

Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?  
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;  
The reading of an ever-changing tale,  
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil—  
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air,  
A laughing schoolboy, without grief or care."

## V.

ABEL MEAD was a "tiller of the ground" by destiny, not by nature. His father and his father's family were farmers before him, and the fair homestead which he now owned, with its well-lying fields and opulent woodlands, had been the scene of earnest and untiring toil for two generations.

It was known as Hillside throughout the neighboring country, and acknowledged to be the "crack farm" of the county. There were not a few of the young farmers in the vicinity, who envied the heir of Hillside his rich acres, for at all the agricultural shows held year after year in the town near by, the "Meads" had uniformly taken the premium for the largest corn and potatoes, and the best seed wheat. Yet it was not likely so to be, the season in which I sojourned thereabout.

A year had not passed since Abel, upon his father's death, became sole possessor of the farm; yet already did it give evidence that a less thrifty and industrious hand superintended its labors. Here and there the fences were tottering, and the wealth of the barn-yard,

once so carefully gathered and heaped, was wasting away beneath the sun and rain.

The last labor of the old farmer, previous to his death, had been in clearing up an overgrown swamp, which embraced the best land on the farm. Death came, and his work was unfinished; so it was left for Abel to accomplish.

The middle of September had come, bringing the husbandman to his corn-field; and already the winds which whisper of the Equinox were rustling among the yellow stalks.

The season had been a propitious one, and the heart of the hard-toiling farmer was made glad. A few weeks before, I had seen the wheat crop gathered, and followed

“The large, o'er loaded, wealthy looking wains,  
Quietly swaggering home through leafy lanes,  
Leaving on all low branches as they come  
Straws for the birds, ears for the harvest home.”

Again, beneath the warm October sun the corn was stacked and drying upon the fields of Hillside, and as I threaded my way across them towards the distant swamp, in search of game, the sounds of labor came thenceward to my ear.

Rising the hill that intercepted the view, I looked down into the hollow. It was as I had supposed.

Abel was striving to carry out his father's plan—to finish what his father had begun.

Though superintending the work, the young man's hand was not to the plough—the plough that his father had held and guided many a weary day. Upon the stump of an old oak tree that lay across my path, an open book was lying. Curious to know what might have been the study of the young farmer, I took it up—it was a copy of “Byron,”—and opened at the tragedy of “Cain.” These lines, deeply scored, first met my eye—

“I have toiled, and tilled, and sweaten in the sun  
According to the curse; must I do more?  
For what should I be gentle? for a war  
With all the elements ere they will yield  
The bread we eat? For what must I be grateful?  
For being dust, and grovelling in the dust,  
Till I return to dust?”

These lines, then, shadowed forth the feelings of Abel Mead! these were the thoughts which filled his spirit, breeding discontent and misery amidst the blessings of his lot—a lot that his companions envied, and which might better have fallen to some of them than to him. I marvelled not that his fair estate was running to waste; I only wondered what freak had driven him to undertake the labor in which he was then engaged.

It was but a short time afterward, that I again wandered by the swamp; but no work was going on. The clearing was put off till the next season, and the half finished work left to bear witness to the supineness and irresolution of the young farmer. Thus it was in all that he undertook. Impulsive and undecided, his plans were quickly formed and as quickly abolished, exemplifying the truism of the bard—

“The flighty purpose never is o’ertook,  
Unless the deed go with it.”

It was a few months afterward when I revisited the vicinity of Hillside, but Abel Mead was no longer its possessor. The valuable farm and all its appurtenances had passed into other hands; it might be of some who had looked upon it with longing eyes for years.

In a lowly school-house, not far off, Abel was striving to teach a wild troop of urchins the rudiments of learning. His task was ill-chosen, for he lacked that decision so necessary to success in his vocation, and especially among the untamed youth under his charge.

Passing by the school-house one day at noon, when its noisy occupants were improving to the utmost their hour’s release, I stepped in to renew my acquaintance with their teacher. He seemed much worn and changed, both in appearance and manners; I thought

for the better, and wondered if his change in circumstances and position had not been also a school for him, wherein he had learned the lesson of contentment. But it was not so; for in the short intercourse we held together, I saw that his spirit was haunted with sad memories—memories of the happy hours which had been his in the old homestead and amidst the fields of Hillside.

The hope that he might at some future day again be its possessor, shed somewhat of gladness through the gloom that shrouded his being; but that hope was never realized.

Month after month passed by in fruitless and changeful endeavors, but Abel Mead never again entered the home of his childhood. I never saw him after that hour in the school-house; for, when I passed that way a few weeks later, a strange form and face were in the place of his, and he had gone from the neighborhood.

From those who still felt an interest in the unstable youth, I heard how from his desk and his pupils, he had gone into the woods, along the sources of a noble river, and floated his raft for a season to a distant market. Tiring of that, he next became a Methodist exhorter, and in church and camp sought “to turn men from the error of their ways,” and teach them that which he had not yet learned.

The last tidings of him brought to Hillside were

vague and doubtful: yet, corresponding so well with his vacillating course, hitherto, they were generally believed. It was said that he had joined a tribe of Indians in the far west, and with the little knowledge of physic and anatomy that he possessed, became their great "medicine-man."

Where, after that, were Abel's wanderings or what his pursuits, his friends never heard; but there were some of them who looked for him day after day, expecting that he might come home laden with gold, to buy the still fertile acres of Hillside. There was one too, among those well-tried friends, who had thought of him and loved him, through all his chances and changes.

Her hope has been long deferred and is doomed to disappointment, for it is far from probable that she will ever see again her errant and misguided lover

## VI.

THE harvest-time of the year comes always fraught to me with many tender and pleasant recollections.

At times I am a child again, sporting with my play-mates amidst the newly mown hay upon the meadows of Willowdale; or later in the season, as older in years, I follow the reapers to the opulent wheat-field to hear the rustling of the grain as it falls beneath their sweeping cradles. A glorious sight it is to me when the capacious granary is heaped to its very eaves with its golden wealth; for it makes the heart of the husbandman glad, and his toil in the hot summer is forgotten.

And sometimes I am by the Rhine again in fancy, where is

"A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,  
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, corn-field, mountain, vine,  
And chiefless castles, breathing stern farewells,  
From grey but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells;"

and amidst those mellowed beauties I listen to the peasant's song as he gathers to the wine-press the fruit of his sunny vineyard. I think of the olive gathering in sunny Provence and still sunnier Tuscany