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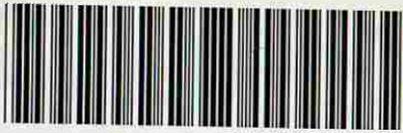
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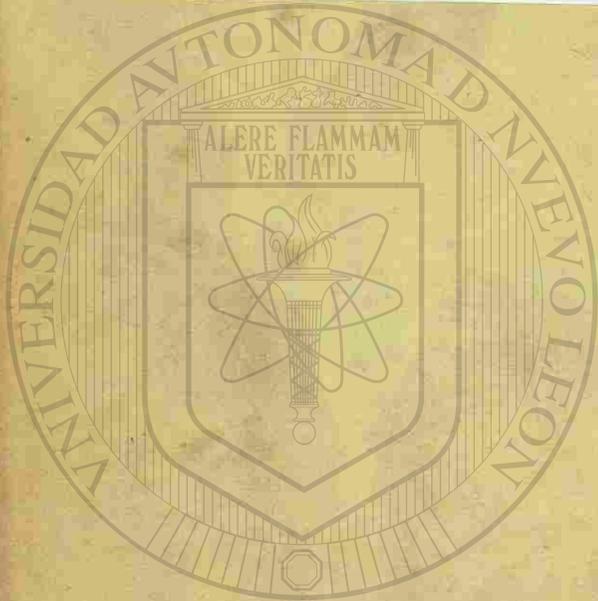
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DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS



RURAL LIFE

IN AMERICA;

OR,

Summer and Winter in the Country.

BY
HARRY PENCILLER.

UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

DIRECCION GENERAL DE BIENESTAR

NEW YORK:

DERBY & JACKSON, 119 NASSAU STREET.

CINCINNATI: H. W. DERBY & CO.

1887.

19170



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DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS

DEDICATORY LETTER.

MY DEAR FRANK :

When you have seen me pencilling on my tablets in the shadowy retreats of Hermit's Dell, and amidst scenes more or less sequestered—when you have seen me transcribing those rough sketchings upon the pages of my journal, by the light of our study-lamp—you have often expressed a desire to look over my shoulder and read them.

Henceforth, some of them are yours ; and you will not wonder that your name is so frequently upon them, when you remember how, in scenes of both joy and sorrow, in wanderings oft glad, oft gloomy, we have been together.

Though these desultory pencillings are woven in somewhat a fanciful web, your eye can trace the thread that gleams through it—the shining thread of truth.

You know how we have loved to tread alike the byways and highways of life, to weep sometimes with the sad and laugh sometimes with the gay : saying with the good

Lavater—"What sublime joys do we derive from our souls, when we banish thence the sweet feeling of human brotherhood, which is its most precious jewel."

Knowing, then, our kindred sympathies, as also your friend's fancies and failings, accept my frail gift—too frail to bear "the iron verdict of the world."

That at Briar Cliff, your beautiful home, long years of happiness may be for you and yours, is the fervent wish of your friend

HARRY.

RURAL LIFE IN AMERICA.

I.

Our simple cottage stands upon the crest of a hill whose undulating slopes, dotted with noble trees, fall gradually away to the bank of the river.

Though unpretending in architecture, the high peaked roof and bracketed gables of our dwelling may be seen from points, miles away in the adjacent country. A low piazza, whose chief beauty is in the vines which clamber up its pillars, and all the long summer festoon its lattices with their odorous wreaths, completely surrounds it. The situation is one not often surpassed for rare and varied beauty. A wide expanse of water, bounded within view by verdure covered shores, fills up the foreground: to the north are ranges of hills with white farm-houses glistening on their sides, and behind them in the distance

"Rise the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream."

Southward are lofty and rugged hills, amidst which

the river winds from our view, whilst to the east, a wide section of farming country stretches away to the distant Housatonic.

A gravelled and winding path, whose terminus is invisible from the house, leads to a graceful knoll above the river bank, whereon is a rustic seat over-arched by trees, which parasite creepers have mantled with dense masses of verdure. Here the eye may take in at a glance, river, mountain, stream, cascade and shadowy glen, nor desire a view more lovely.

Spring with its balmy airs and life-renewing breezes has fairly come, waking from their long sleep the piping frogs, and bringing back the glad blue-birds from their winter quarters. The hills, from whose southern slopes the snow has vanished, already look green and smiling: the river is free from ice, and the stream which courses through our meadow is casting over the mill-dam the last links of its wintry chain. The spray of the willows by the brook side is changing its golden hue, and the red buds of the maple are almost bursting into leaf. By the southern piazza the sweet briar is already green, and the Virginia creepers are about starting on their summer race. Another month and Nature will look her loveliest!

It is our first experience of country life, but already we love it, and the weaning from city associations and excitements has been accomplished with scarcely a

sigh. A few days since, the din and jostle of the city seemed accompaniments to existence not easily shaken off or forgotten; but now, leaning beside half hidden waters, I fancy their murmur the same my boyhood heard and loved, nor think of time's interlapse. Thus with more than electric speed does thought flash along the chain of years that binds the Present to the Past.

There was just such a stream with willow-fringed and grassy banks that gladdened my schoolday loiterings, and with companions whose "brows were bright as spring or morning," I stole many an hour from my books to catch the minnows with which it abounded, on our sily-made pin-hooks; and there was a mill too, very like the one I see now, only more dilapidated and lonely, in whose old lofts we romped and played our childish games, raising such a dust as the worn out stones never did when they were in their prime.

Of that gay frolicking band there are very few I can identify now. Some have become "fishers of men;" others have been caught by wiles more potent than minnows ever knew; some are in untimely graves, and others like me are idling or improving the precious hour. But my reveries have made me prosy, and I must not pass judgment! we know not how much the follies and fancies of youth may tend to form the idiosyncrasies of after years.

A short distance from the cottage and visible from

one of its gable windows there is a cleft amidst the hills, deep, verdurous, and shadowy, whence the dash and murmur of lapsing waters come to us on the southern breeze. The beauty of the spot can only be realized by nearer and frequent vision. The sides of the hills which form the glen are covered with a dense growth of spruce, hemlock and cedar, forming as it were an undergrowth to the maples and chestnuts which tower above them.

A stream, whose source is amidst far-off hills comes babbling over its pebbly bed till it widens and deepens into a pool which Naiads might have envied alike for a bath and mirror. Thence over tiers of rocks overhung by spreading hemlocks, the waters rush in mimic rapids till they leap in foamy cascatelles the wall of roughly piled boulders, which form the upper barrier of the glen. Winding through a narrow strip of natural meadow, which in the dryest summer is always fresh and green, the stream soon mingles with the river.

"Sometimes it fell

Among the moss, with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness."

We have called this glen of shadows, Hermit's Dell,

not only for its seclusion, which an anchorite might covet, but because of the strange and lonely woman whose dwelling is upon its borders. She is not altogether solitary, for her life is gladdened by the sunshiny presence of her child, a boy some eight years old.

Her habitation is a small frame cabin, rudely built, yet far from comfortless, and the indigenous creepers, which so rankly festoon its sides, screen many a crevice and unsightly time-stain. A noble weeping elm flings its boughs over the cabin roof, making a wide spreading shade alike grateful and protecting during the heats of summer.

A small garden patch, watered by a rivulet and cultivated by her own hands, affords sufficient sustenance of its kind during most of the year. In the winter season she sets snares for the rabbits and partridges which abound amidst the hills and thickets; these are also a source of profit to her when the season is propitious, finding ready purchasers in the immediate neighborhood.

A couple of goats, which obtain a good subsistence in their wide roving, afford her and her child no small degree of comfort and nourishment. So, with contented spirit, few wants and not many household cares, the visible life of our mysterious neighbor is not an irksome one: though she may have sorrows which her own heart alone knoweth.

We have all this information concerning her from our gardener Teddy, who has lived hereabout previous to our coming. But little more than this is known of her, though she has lived in her present dwelling nearly four years: rarely leaving home except to make needful and occasional visits to the village store, two miles distant. She is generally supposed to be an Italian, and has the reputation of a fate-teller. We have heard that occasional parties of swains and maidens visit her on moonlit eves, to hear their destinies read from a parchment book, and sip sometimes a love-potion from her mystic bowl. At such times, the echoes of the dell reply to glad voices and merry laughter, which seem almost a profanation of its quietude.

Strolling as we often do near the domain of La Solitaire, as my fair cousin Blanche has named her, a desire to know her history more intimately possesses me, and I am only waiting a fitting opportunity: now we can only speculate concerning her, and indulge strange surmises as to what and where her past life has been.

Watching her the other day from a distance, busied in some womanly avocation, and pausing now and then to caress her child, who was weaving beside her a tiny osier basket, in which perhaps to gather wild berries when the summer should come, I thought—how varied and dissimilar are the links which form the

great chain of human-kind: some bright and lustrous, fresh from the hand of their Artisan, God; some, worn and fragile from too much attrition with their fellows; others unique and peculiar; whilst on the rest, inaction and age gather their cankering rust! Some such idea had Shelly, perhaps, when he wrote so beautifully,

“Life, like a dome of many colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.”

II.

Our garden lies upon the southern hill-side, convenient to the house, and from its favorable exposure must be an early one. A wide border of lilacs and syringas mingled with lesser shrubs and plants, divides it from the lawn and serves as a screen to veil from the house our prospective cabbage and potato patches, which are not very ornamental appendages. To the east of the garden is a small peach orchard, which now gives promise of an abundant crop, notwithstanding the late April frosts. Skirting the orchard is a long range of trellises, covered with wide-spreading grape vines, at which Teddy the gardener has lately been busy with his pruning knife and bass strings. They look dry and lifeless now, those interwoven and errant branches; but soon the sweet juices coursing through them, will swell their latent buds, the germs of shoots, whose pendant clusters the September sun shall warm and ripen.

