"Ah," he said, "you have not answered."

"I have told you that I am not your judge."

"Ah, but that tells nothing: a woman is never a judge. She is either with one or against him."

"Which do I look like?"—she laughed evasively—"Mercy or Vengeance? And have you forgotten that it is late—too late to ask questions?"

He stood, comprehending her doubtfully, with immeasurable joy, and then went out to get his overcoat.

"Bring your things in here," she said, "it is cold in the hall. And wrap up warmly! That is more important than all the Genevan and the homiletical!"

He bade her good night, subdued with happiness that seemed to blot out the troublous past, to be the beginning of new life. New happiness brought new awkwardness:—

"This was not my regular night," he said threateningly. "I came to-night instead of to-morrow night."

Gabriella could answer a remark like that quickly enough.

"Certainly: it is hard to wait even for a slight pleasure, and it is best to be through with suffering."

He looked as if cold water and hot water had been thrown on him at the same time: he received shocks of different kinds and was doubtful as to the result. He shook his head questioningly.

"I may do very well with science, but I am not so sure about women."

"Aren't women science?"

"They are a branch of theology," he said; "they are what a man thinks about when he begins to probe his Destiny!"

XVII

David slept peacefully that night, like a man who has reached the end of long suspense. When he threw his shutters open late, he found that the storm had finished its work and gone and that the weather had settled stinging cold. The heavens

were hyacinth, the ground white with snow; and the sun, day-lamp of that vast ceiling of blue, made the earth radiant as for the bridal morn of Winter. So *his* thoughts ran.

"Gabriella! Gabriella!" he cried, as he beheld the beauty, the purity, the breadth, the clearness. "It is you — except the coldness, the cruelty."

All day then those three: the hyacinthine sky, the flashing lamp, the white earth, with not one crystal thawing.

It being Saturday, there was double work for him. He knocked up the wood for that day and for Sunday also, packed and stored it; cut double the quantity of oats; threw over twice the usual amount of fodder. The shocks were buried. He had hard kicking to do before he reached the rich brown fragrant stalks. Afterwards he made paths through the snow about the house for his mother; to the dairy, to the hen-house. In the wooden monotony of her life an interruption in these customary visits would have been to her a great loss. The snow

being over the cook's shoe-tops, he took a basket and dug the vegetables out of the holes in the garden.

In the afternoon he had gone to the pond in the woods to cut a drinking place for the cattle. As he was returning with his axe on his shoulder, the water on it having instantly frozen, he saw riding away across the stable lot, the one of their neighbors who was causing him so much trouble about the buying of the farm. He stopped hot with anger and watched him.

In those years a westward movement was taking place among the Kentuckians — a sad exodus. Many families rendered insolvent or bankrupt by the war and the loss of their slaves, while others interspersed among them had grown richer by Government contracts, were now being bought out, forced out, by debt or mortgage, and were seeking new homes where lay cheaper lands and escape from the suffering of living on, ruined, amid old prosperous acquaintances. It was a profound historic disturbance of population, destined later on

to affect profoundly many younger commonwealths. This was the situation now bearing heavily on David's father, on three sides of whose fragmentary estate lay rich neighbors, one of whom especially desired it.

The young man threw his axe over his shoulder again and took a line straight toward the house.

"He shall not take advantage of my father's weakness again," he said, "nor shall he use to further his purposes what I have done to reduce him to this want."

He felt sure that this pressure upon his father lay in part back of the feeling of his parents toward him. His expulsion from college and their belief that he was a failure; the fact that for three years repairs had been neglected and improvements allowed to wait, in order that all possible revenues might be collected for him; even these caused them less acute distress than the fear that as a consequence they should now be forced so late in life to make that mournful pilgrimage into strange

regions. David was saddened to think that ever at his father's side sat his mother, irritating him by dropping all day into his ear the half idle, half intentional words which are the water that wears out the rock.

The young man walked in a straight line toward the house, determined to ascertain the reason of this last visit, and to have out the long-awaited talk with his father. He reached the yard gate, then paused and wheeled abruptly toward the barn.

"Not to-day," he said, thinking of Gabriella and of his coming visit to her now but a few hours off. "To-morrow! Day after to-morrow! Any time after this! But no quarrels to-day!" and his face softened.

Before the barn door, where the snow had been tramped down by the stock and seeds of grain lay scattered, he flushed a flock of little birds, nearly all strangers to each other. Some from the trees about the yard; some from the thickets, fences, and fields farther away. As he threw open the barn doors, a few more, shyer still, darted swiftly into

hiding. He heard the quick heavy flap of wings on the joists of the oats loft overhead, and a hawk swooped out the back door and sailed low away.

The barn had become a battle-field of hunger and life. This was the second day of famine — all seeds being buried first under ice and now under snow; swift hunger sending the littler ones to this granary, the larger following to prey on them. To-night there would be owls and in the darkness tragedies. In the morning, perhaps, he would find a feather which had floated from a breast. A hundred years ago, he reflected, the wolves would have gathered here also and the cougar and the wildcat for bigger game.

It was sunset as he left the stable, his work done. Beside the yard gate there stood a locust tree, and on a bough of this, midway up, for he never goes to the tree-tops at this season, David saw a cardinal. He was sitting with his breast toward the clear crimson sky; every twig around him silver filigree; the whole tree glittering

with a million gems of rose and white, gold and green; and wherever a fork, there a hanging of snow. The bird's crest was shot up. He had come forth to look abroad upon this strange wreck of nature and peril to his kind. David had scarcely stopped before him when with a quick shy movement he dived down into one of his ruined winter fortresses — a cedar dismembered and flattened out, never to rise again.

The supper that evening was a very quiet one. David felt that his father's eyes were often on him reproachfully; and that his mother's were approvingly on his father's. Time and again during the meal the impulse well-nigh overcame him to speak to his father then and there; but he knew it would be a cruel, angry scene; and each time the face of Gabriella restrained him. It was for peace; and his heart shut out all discord from around that new tenderer figure of her which had come forth within him this day.

Soon even the trouble at home was for-

gotten; he was on his way through the deep snow toward her.

XVIII

GABRIELLA had brought with her into this neighborhood of good-natured, non-reading people the recollections of literature. These became her library of the mind; and deep joy she drew from its invisible volumes. She had transported a fine collection of the heroes and heroines of good fiction (Gabriella, according to the usage of her class and time, had never read any but standard works). These, when the earlier years of adversity came on, had been her second refuge from the world: religion was the first. Now they were the means by which she returned to the world in imagination. The failure to gather together so durable a company of friends leaves every mind the more destitute — especially a woman's, which has greater need to live upon ideals, and cannot always find these in actual

life. Then there were short poems and parts of long poems, which were as texts out of a high and beautiful Gospel of Nature. One of these was on the snow-storm; and this same morning her memory long was busy, fitting the poem within her mind to the scenery around the farm-house, as she passed joyously from window to window, looking out far and near.

There it all was as the great New England poet had described it: that masonry out of an unseen quarry, that frolic architecture of the snow, night-work of the North Wind, fierce artificer. In a few hours he had mimicked with wild and savage fancy the structures which human art can scarce rear, stone by stone, in an age: white bastions curved with projected roof round every windward stake or tree or door; the gateway overtopped with tapering turrets; coop and kennel hung mockingly with Parian wreaths; a swan-like form investing the hidden thorn.

From one upper window under the blue sky in the distance she could see what the