Jenks's will, with relation to his savings, when my old resolution to visit Mr. Bradford recurred. In the meantime, I felt that I had won strength from my troubles and cares, and was better able to bear trial than I had ever been before. I was little needed in the house, now that Jenks was gone, so, one morning after breakfast, I started to execute my purpose. As I was taking my hat in the hall, there came a rap upon the door, and as I stood near it I opened it and encountered Millie Bradford.