As I came out on the piazza before breakfast this morning, to snuff the pure air, I perceived the fragrance of freshly-turned earth, and soon descried Teddy in his shirt sleeves, delving away in the garden with

might and main. It was a pleasant sight and a "goodlye smell" too, furnishing a provocation to my matinal appetite which Lucullus might have envied. Oh, ye denizens of the city, inhaling an atmosphere heavy with smoke and dust, the wear and tear of life, little do ye know the blessedness and healthfulness of our rural airs!

So Teddy dug all the day, and I raked off a bed for our first sowing of lettuce and peas, which may escape the occasional night frosts. My fair cousin Blanche is out on the lawn near by, equipped with scissors and cord, clipping off the dead shoots from the rose-bushes and tying up their refractory branches: another one still is sitting in the sunshine not far distant, weaving airy ladders for wild creepers to climb and mantle the dead maple that stands by the garden gate. Oh, my Minnie, thought I, true to your woman nature, so would you veil from the world, as your loved but unsightly tree, man's often failings and infirmities! By and by, the lighter tasks of my companions are finished, and they stroll towards the river to watch the fishermen draw in their shad nets, the first they have set this season. But on the porch I hear the patter of little feet endeavoring to follow the two well-known forms that are disappearing over the knoll; this however is quickly stopped by ever-watchful Bridget, who is not quite ready to take Birdie his daily walk. My labors

are not quite over, for I have to manufacture a ladder, that I may attach to the maple that cunning device over which its leafy shroud is to gather and thicken. Then there are some loose pickets wanting a nail on the garden fence, and after that, there are letters to be written for the city mail, and so the morning wears away.

Then comes dinner, and after it an hour's reading for the sake of wholesome digestion, before I saddle old Charley to ride four miles to the post office over the eastern hills. Blanche proposes I should send Teddy to-day, for the roads are not settled yet and I cannot go faster than a walk; but I divine her motive when I remember that it is Wednesday, when she never fails to receive a very suspicious-looking, daintily-sealed envelope, containing four or more pages of closely-written lines; but pretending not to fathom her innocent sophistry, I prefer going and draw my inference from the sequel. When I emerge from the gravelled lane I find the road bad enough and am almost persuaded to return, but then Blanche would clap her hands and think how nicely she had outwitted her "shrewd cousin," as she often calls me. So I keep on and arrive at Hillsdale in a sorry plight. There I discover that Charley has left a shoe some where in the mud, and he must stand at the blacksmith's for half an hour. There is a letter for Blanche

in the post office and a packet of papers for me, with a letter well covered with European post-marks; it is dated, Venice, March —, and has been only thirty days coming, thanks to Collins' enterprise. The superscription is in a familiar hand-writing, that of Blanche's brother, my familiar friend. I put it in my pocket unopened, to be read by our evening fire. The papers are interesting with details of the Revolution in Paris, and I sit down to read them whilst Charley is being shod.

It is sun down when I reach our gate, and as I look upward, I see Minnie and Blanche in the arbor on the knoll, waving their handkerchiefs at my return. Birdie is there too, and I know he has been watching for "his ship" to emerge from the Highlands, the ship which his nurse tells him will bring the long talked-of pony. How unshadowed is childhood's faith and hopefulness! Yes, my child, your pony will come, but that fabled ship, like ours, is moored on viewless waters beside aerial castles, nor freighted yet with the wealth that lies beneath their "pleasure domes!" We all meet at the house, and Blanche getting the letter, saunters away to read it, her sunny face beaming with pleasure; whilst I, wearied after my ride, lounge upon the sofa and frolic with Birdie till Bridget takes him away for the night. Tea over, that genial cup so grateful to the weary, abused by Hanway and defended

by Johnson, we gather round the fire, not a dead, dry grate-confined fire, though the house is modern built, but a kindling, flashing blaze of old hickory, diffusing its moist warmth into every corner and lighting up the study, so that the reading lamp is fairly dimmed. When the flame is brightest, I take from my pocket Frank's travel-soiled letter, the first we have had from him since the scrawl he sent by a stray pilot-boat coming homeward. Thus he writes with all the warmth of an out-gushing, imaginative spirit:

"Harry, Minnie, Blanche,—I am in Venice, the city of the Doges, of the Rialto and 'silent highways.' I walk the Piazza of St. Marc with Shylock and Othello and Jessica, but in thought I roam with you the leafy paths of Hermit's Dell. This is a strange city! the swiftly gliding, funereal gondolas, the deserted and desecrated palaces, the degenerated people, all impress me wonderfully; yet it is as a dream, and I cannot realize that I am in Venice. You, Harry, may never cease to regret not coming here when you were in Italy. Florence, Rome, Naples, each have their charms and storied associations, but Venice is unique. I wish you could see the Ducal palace, whose long halls are fairly warmed by the glowing colors of Titian, Paul Veronese and Tintoretto. I wish you could stand with me in the Barbarigo palace, before the

wonderful 'Magdalen' or over the tomb of its author, on which is inscribed—

'Qui giace il gran Tiziano.'

But I must wait till I am with you all again before I can relate my impressions; a letter is but a poor vehicle to convey them. * * * * *
* * * * * Tell Blanche she must not be married before I return, which will be in three months, unless I go to the East, which depends upon my companion. * * * * *

Have you made the acquaintance of the strange being you wrote me about in your last letter? By the by, it came to hand at Paris. If you write again, direct as before, for I do not think I shall reach Egypt. A few words about * * * * *

But the rest is for myself, and I expect Frank will not dream that I have transcribed his rambling letter into my diary; but it gladdened an evening in our experience, and so it must have its page. Blanche was a little disappointed at not having a few lines especially for herself, but this was soon forgotten. Frank's letter had really given me the Italian fever, so I spent the rest of the evening over my own journal, written five years before, and in brushing up my memories of masters and master-pieces sadly confused

What an influence a friend's letter exerts upon the spirit! If kind and genial, it seems almost like the familiar pressure of the hand that wrote it; if harsh or reproving, it wounds us; if ungracious and condemning, it angers us, and threatens to sever the links which never so much weight of mutual grief or care could weaken or separate!

Frank's letter had imbued us all with its warm Italian spirit; it even generated yearnings to be with him in his travels, and made us almost discontented with our hitherto charming locality. But a thought was engendered in my brain, as a passing breeze bore to our ears the voice of the waterfall far down in the valley. It whispered the magic name, *La Solitaire*. Yes, it dissipated my dreams of Venetian gondolas and palaces, Shylock and Titian. I looked at Blanche; she was bending over her tambour frame, and I saw that her thoughts were far away; perhaps in the sunny south,—perhaps nearer home. Minnie is busy too upon a new frock for Birdie, and with maternal vanity is doubtless thinking how becoming it will be to his fair skin and rotund form.

Preparatory to the suggestion I was about to make, I stepped out upon the piazza, (*Anglice*, porch, for my evening researches had reminded me of the misnomer,) to take an observation of the weather. It was a beautiful night, but a rime, glistening like diamond

dust in the light of the moon, lay upon the grass and coated the lightest branches of the shrubbery. On the river, white sails were gleaming as if unsoiled by time or weather, whilst the lantern of the Pharos, ever lighted by its watchful guardian to warn unskilful mariners of the shoal it stands upon, seemed a superfluous feature of the scene; though its cheerful radiance has been often our pleasure during the dreary nights of stormy March. The cool night air effectually dissipated my Italian fever, so I came back to my chair and cold supper, for we dine early in the country, with a wholesome appetite.

The good bread and butter and cold beef had the effect of opening our long silent mouths in a twofold sense. Blanche had done dreaming, for a while at least, and Birdie's gay frock was finished excepting the buttons, so I had the field to myself, for I knew it would require some degree of persuasion on my part to secure Minnie's co-operation at least, into my plan, for they both had always felt a little afraid of *La Solitaire*. As Blanche is the most persuasible of the two, I try her first. "Blanche," I said, "let me show you how to catch a trout to-morrow; you may have my light rod, I will bait the hook for you and take the fish off, if you get one; you shall do none of the drudgery of the sport. You need not be afraid of the sun either, for my seat is a shady one, and the

April sun is not warm enough to be unpleasant." "No, cousin," replies Blanche, "I want to finish this piece in time for the fair at the church next week; besides, I have two or three letters to write, and I have promised to make Uncle William a visit certainly this month, so you see I have my hands full; but I will go one of these days." "But Blanche, cousin mine, it will only be for an hour or two, you can certainly spare that time, and now it is not so warm as it will be in June."

"But, cousin Harry, I had rather not go; why are you so pertinacious, I fancy you have some other object in mind, haven't you now, speak the truth?" "Well Blanche," said I, not wishing to commit myself, "I will not urge you, we will wait your pleasure, for the fish need coaxing; they won't bite at unwilling hooks, you know."

Minnie is equally intractable; she does not like fishing, and not only that, there are household matters requiring attention. The cook has given notice of retiring from kitchen duties to become a wife, and there will be a week or two before another can be persuaded to "lave her frinds" in the city and go to the "lone counthry." So I am completely vanquished, and decide to await another letter from Frank, which may cause a relapse of the "fever," for this I think will beget a sympathy for La Solitaire. I sit down again to my book, the "Cosmos" of Humboldt, which Frank's

letter and my old journal has superseded for a while, and am soon absorbed in his "study of nature," with all its wonderful and philosophical details. To the ardent lover of nature and all that is her handiwork, he who derives his highest pleasure in the contemplation of grasses, mosses and springing flowers, in beholding the glories of sunrise and sunset, and the silvery radiance of moonlight; to him who listens with "rapt ear" to the whispers of leaf-stirring breezes or the roar of the tempest amid the primeval forests; to him who loves the murmur of streams, the voice of the waterfall and the dash of ocean's surge; or finds delight in anything that is Nature's, how fertile seems the theme which the great naturalist expounds!

He awakens memories of our schoolboy days, and going back to our *alma mater*, we con again the well-worn Pliny, Virgil, and Euripides of those classic days. Then there are Gregory of Nyssa and Chrysostom the hermit, Camoens and Dante, and a host of others, ancient and modern, with whose works we are more or less familiar.

But Blanche is dozing, Minnie is getting impatient, my lamp is burning dim, and it is long past bedtime.

III.

As in city, so in country life, day after day brings its employments, duties and pleasures. They err who say, that out of cities and towns, in the wide domain of woods and fields, existence is lazy and selfish.

True, that contact with our fellow men is less frequent here, and that our sphere for well-doing unto others is far more limited; but the poor and suffering are everywhere; all over the world reigns the curse for sin, in the "hedges" as well as the "highways." There are some who everywhere wrap about them the impenetrable cloak of selfishness; but to him of willing heart and hand, occasions for kindly words and deeds are never wanting.

There are many too who have had their share of the jostle and hurry which characterizes city life; it is perhaps uncongenial to their natures, and when the object which stimulated their endeavors is acquired, they look about for rest. Beautifully has some one written,—

"One does not want for ever to contend with the mad race of waters, and the arm longs to put out of the cur-

rent into some quiet cove where sunbeams glitter in golden rings, and overhanging trees make green shadows and soft whisperings—it longs for a *rest*."

Some such thoughts had I this morning as a poor, travel-worn stranger stopped at the kitchen door to crave a mouthful of food. After he had eaten his fill he came to the garden, where, like the child I have read of, I was examining some of the seeds we had planted, to see whether they were growing. He wanted work; for he says he is poor, and has no home or friends, but is willing to work. He is a Pole, and having vainly tried to find employment in the city, has started, he knows not whither, in search of a living. I question him a little, but he hardly understands me, nor I, him. Yet I gather enough to know that it is the same tale we often hear: a recital of oppression, cruelty and suffering, of family ties rudely sundered, and warm hearts ruthlessly broken. He is a strong man, but weeps like a child as he strives to tell me his history. Poor fellow! he has probably pawned all the clothing that is not absolutely necessary to cover him; yet he still wears his braided coat, now sadly out of repair, and destined soon to be cast aside. I find something for him to do and promise him a shelter for the night, and he almost overpowers me with gratitude.

Teddy brings me word that Brindle, our choice Devon, has a calf an hour old, but unfortunately it is

of the male gender, at which I am greatly disappointed, for I had hoped to raise a heifer from her this season. The butcher from the village reaches us three times in the week, and brings, for our convenience, whatever letters or papers come for us by the mail of the previous night; as yet the terminus of the railroad running from the city is many miles distant, and our only communication is by steamboat and barge.

But the butcher's red wagon is at the door, and Blanche is on the piazza, holding up a letter for me. It contains, as I expected, notice that the Shetland pony which Birdie has been looking for so long, was shipped, no not "shipped," but "barged," last evening from the city. It must have arrived at the Point this morning, and I forthwith despatched Teddy after it on old Charley, a ride of three miles.

Poor Teddy! he does not want to go, for he is planting with great care a large bed of early beets, and is afraid that "Polaski," as he calls the poor fellow, his co-worker, will destroy it, but I promise it shall not be disturbed, and he is off to the stable as fast as his short legs can carry him.

He is a perfect jewel in his way, that same Teddy, as honest and faithful an Hibernian as ever lived; there is no pretension in him either, though he can do almost anything, and what he undertakes, he does well. Grooming Charley, milking Brindle, chopping wood,

making the garden, and running here and there, keep him busy; but he is never behindhand, and never tired. Where could I get such another? I endeavor to show Pulaski what I wish him to do, and not to do, then go to the house and sit awhile with Minnie and Blanche, perusing the papers which came this morning.

The steamer is to sail day after to-morrow, and this fact reminds me that I must write to Frank, but I put off the task till evening, when there will be nothing to interrupt me. We pass away an hour in pleasant talk on subjects domestic and foreign; though there is one domestic topic broached by Minnie, not very pleasant to me. She says, I must search for a cook; and if I cannot find one here, why, I will have to go to the city for one. I protest loudly against this innovation of marital duties, but Minnie's persuasive powers carry the day, and I promise to try: Blanche roguishly saying, "Only think, cousin, what an amusing little story you might write, called, 'Harry C—— in search of a cook.'"

Twelve o'clock comes, and soon after Teddy passes the window, leading as diminutive and shaggy a specimen of horse-flesh as I ever saw. We all run out to see him, and some one calls Bridget and tells her to bring Birdie down, and even Pulaski ventures to leave his work and draw nearer. Birdie cannot get down stairs fast enough, so Bridget must carry him, and

when he reaches the scene, what an impersonation of delight he becomes. The pony is a perfect stoic; he allows all sorts of liberties from us. Teddy opens his mouth to see how old he is. I look at his unshod feet. Blanche handles his long mane; while to crown all, Birdie is placed upon his back, switch in hand, and wonderfully brave, till Teddy leads his charge a step forward, upon which the young novice utters piteous cries for papa, mamma and Bridget to take him down. This done, Shag is led to the stable to get a good mess of bran and rest after his long journey, for he is still on his sea legs.

Whilst we are at dinner, the ladies propose that I take them a drive this afternoon. There are necessary purchases to be made at Hillsdale store, and we can get the morning papers from the post-office. I acquiesce if they will go in the box wagon, as it is lighter than the other, and the roads are not yet in order. In an hour Charley is at the door, and though he is pretty well advanced in years, yet when well groomed and harnessed, there are few nobler looking animals; and then he is so gentle and fast, and knows so well the gait he is to travel. We drive slowly down the road which winds along our hill-side, and crossing the creek that bounds our domain upon the north, we enter the river woods, beneath whose overarching branches, the road is always damp and shadowy, even

in summer. Here and there, where the high ground commands a fine river or mountain view, or both combined, the forest has been long since cleared away, and tasteful dwellings with velvety lawns and well kept enclosures, mark the hand of wealth and taste. They are the abodes of those upon whose intercourse and society we are dependant for much of our present and prospective pleasure. Keeping the river road, which runs northward for many miles some distance farther, we diverge into a narrow lane cut through the woods, and intersecting the level turnpike leading from Hillsdale to the river. This is skirted by large and fertile farms, mostly grazing land, and is much travelled. We have taken this roundabout way to our destination merely for the drive, and shall return by a more direct road. Reaching the village which, as its name implies, is embosomed amidst the hills, I discharge Minnie and Blanche at the main store, and then tying Charley under the tavern shed, I stop at the post-office and getting my papers, sit down to chat awhile with its sociable and news-burdened functionary.

When the ladies' shopping time has expired, and I rise to leave, a flaming yellow handbill posted on the wall attracts my notice. It is to inform the public that an itinerant lecturer "will address them to-morrow evening at the meeting-house in Bridge Valley, on

Animal Magnetism, illustrated by subjects." We will go, thought I, it will just suit our dreamy Blanche, and if we do not become converts, it will be a pleasant moonlight ride at least! By the time I reach the store and the assiduous clerk packs away the various sized straw-papered packages, Minnie and Blanche have finished their business with the dressmaker who lives adjoining the store, and we are soon on our way homeward. The road now lies over and between the ridges of hills which run parallel with the river, and break the force of those chill easterly winds so prevalent in our latitude. The sun is nearing the horizon; and, as we follow the inequalities of the road, sometimes we are in sunlight, sometimes and oftener in shadow, so like—

"The lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life."

We reach home in time to give Birdie his good-night kiss, and take tea at the usual hour. Teddy has made Pulaski an odorous bed in the hay loft, and the poor wanderer has gone to it, perhaps to dream of his country and her wrongs.

When the astral is lighted and a fresh stick put on the fire, we dispose ourselves as best pleases us. I take my book till Blanche finishes her two pages to Frank at the *escritoire*, whilst industrious Minnie

opens some of her many bundles, which perfume the room with a mingled scent of coffee, cinnamon and sugar, to find buttons and cord for that frock which is to display her darling's charms so becomingly. It is soon finished, and Bridget is summoned to take it to the nursery and put it on the child when he is dressed for dinner to-morrow. Oh! a mother's vanity! but it is akin to her love.

Blanche is a ready writer, and has spun out three pages, from which she reads us occasional passages and then gives me her seat. I have much to write about, so I hunt up some Paris post paper that has been reposing in my drawer for years, and shall probably indite six or eight pages of it.

As I write, Blanche opens the piano and plays the serenade from "Don Pasquale," for, ever thoughtful as she is, she knows it is a favorite air of mine, and that music is always suggestive to my pen.

Minnie tells me not to forget to thank Frank for that case of anchovies and basket of Florentine oil he shipped from Leghorn, and which are now in our larder. No, my friend, those choice and spicy fish keep you in eternal remembrance; as for the oil, we will prove its delicacy when my lettuce is well up and before it has headed, I assure you. When I reached my third page, Blanche says she forgot to tell Frank not to fail bringing her the coral and lava sets

from Naples, and if he should go to Constantinople, "he must bring her a pair of Turkish slippers, the handsomest blue and silver ones he can find." By and by, I am in want of a sentence, and I ask Minnie if she has any commission for Frank to fill. She says she will think, but as the thought does not come very soon, I have to think of something I would like for myself, a chibouque perhaps, if he goes to the East, or a Damascus hunting knife.

But at last I reach my eighth page of desultory matter, and looking over what I have written, I believe I have touched on every topic that could interest my friend. He has never been here, and has no idea of our location except from the description I wrote him after we came. I tell him of Charley and Brindle, Shag, Birdie and Teddy, and of ourselves, our quiet home pleasures, our hopes and fears; I speak again of La Solitaire, but can tell him little more than I did at first; then I close with wishes from all of us for his safe and speedy return. No, there is a P. S. to be crowded in; it is Minnie's wish that has reached her lips at last. Well, Minnie, what is it? "Why just ask Frank, if it is not too much trouble, to bring me a fine Scotch woollen plaid to make Birdie a coat next Fall, he knows my taste." Oh, Minnie, Minnie, you will spoil that boy!

Blanche's sweeping fingers stop for a moment in the

middle of a passage from "Sonnambula," as though a sudden thought had struck her, and she wishes to express it; but it is only for a moment; she restrains it and her hand sweeps the keys again.

"I know you are wishing for something more, Blanche, but I think you can do without it. Frank's trunk is over-burdened already, and will hardly pass the custom-house duty free."

I enclose Blanche's letter in mine, seal it and direct it to his banker's at Paris; he will open it within thirty days, and in less time than that, he will be with us I know, if I mistake not the influence of his sister's letter. Will she postpone that eventful day to which she is looking forward, if he is not here? her own heart can tell.

But it is nearly midnight, later by two hours than we generally sit up. Books, paper and pen are laid aside, the piano closed; and lighting their chamber candles, my companions quietly vanish. I turn down the wick of the astral till its flame expires, and then heap ashes on the smouldering embers of the fire, which,

"Just glimmering, bids each shadowy image fall
Sombrous and strange upon the darkening wall."

IV.

SPRING is maturing most beautifully, and the sight most grateful to mine eyes this morning are the well-defined rows of my early frame pease, and the tender leaves of nascent lettuce. Pulaski spades with greater vigor than he did yesterday, and seems elated from some cause or other. Can it be that he carries a stimulus in his pocket? No, I wrong him, for Teddy approaches and tells me he went over to farmer Mead's last night, hearing he wanted a man to tend his cattle; and that he has promised to take the poor Pole on trial, as soon as I have done with him. This is pleasant to all parties, for I felt loth to discharge the wanderer, as I intended doing in a day or two.

Brindle's calf is thriving finely, and Shag looks somewhat better after the grooming he had this morning; by and by we will have him on the lawn, and try to make him and Birdie better acquainted.

The weather is so pleasant and the meadow looks so much dryer, I return to the house and get out my gun in hopes of finding some English snipe on the low grounds. Dash, my noble setter, whom, amidst the

variety of topics which have engaged my pen, I have forgotten to mention, is almost beside himself at sight of my gun, so long laid aside. He runs and turns and hunts the lawn in the wildest manner, then comes up to me and crouches at my feet whilst I charge my piece. A fine and full-blooded setter is Dash, the treasured gift of a friend who has long been gone

"To the dim unknown."

Many are the woodcocks we have shot together on the meadows of the Delaware and amidst Jersey swamps; many the quail flushed on autumn stubble-fields. But those days are over, and it is seldom that I hunt now! Dash is getting old too, and fat and lazy; he loves better to lie dozing in the sunshine on the cottage porch, than soil his coat with black swamp mud or tangle it with briars.

It is a novelty to him now, and we go toward the meadow with careful step. Dash is wild, and I have to restrain him. There! a bird rises and is off with rapid zigzags; a little farther and up gets another; I fire as he turns and drop him. Charge, Dash! I may want two barrels for the next one. Another and still another rises, and I get two out of the four. The meadow stretches for a half mile along the creek, and then merges into swamp and woodland, on which doubtless the woodcock are plenty in July. By the

time I reach home there are five birds in my pocket, whose succulent flesh will make us a glorious supper after our return from Bridge-valley to-night.

Dinner has been over for some time, but thoughtful hands have placed in the heater before the fire a plate or two of substantials and a dish of some delicate compound, Blanche's invention and handiwork. Whilst I eat, Birdie is in the hall, wondering at the birds and caressing them after his fashion, till Bridget takes them to the kitchen.

Blanche practises the last new Polka, which she does not fancy much because it is not difficult enough; she loves dashing, brilliant music, like Jullien's and Herz's. Minnie is almost lost in my great reading chair—

“An antique chair
Cushioned with cunning luxury”—

and deeply absorbed with the glowing pages of Hans Anderson's “Improvisatore.”

We are to have tea served early, for there are three miles to drive to Bridge-valley, and I send orders to Teddy about the conveyance. The couch before the fire looks inviting, and, taking up “Cosmos,” which I have nearly finished, I read till the book drops out of my hand, and almost unconsciously I am dozing.

Blanche's music was soothing, and Minnie's attitude was drowsily suggestive; besides, I was reading of

stellar research, which savors of drowsy night; so it is not surprising that I was overpowered.

The clatter of the cups and saucers, however, rouses me, and Blanche, who likes to get the advantage of me sometimes, exclaims, “There, cousin Harry, you say you never sleep in the daytime; why, you have been sound asleep and snoring for an hour; you owe me a pair of gloves too—Bajou's best, dove color, number seven—don't forget.” Looking at the clock, I have to plead guilty, and my fair cousin has no doubt earned the gloves; in fact, I felt the impress of her lips upon my forehead when I woke.

My demure Minnie, who is little older than her companion, laughs at her gay raillery. She is not jealous, and says I shall pay the gloves.

What a happy home is ours! How closely are the hearts of its in-dwellers united! But one of these days Blanche, whose very presence is as a ray of sunlight and a blessing, is to go out from us and form new ties—new associations. We often think of it, and are selfish enough to wish it otherwise; but it is human nature.

As the sun sets we take a cup of tea, reserving our appetites for the better appreciation of the supper in store for us, and soon the wagon is at the door.

We take an easterly direction now, for the little settlement at Bridge-valley lies amidst the hills equidistant from Hillsdale and another village of the same

size farther south. After the hills are crossed, we come into a wide and fertile valley, through which a rapid creek winds, whose waters furnish motive power sufficient to drive a large paper and grist mill the year round. These probably formed the nucleus round which the village has gathered and grown. This is the old post route, and an antiquated tavern with a high sign-post, from which a weather-beaten portrait of the "Father of his Country" hangs creaking and dangling, still offers dubious "accommodation for man and beast."

This, with the post-office store on one corner, and a rival one on the other, a butcher's and baker's shop, a shoe store, and the "meeting-house," mainly constitute the village of Bridge-valley.

The place derives its name from the noble stone structure which spans the stream on two massive arches, forming the only substantial connection of the two shores for a distance of three miles.

We reach the "meeting-house," as they choose to call it, in good season. It is plainly a *gala-night* in Bridge-valley. The sheds are occupied by every description of vehicle, from the lumber-box family wagon, with its spring-seats covered with buffalo skins, to the light, spider-bodied sulky, driven by some "fast" young man with a fast horse.

Aspiring youths with very stiff collars and fanciful

cravats, stand in knots about the door, awaiting the lecturer. Inside, the plain pine benches are pretty well filled with promiscuous occupants. Staid farmers and their wives in unassuming apparel; smart-looking beaux, whip in hand, sitting snugly between gaily-dressed, buxom maidens, to many of whom this is doubtless an eventful occasion, an epoch in their lives. On the foremost benches, noisy and inquiring boys sit, scraping their feet over the sanded floor, and slyly munching peanuts and mint-stick *à la* "National."

Here and there in the assembly, we recognize a familiar face, drawn hither like ourselves from curiosity or to enjoy a moonlight drive. Soon a wonderful commotion at the door, and a sudden influx of the "outsiders," herald the coming of the lecturer. There is considerable excitement for a while in the assembly: a great many have bad coughs, numerous heads bob this way and that, and the boys in front whisper and giggle and rub their hands together in anticipation of fun. Two youngsters in front of us joke about the "lecturer's hair," which really does stand from his head as though it was magnetized. When silence is restored to some degree, the "Professor" mounts the platform, and addresses his audience. He talks of Mesmer, and Gall, and Spurzheim, and enlarges upon "magnetic influences" and "phrenological developments." He indulges in a great

many hard words, among which are "clairvoyance" and "psychology," whereupon some of his listeners look very much edified, though they have not the remotest idea of their meaning. He tried very hard to convert unbelievers to his doctrine, which he insists "is as true as the gospel," and that he will prove it by "ocular demonstration if any of the audience will step to the stage:" to which Blanche adds, *sotto voce*, "and be made fools of."

Upon this invitation from the "Professor," one or two of the older boys in front go upon the platform and take their seats; and soon after, two young men from the rear of the room join them. They are each provided with some talismanic bit of zinc and silver combined, and directed to keep their eyes upon it. Whilst they are thus employed, the lecturer proceeds with his elucidations. In a few minutes there is a titter among the audience, for one of the "subjects" is nodding in an unequivocal manner; soon another follows suit, and then a third, but the remaining one is not "susceptible," and he is discharged. The Professor now makes sundry gestures and manipulations over the individuals, and soon "wills" them to do marvellous things. One imagines he is fishing, and goes through all the movements pertaining to the art; another fancies himself to be Henry Clay, and makes a speech after the style of the statesman. The other makes wry faces at tasting

a glass of water the lecturer gives him, thinking it to be vinegar; all of which is very amusing and "convincing" to the audience.

We have seen enough, however, and leave before we are made converts of. I remain decidedly skeptical, and as to the ladies, they seem equally unbelieving. Teddy alone expresses his undisguised opinion, in declaring "they can't humbug him."

Our ride home is delightful, and Charley whirs us over the road at a glorious rate, for in half an hour from the meeting-house, we are sitting cozily by the parlor fire, expatiating on the merits and demerits of the evening's entertainment.

By and by, a savory and appetizing odor penetrates the house, and when the table is spread in the dining-room, we are summoned to our supper. There is everything necessary to its appreciation, but the salad, that we think grows so slowly. Blanche and I enjoy the birds with epicurean zest, but Minnie, a true disciple of Epicurus, craves their heads for the dainty bits that are within. What do you think of that, oh! sage and genial Frank—Forrester? Is not her taste appreciative?

It is Saturday night. A sensation of weariness comes over us, even at the remembrance, and we go early to bed. "Good night, cousin!" "Good night, Minnie!"—"Bon soir, Blanche; pleasant dreams!"

V.
 ALERE FLAMMAM
 SABBATH in the country! a day of real rest and quiet, except for those employments which are always necessary, even in the performance of religious duty.

The clatter of the mill is stopped, that whir and clatter so familiar, that we do not think of it till it is missed. The garden tools are laid aside; Pulaski has gone to his new home, and the halloo of the boy, who has been all the week ploughing farmer Mead's corn ground, is hushed for the day.

We hear the bell of Hillsdale church—our church—but faintly through the intervening woods; and fainter still, that of the meeting-house at Bridge-valley, over the hills.

Breakfast over, and morning duties attended to, we prepare for church, in which there is service but once during the day. Blanche, however, changes her mind as she is about to get into the carriage, and says she does not feel very well, and would rather not go; so we go without her. Ah! Blanche, I well know what affects you, and why your eyes looked so tearful this

morning; but you must try to conquer this proneness to melancholy!

"Yes," replies Minnie to my soliloquy, which I had unconsciously spoken aloud. "She must do it, for it is affecting her health; she is too doubting and apprehensive, and it is all for another, too." We reach the church as the bell ceases tolling. It is an old Dutch building, with a high modern-built steeple, and the interior has been so completely modified to our ideas of comfort, it is doubtful if the Van Winkles and Wynkoops, and all the other "Vans" and "Koops," who helped to build it, would recognize their handiwork, if they could take a peep at it from their graves, which lie under its shadow.

The congregation is large and wealthy, for it is the only church in the place, if we except a small frame building occupied by the Catholics as a chapel. Our pastor, though old and gray-headed, is still faithful and vigorous, truly a vigilant "watchman on the towers of Zion." He preaches to us in plain terms the truths of the gospel, avoiding those controversial and labyrinthine doctrines, amidst which some of our teachers love to flounder.

Good old man! we sit and listen to your words, and go to our homes wiser and better for their influence—not mystified and misled.

We reach the cottage with pleasant reflections on

what we have heard, and find our cousin absorbed in the perusal of some sombre and hypochondriac memoir, whose spirit is probably in unison with her present state of feeling.

Minnie kisses her, and inquires if she feels any better. "Not much, cousin," replies Blanche.

"No, nor you never will, Blanche," I add, "unless you lay aside that book; better read good Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' than that, in your present morbid state."

Birdie, whose laughing face and winsome frolics are enough to cure the "hypo" in any body, has escaped Bridget's eye, and rushes into the room, with his resplendent frock of Spring colors and material half buttoned. I take him on my knee, and ask him the few questions from the Child's Catechism which are plain to his comprehension. He knows them already from frequent rehearsal, and soon slips from my knee to prattle with his "Aunty Blanche."

But Blanche is not in the humor for it, and the little fellow gets a book, and sits down on the floor to amuse himself with his own resources.

I take up a book to read till dinner-time, but in a few minutes I hear Birdie give a long-drawn sigh, as if from the very depths of his tiny heart; his book is thrown aside, and with the versatility of childhood, he flies to some other attraction. How suggestive, though

comparatively meaningless, was that sigh! Age sighs beneath the weight of years; manhood, with the burden of care; youth longs for a better and a happier day, and childhood sighs amidst its playthings.

The afternoon comes, the warm, quiet Sabbath afternoon. It is a dreamy one, and I am inclined to sit in my luxurious reading chair, and fall unconsciously to sleep over my "Theron and Aspasio."

But I take my cane, and walk toward the belt of woods which lies between us and our neighbor Mead. There, under a spreading chestnut, I sit and view the fair scene that stretches away before me. I think of Birdie's sigh, and weave in my memory some rhyming thoughts, which if I keep till then, shall be inscribed in Blanche's scrap-book when the "lamps are lighted."

Lured by the voice of the cascade not far distant, I go homeward by the way of Hermit's Dell, and loitering there awhile, it is evening ere I reach the house.

Minnie is reading aloud from my book, and Blanche is attentively listening with unclouded brow. Reader! if any there may be, who shall scan these desultory pages, are you conversant with "Theron and Aspasio"? If not, get it; it is a book for your rural Sabbath; read the fourteenth dialogue, and marvel not that some love the country.

"Blanche, you feel better, do you not?" I ask.

"Yes, cousin, I am quite well now. Say no more about my foolish whims; I know I am doubtful sometimes without cause, but then, I cannot help having presentiments."

"Ah! Blanche, you know what we are told: 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' Bring me your 'index rerum,' if you will." It is cheerfully handed me, and I write therein, Bowring's translation of the Chinese maxim.

"To seek relief from doubt, in doubt,
From woe in woe, from sin in sin,
Is but to drive a tiger out,
And let a hungrier wolf come in."

There, look at that sometimes, Blanche, not only now, but in after-life. It has been in my memory for years.

"I will," comes from her trembling lips.

"Do not put away the book yet, Blanche. Do you remember Birdie's sigh this morning? When tea is over, I have a few lines to write: some of my afternoon's rhyming."

The evening comes, with its cheerful fire-light, for we need a little yet, and the astral throws its pleasant light upon the table, round which we sit.

Minnie re-opens the book she was reading, and Blanche finds another, whilst I take from the book-

case an old calf-covered volume of Donne's Sermons, wherein there is so much of rare worth and beauty.

So we sit and read till bed-time, when I take up Blanche's scrap-book again, wherein is written in fairy characters, many a fugitive gem of prose and verse, gathered here and there, as they have struck her fancy. Their burden now is mainly of joy and love and hope. Will they be less shadowy hereafter—those sunshiny pages? Who can tell!

Blanche shows me where I may write my effusion, and it is soon indited.

BIRDIE'S SIGH.

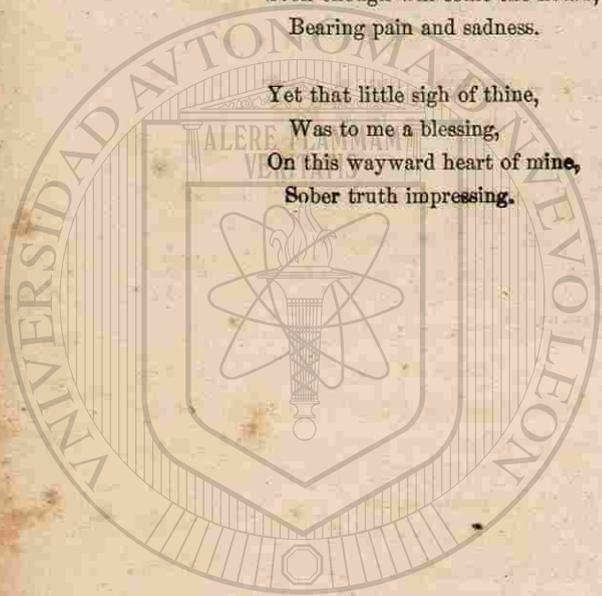
Child! I heard thee sadly sigh,
Midst thy trifles playing:
Still, no tear-drop from thine eye,
Down thy cheek is straying.

Dost thou know a secret grief
In thine infant bosom?
Like the frost on bursting leaf,
Or on tender blossom?

Soon enough thy heart will be
Conversant with sorrow;
Now thy day is full of glee,
With as glad a morrow.

Like the bee amidst the flowers,
 Pass that day in gladness;
 Soon enough will come the hours,
 Bearing pain and sadness.

Yet that little sigh of thine,
 Was to me a blessing,
 On this wayward heart of mine,
 Sober truth impressing.



UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS

VI.

THE early rains and late blighting frosts are over, and on the bright weeks of Spring we are gliding rapidly towards Summer. The early fruits have begun to ripen, and the gardens and fields promise opulent returns to the labor of the husbandman.

Blanche has already been a week at her uncle's place, Glen-Clunie, a day's travel westward, and we are anxiously awaiting her return. The house seems gloomy, in a degree, when her gay laugh is not ringing through it.

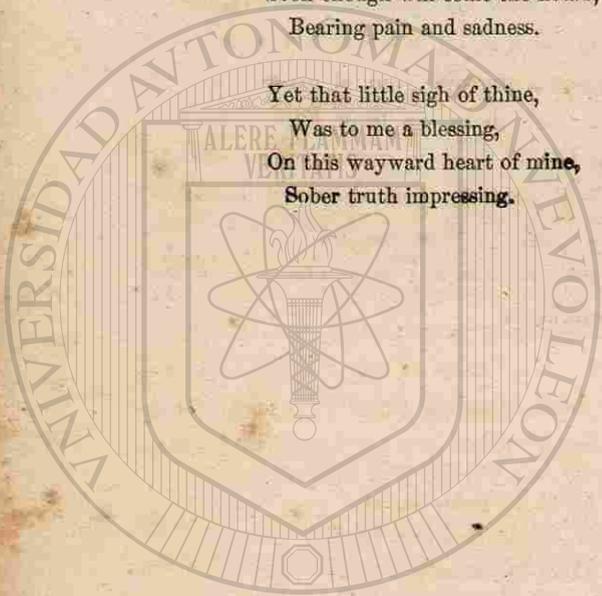
Minnie says, this is a foretaste of what is to be hereafter; for when Frank comes back from his travels, she is to be married. We can hardly realize it; for a year or two ago, she was a fairy-like girl, just from school.

"Standing with reluctant feet,
 Where the brook and river meet;
 Womanhood and childhood sweet."

Now, almost a woman, accomplished and beautiful, she is worthy of all the love that can be lavished on her by the heart of man.

Like the bee amidst the flowers,
 Pass that day in gladness;
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 Where the brook and river meet;
 Womanhood and childhood sweet."

Now, almost a woman, accomplished and beautiful, she is worthy of all the love that can be lavished on her by the heart of man.

It is a soft star-lit evening, and we sit on the porch, now festooned with twining and odorous creepers, and listen to the sounds which form our out-door melodies: the occasional chirp of a sleepless bird upon its nest in the sweet-briar; the bell on the factory at Bridge-valley striking the quarter-hours; the murmur of waters; the breeze-whisperings, and now and then the hoot of the owl in farmer Mead's woods.

Birdie's little "chippy," doubtless listens to the last ominous sound, its heart throbbing with all a mother's anxieties.

We have been to Briar-Cliff to day: a deserted old mansion of which we had frequently heard, and long desired to see. It is five miles inland, and a pleasant drive most of the distance along the post road.

We had started soon after breakfast from home, and spent some hours there, wandering over the desolated grounds. The approach to the mansion is by a short and narrow lane leading from the main road, and going no farther than the enclosure of the property.

We entered the unclosed gate-way, flanked by massive stone pillars, leaning and defaced; and keeping the gravelled road, now overgrown with grass and weeds, a drive of a few hundred yards brought us to the house.

It stands amidst majestic locust and chestnut trees, mingled with indigenous evergreens, under which is a

level sward, sloping and undulating, which must have been a beautiful lawn; but now covered with long, waving grass and underbrush. At a little distance from the rear of the house, you stand upon the edge of a cliff and look down into a glen, full of dense verdure, and holding in its bosom a deep, dark pond of living water. The sides of the cliff, steep and rugged, are covered with tangled briars and creepers, and from this the place derives its name.

It was melancholy to walk the long, winding paths of the once beautiful garden, now a wilderness of rank weeds. Choice fruit trees and luxuriant grape vines were left unpruned, and threw their straggling branches far and wide, yet giving promise of fruit in abundance. In the pleasure grounds, a few hardy plants were still living and blossoming; but everywhere else was nothing but desolation and gloom.

The house was closed, though the frail door could have been easily burst open. It was no less dilapidated than the out-buildings which surround it, though it bore witness to the action of fire upon its wings, probably at a remote time. There was no living thing upon the premises, except the birds and squirrels, which sing and gambol undisturbed in fearless freedom.

We have never heard the full history of those who once lived there, and we wondered why it was deserted, and that no one had ever been tempted to purchase

and restore the property to its former beauty, for it has evidently been highly improved at no inconsiderable expense and labor.

As we emerged from the avenue into the lane, on our way homeward, we noticed a small cottage, which had escaped us before, almost hid from view by a hedge of willows on the road side. It was not far from the gate-way we had just passed through, and had probably been a lodge or tenant house attached to Briar-Cliff mansion.

An old, decrepid man sat on the door-step, watching a sportive child playing with a kitten on the grass before him. He seemed to be dreaming of his own youthful days, if we might judge by his listless expression and disregard of our passing.

I proposed to stop under pretence of giving Charley a draught of water from the well near by, thinking we might gain some information concerning the spot we had been visiting.

Minnie, none the less curious, assented; so, tying the horse by the fence, we entered the picket gate amidst the willows. The child, probably unaccustomed to the sight of strangers, left its sport and ran into the house crying. The old man essayed to rise, and respectfully asked us into the house, but I insisted on his not disturbing himself, as we only stopped for a moment. "Ay, but ye must sit," said he; "Jenny!

bring a chair for the people!" he continued, to some one inside. It was brought by Jenny, a woman of middle age, cleanly and neatly dressed, whom we rightly supposed was his married daughter, and the mother of the child that was playing in the yard. We could not but accept the cheerfully proffered hospitality of the strangers, and Minnie took the seat while I watered Charley.

On my return, I found Minnie and old grandfather well acquainted, for he appeared to be communicative in the extreme; so much so, that his listener could not put in a question, even if it was necessary. I sat down on the door-step near him and listened for a while too, but his subject was irrelevant to the one I wished to be informed on, and I let him edify Minnie whilst my inquiries were addressed to "Jenny." This did not suit the old man though; he wanted to give all the information himself.

"Ay, ye want to know about the old house up there, do ye? I know all about it," said he, as soon as he heard our conversation.

"Yes, my friend, we have been there this morning for the first time, and are a little curious about it."

"Well, I'll tell ye. I was a boy about here when they builded the big house there, and a power of men was at it, a-workin' on it; I said I was a boy, some twenty-two or three, thereabout; we wasn't

men then right out of school; and I worked at carpentering with old Boss Jones, dead, you know. Well, I worked on the house odd spells, when dad wasn't harvesting or makin' cider, and I knows about the house, roof to cellar. When it was done, there was nary a house in the country about, near it. Oh! dear me; the rooms, and the closets, and the cupboards, and sich a hall! all carved and painted like, what d'ye call it? friscoes; I forget, it's so long gone. Howsomever, they was grand folks what came in coaches when it was done, and sich furniture and trampery as they brought, too, among us farmers and sich like; and sich horses, big and slick, and black men to mind and drive 'em. There was an old man and his wife and two boys, about twenty-five and thirty, like you, sir, or thereabouts; and they were wild enough too—made the mud and dust fly on yon road there. People said they'd been over the sea and got forrin ways; I don't know, but they used to talk of their grand-dad bein' an Englishman, and a lord, too. In summers there was loads of company from the city, and they lived high at the Hall, we called it; plenty wine, and fruits in the garden, lots of it, and to spare: look at it now, goin' to waste."

"My good friend," said I, for the old man had stopped a minute to get breath, "we do not want to tire you, only tell us 'he reason why no one lives there now,

why some one does not buy it and put it in order; there are always purchasers to be found for such places. Who holds the property?"

"Well, have patience. I'll tell you in time, sir; you must know whys and wherefores, always. Ye see, the old man took sick after he lived there a spell, mortal sick, and doctors, city doctors couldn't save him; so he died. A great funeral that was; he wasn't buried hereabouts; some big church-yard in the city; Trinity, I believe; and then the old lady lived with the boys; but they was away a good deal, and she was lonesome, very, only an old nurse with her betimes; and then she pined away, and went after the old man; and the boys had it all their own way awhile, till they got quarrelling about money matters, and went to law, and the old place 'gan to go to rack, and the servants wasted every thing.

"That was fifteen years ago, or thereabouts; time goes so fast now, these old days! Well, the law giv the Hall to one on 'em, the oldest, and then, arter that, the other never come here again; they said he went over the sea to live. I never saw him more. And the one what lived there was always gloomy like; he never liked no one, and people hereabout never liked him, he was so grum and short. The boys called him Old Grum' arter a while, and he sent off all the servants but one white-headed negro, black enough too;

the boys about called him 'Guinny,' for he told 'em he came from there when he was a youngster. He used to cook vittles for the master, and work in the garden, and do all sorts of work and chores around. Well, by this time, the young man that was had got to be nigh fifty or thereabouts, and he takes a notion the house was hanted, and he had a room made out-doors somewhere, and shut up the old house, and made old 'Guinny' sleep at the foot of his bed. People got to say he was a miser, and only eat bread and cheese, and sich like, and put his silver, all he could get, in holes and rags, and sich places. He looked poor enough, skin and bone, and the old nigger not much better; he was a true friend though; old Guinny never said a hard word about the man:

"Sometimes, there would be people come from the city to see the miser, but by and by they stopped; he didn't want to see nary body. He took sick too, one winter, when he wouldn't have fire, and no doctor either afterward; and he lay so a while, till it got on his lungs, and he didn't last long.

"Old Guinny was with him when he went, and cried like a baby too; and when word got to the city of his death, some old friends come up and took him down to where the old folks was buried; and then they sent word to his brother, and after two or three months, or thereabouts, they had a great vandoo at the Hall; but

his own brother wasn't there, only folks from the city and towns about. There was heaps of rubbish, and what money the lawyer found, what old Guinny had safe laid by, he took to keep, I s'pose, for the other one; and so no one has been in the house since. People about here won't go there; they say it's hanted. Boys go there in day-times to get the fruit when it's ripe; they wont go there of nights though. I s'pose the brother what's away hasn't come back yet, and so they don't sell the old place. It got afire once too, and burnt some, but not much; some boys was 'spected of it. I'd tell ye great stories of doin's there, if ye'd wait a while, or come again, but I guess that's enough now."

"Yes," replied Minnie, "that will do, my old friend, perhaps we will have another talk the next time we come." We both acknowledged our thanks, but the old man would not let us go till we ate a piece of bread and butter, and drank a glass of buttermilk right out of the churn, which we did with great relish.

"Jenny" told us, when we came again, her husband, who was away from home then, would take us down to the pond we had seen from the cliff, and catch us a mess of trout, with which it is full, notwithstanding its frequent dragging by the boys of the neighborhood. It was a pleasant hour we spent with the garrulous old

man, and he seemed to live over the best part of his life during the recital of his tale.

As we sit on the porch and talk over our excursion, we fancy the interest with which Blanche, who is inclined to be romantic, would visit those deserted grounds, and listen to the narrative of our superannuated informer.

Strange it is, that in this enlightened age of ours, this short life too, wherein we may gather and cherish so many elements of true happiness, a man can become the vile slave of accumulating gold! living devoid of every comfort to—

“Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him.”

VII.

JUNE, sweet, leafy June has come! bringing roses and strawberries, and other pleasant things, among which, last but far from least, is our radiant and long absent Blanche, laden with gifts and messages of love from our kindred at Glen-Clunie.

We have many questions to ask about Nelly, and Kate, and Bob, just from college; and in return, Blanche has so much to tell, she hardly knows where to begin. In a day or two, however, all is thought of and communicated, and Blanche settles down again to our quiet life, yet looking forward to her brother's return with no little anxiety.

We had a few hurried lines from him yesterday, written at Naples, as he was embarking for the Ionian Islands, closing thus:—“I may go to Egypt, but if I do not, you will see me as soon as a letter could reach you.” Blanche says when he receives *her* letter, he will not go farther east; it will bring him right home.

Minnie and her cousin both intimate a desire to go trout-fishing to-day, in accordance with a promise

made some weeks ago, and which I had not forgotten. It was proposed to wait till the afternoon, when the pool would be more shady, and the walk pleasanter; so after dinner the ladies equipped themselves with sun-bonnets and stout shoes, and were soon on the way to Hermit's Dell, whilst I followed their tripping feet, bearing poles and all necessary accompaniments. A few minutes walking brought us into the shadows of the glen, past the cabin of La Solitaire; along the brook side till we crossed the rustic bridge below the cascade, and wound our way up the steep bank, fragrant with cedar boughs, to the brink of the pool.

My companions not being skilled in fly-fishing, preferred other bait, which Teddy had provided, and I fixed their hooks for them. Blanche, entering into the sport with great enthusiasm, caught the first fish, and a very fine one, which disengaged itself from the hook when landed, and was quickly secured in the basket. Minnie, the very impersonation of patience, reclined upon the bank, waiting for a bite at her quiescent hook; a Minnie catching "Minnies," for her first fish was one of those diminutive shiners which so often annoy the angler by their pertinacious nibbles at his bait. Minnie has no fondness for the craft; she only came to keep us company. Her minnows, however, did me good service, for not finding my fly taking, I substituted a live fish, and was very successful. In

two hours our basket was full, some of the fish weighing nearly a pound, though we followed the stream some distance from the pool, before we took them.

Blanche was uncommonly successful, although a novice in the art, taking almost as many as I did, and taking them from the hook herself with perfect non-chalance.

There are some beautiful walks through the surrounding woods, which we had never explored, so, when we became tired of fishing, we took a long stroll of discovery, embracing quite a circuit.

The ridge which commences at Hermit's Dell runs for miles and miles eastward from the river, and is covered with dense woods, most of which are primeval. Here and there they have been cut off by their owners, but a dense second growth is rapidly filling up the openings.

Where a little spot of natural meadow lay along the stream, we came upon the goats which belong to our neighbor La Solitaire; and as the afternoon was wearing away, they were browsing homeward.

It was quite a pastoral picture, and we could almost imagine ourselves for the moment amidst Alpine hills or the ridges of La Cava, and we wondered if it might not be that the similitude of these hills and streams to those of her native land, had won the heart and feet of the Italian woman hither.

It was sundown when we stood upon the bridge again, returning, yet lingering awhile to watch the foamy waters of the cascade, and feel its cool spray upon our faces.

The cabin of La Solitaire lay near our homeward path. She came to the door as we passed, and we were inclined to stop and exchange a few words with her, the first opportunity we had ever had, but seeming to be in dishabille, she retired inward, as if to avoid an interview.

Blanche was much disappointed, for it was the first time she had manifested any desire to approach the stranger, with whose appearance she was evidently pleased at the first glance. "You will have other opportunities, Blanche, and I expect I shall introduce you, after all, for I am determined to know something more than we do of the woman."

"Yes, Harry," replies Minnie, "you are quite famous for making wonderful acquaintances, and we must depend on you for an introduction to La Solitaire."

I felt a little chagrined at this termination to our excursion, for my sole object in making it, was to get the ladies into the good graces of our neighbor, whom I, for some undefined reason, had always felt an interest in. Still, though she appeared unapproachable, as we have heard she was, I did not despair.

When we reached home, Birdie was riding his pony

on the lawn, under the guidance of Bridget, and the little fellow was enjoying himself to the utmost. Our approach was, however, a pretext for his being tired of riding, and Shag was soon in the back-ground.

We had a royal supper of broiled trout, and a modicum of strawberries, the first of the season, which Teddy's sharp eyes had discovered in the sunniest portion of the bed.

Some pleasant neighbors came in after tea, and with a stroll along the river, a short and breezy sail to the light-house and back, and a little music at the house, the evening glides away. Not our evening though, for we sit an hour or two after our friends leave, and Blanche listens to the description of our excursion to the deserted domain of Briar Cliff with great interest, proposing, when Frank arrives, that we shall all go and spend a day there.

Ah! Frank, I expect you will be valued more than ever, when you return; you are becoming of great importance to us, in more ways than one! There are even half a dozen bottles of that amber olive oil reserved for your enjoyment, not to mention the spiced fish, over which, with our rural bread and butter and a bottle of "Sauterne," we shall talk away many a cosy, lamp-lit hour!

"Is the day fixed yet, Blanche, rain or shine, Frank

or no Frank? Come, you have kept your secret long enough." Blanche's reply is non-committal, though I shall probably be informed. "Don't ask me, cousin, Minnie knows;" and the next sound I hear is my favorite "Don Pasquale," with a new and brilliant after-piece, something she has brought from Glen-Clunie.

Minnie whispers that R——, our prospective cousin, intends visiting us soon, and as he is one of us already, he will be welcome as ever to this our country home. How doubly happy Blanche will be!

VIII.

LEANING over the pool whose full bosom nurses the sportive rapids, there is a massive rock, from the crevices of which, dense cedars spring and mingle, forming an arbor almost impervious to the wind or sun. It is a favorite resort of mine, and sitting there in the breezy afternoons of June, I while away many an hour in enticing the silver trout from their cool nooks below, by means of worm or fly too tempting for their epicurean taste to resign.

It was on one of these occasions that I won the acquaintance of La Solitaire's child. He had been searching the woods for the goats, and attracted by the wild flowers which grow in such profusion along the margin of the stream, unconsciously drew near to where I was sitting.

The cast of my line upon the water first apprised him of my presence. Unaccustomed to strangers, he started back half affrighted, but a kind word or two and the proffer of a live fish in his hand, brought him to my side and we were soon friends. The remarkable beauty of the boy somewhat surprised me; it seemed so inconsistent with the humble and secluded

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life in which he was nurtured. Not that there is less of loveliness to be found amid the by-ways than the highways of the world, but there was a light in his dark eye and an expression about his lip which spoke of a spirit that, when cognizant of its strength and fitness, would demand a far wider sphere for the exercise of its powers.

Amused and made wiser by his childish prattle, the twilight was deepening before we started homeward, but a walk of a few minutes brought us into the glen. The goats which had found their way homeward were already enclosed for the night, as descending the hillside we looked down upon the cabin; and there in the door-way sat the child's mother watching for him, and wondering, no doubt, the cause of his delay. Coming as we did from an opposite, or rather angular direction to that in which she was looking, we were not seen till nearly at the house. Though my first near meeting with the woman, who had been to me an enigma, I was not wholly a stranger to her, for she had seen me frequently pass her dwelling in my strolls through the valley. First offering me a seat, she gently chided the boy for his long absence, but for which I apologized, as being perhaps the cause of it. No one could mistake the parentage of the child on seeing his mother; his were the same dark eyes and hair, the same glowing complexion, in everything alike except

form and accent. It needed no very skilful ear to discover that she was of foreign birth or parentage; I fancied her an Italian from the flowing softness of her accent, and her physical peculiarities; and my impressions were strengthened when I surveyed the apartment in which I sat. It was small and scantily furnished, but scrupulously neat and clean. A plaster statuette of the Virgin and child stood upon the mantel-shelf, and over it hung a highly colored but coarse picture of Guido's *Magdalen delle radici*, whose original I had seen in the Sciarra palace at Rome. These objects bespoke her religion, and they may be her comfort too, if her faith in them is sincere. As I rose to depart, my eyes were momentarily attracted by what appeared to be a picture shrouded in black muslin and hanging in a sort of cupboard or recess beside the chimney. It stimulated my curiosity, but appearing not to notice it, I took my leave only to await with feverish anxiety another interview.

It was evident to my mind that she was no ordinary woman; that whatever she might be now, however humble her lot or employments, she had or should have adorned a different station in life; and so the little insight I had accidentally gained of our mysterious neighbor, furnished food for musing on my lonesome walk homeward. I strived to divine what accident or vagary had brought this woman from her

native land and placed her here in comparative solitude. Was it some deep wrong, or disgrace, or poverty, or a misanthropic spirit? I should judge from my observation it was neither of these. It might be then some deep heart-sorrow; for grief seeks solitude and looks for solace often "from Nature up to Nature's God." Better that it were so than otherwise, and it might be said of her as of another, when seeking the comfort and sympathy man could not give—

"She found it on the breast
Of nature kindly ever; there she leaned
Sick, worn with long unrest,
And gladly learned she was her child unweaned."

So Petrarch found healing for a wounded spirit amidst the shadows of Vaucluse.

Another hour, and sitting on the knoll which overlooks the river, we three, the congenial spirits of our household, enjoy pleasant converse. It is one of those moon-lit, delicious eves which so often bless our American June; when it seems a happiness merely to live and breathe the balmy Southern airs, laden as they are for us with the breath of roses from our carefully tended garden. We talk of old Brindle and argue if her pretty calf had better be weaned and put in order for the butcher. I decide in the affirmative, but Blanche objects on account of its beauty, though she

knows we require more cream now, as strawberries are ripening, and city friends are to help us eat them. But utility finally carries the point, and Brindle's nursling is sentenced; so on the morrow Teddy will have orders accordingly.

And then we wonder if the meadow by the creek will yield hay enough this season to keep old Charley and Brindle and Birdie's pony through the winter, not forgetting the two South-down cossets we keep tethered on the lawn; but the decision on this question is deferred till after the change of the moon, which the almanac presages will bring dry weather.

A little distance down the road that skirts the river bank, there is a low red house in which old Jimmy Pike, the fisherman, lives. He has a daughter wasting away with consumption, and the doctor says she cannot last long. We see a light glimmering from her chamber window, and now and then discern the form of her old mother, bowed by grief and years, moving about the room, busied in tending the child who should have been the staff of her age. We often send trifling delicacies to the sick girl; but our sympathies are freshly awakened, and thinking what a treat a bowl of strawberries would be to the fevered invalid, our tender-hearted cousin promises to pick them early in the morning, fresh and cool, and take them to her with some new cream.

As the evening wears on into the early night, we hear far away amidst the river hills the faint echoes of revolving paddles, heralding the approach of boats going northward from the city; and soon we see their colored lights emerging from between the mountains, as they speed their way like spirits of the night.

What a varied and priceless freight they bear! Youth and age—rich and poor; hearts, gay and bounding with hope—heavy with grief and despair; forms, fair and graceful—bowed by disease and years; some, seeking pleasure and change—others searching for a home and rest. But they have passed like a dream, and all is still again but the measured ripple of the tide, the breeze whispering amid the tree-tops, and, above all, the dash of falling waters away in the depths of Hermit's Dell.

We think and speak of Frank, and wonder if we shall hear from him again, and in what "haunts of old romance" his feet may wander now. He may be amid the Doric ruins of Greece, or within the shadows of the Pyramids; but wherever he is, our thoughts are with him.

So we sit and talk musingly till the moon sinks behind the western hills, and then loiter houseward to close our eyes within that dreamy realm, whose *far niente* is more perfect than that of Parthenope.

IX.

FRANK is here at last, and our first intimation of his arrival was his well-known shout under our chamber window at sun-rise this morning. I was up and half dressed, for it is my custom in summer to be out of doors early; yet I was startled and surprised, and Minnie none the less so. In a minute I was at the door. "Harry!" "Frank! why, my dear fellow how are you?" was our mutual exclamation.

"Why, Frank, what brought you here at this time of day? How did you get here?"

The story was soon told; he had taken the night boat from the city, and consequently reaching our landing at a late hour, was obliged to remain at the miserable tavern there till daylight.

"Well, how are Blanche and Minnie and Birdie?"

But before I can reply they are in the room, and Blanche in her brother's arms, laughing and crying at a great rate.

"Why, brother, we never expected you so soon," says Blanche, "though you have been among the Turks, too; just look at his beard!"

Sure enough, Blanche might think so, for Frank's beard and moustache would be the pride of a Mussulman; it looked like a six month's growth.

We were all so excited and had so many questions to ask, all at once, breakfast was served before Frank thought of his toilet. This was soon attended to, and we gathered round the table—four as congenial spirits as might be found under one roof.

"Oh! how often I have thought of you all," said Frank; "how much I have dreamed of you! and Blanche; I was so afraid you would play truant, and run away before I got home. How much longer could I have trusted you?"

"Now, Frank, we will talk about that some other time; you know I am always guided by you."

"Yes, but we are told love laughs at bolts and wards; how is it, Harry?"

"It is so sometimes, Frank, but Blanche has been very reasonable; a little melancholy once in a while; but it is all over now, is it not, Blanche?"

"Yes, cousin, that verse you wrote in my *index rerum* cured me; I shall never forget it; and Frank must see it too."

After breakfast, Blanche monopolized her brother for an hour or two, whilst I attended to my various engagements about the place. There are dead fruit trees to be rooted up, at which Teddy is busy; and

the long shoots of the grape vines want guiding aright; always something to be done or thought of even on our limited possessions.

There is an unsightly heap of rock, too, which impedes somewhat of a view southward from the house, which must be quarried out, and converted into a wall to divide the pasture lot. The surrounding ground must be graded into a lawn, which will be enlarged in consequence; and so one improvement suggests another.

But Blanche has finished her private confab and gone into the house, leaving Frank to stroll about with me till dinner-time.

We go to the barn-yard and descant upon the merits of Brindle junior, whom the butcher is to take away to-morrow; then to the stable where Charley and Shag are domiciled, and so away to the pasture lot, of which Brindle is sole possessor. Its extremity is bounded by the belt of woods, through which the white farm-house of our neighbor Mead is plainly discernible, and in the adjoining field, the industrious old man himself, ploughing his corn. He is a perfect pattern of a farmer—never idle—and it is to be regretted that his only son, who is an erratic genius, does not possess the enterprise of his father.

We sit down under the spreading chestnut, my favorite seat here, and enjoy the fair landscape before

and around us. Memories of past days throng our spirits, and we talk over our wanderings together, the joys of the present and the hopes of the future, with all the license of long-tryed friendship. I reveal to him my interview with the divinity of Hermit's Dell, and the discoveries I had made in her lowly cabin, not spoken of before to Minnie or Blanche, for some good reason of my own. As we walk homeward, I take him to a point whence he can look down into the glen, and catch a glimpse of the cascade's foam through the dense foliage, and the lofty branches of the elm which overhang the dwelling of La Solitaire.

It is a fair sight; and he wonders not that I have made it so frequent a theme in my letters; he must visit its recesses to-morrow.

"Yes, Frank, you shall go; we will all go, and strive to unveil the mystery which shrouds the lonely dweller there."

Dinner is ready when we reach home, and Frank tastes for the first time his Florentine oil, which like the finest Neapolitan maccaroni, is seldom found on Italian tables; the best is sent abroad.

"It is the way of the world, Frank, even a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country."

During the afternoon, Frank and I drive to the landing after his choicest trunk, which he had ordered to be sent after him, and in whose contents, both

Minnie and Blanche have considerable interest. We return in due time, bringing the repository of treasures, and it is opened in the presence of many witnesses.

Snugly packed away amidst layers of clothing, are numerous little packets, marked with the names of the recipients—to be.

Blanche has several and Minnie her share also, whilst mine comes from the bottom, an elegant morocco case, enclosing a splendidly mounted hunting-knife.

"Many thanks, my brother Nimrod, for this reminder of our deer-hunts away on the Beaverkill, it may do us service yet; but no, it is too handsome for use." Minnie has unrolled her parcel, and displays a dress for Birdie of real "McGregor" plaid, marvellously fine. Frank says, he had to laugh when he read my letter conveying to him our various commissions, Minnie's was so very modest. But that is not all belonging to her; another wrapper contains a choice cameo from Rome, and a set of corals for Birdie.

Blanche is also well supplied; she has her lava ornaments, her embroidered slippers redolent with genuine attar of rose from the gardens of Stamboul; and in addition, some spider-web laces from Mechlin.

"How *apropos!* brother, you are very kind and thoughtful, and all in such good taste," says Blanche.

We all acknowledge our thanks to Frank for his

gifts and his judicious selection of them; but there are some other parcels for Glen-Clunie, which he unseals for our inspection, evincing no less taste and judgment.

There are some things of his own too, in the custom-house, which we shall see at some future time. A choice copy of "the Cenci," and Carlo Dolce's Magdalen, and some others, which all travellers love to remember, with alabasters and bronzes and other "knick-knacks," as he calls them

Evening again, and Frank is with us! We sit in the vine-shaded arbor on the knoll, and remember that it is almost eight months since he was last with us, just previous to his sailing.

We cannot realize it, neither can he, when he recounts to us the many spots of interest, and the various countries he has visited during the time.

From England to Italy and Turkey, through the intermediate central and southern countries of Europe, he has travelled, and returned to us full of information, not ephemeral and superficial, but lasting and solid. With all his enthusiastic love for the beautiful, not only in Nature, but in Art, it has been to him a tour of highest profit and pleasure; few would enjoy it more.

The evening wanes, and night comes. Minnie and

Blanche have left us, yet we linger on the porch, fragrant with the smoke from our choice cheroots: some Frank brought from the East.

We speak softly of Blanche's approaching marriage, and of arrangements connected therewith; of his future prospects and hopes, none the less interesting; of a country-seat not far from us that he has heard may be purchased, and of many other matters important to none but ourselves.

As Frank speaks of a country-seat for sale, I mention Briar Cliff, and wonder if it may not be the identical property of which he has heard. We will soon see, and if so, how very pleasant for us both, should it fall into my friend's hands. He has roamed and roved enough now, and longs to settle down in some quiet nook like ours, yet near enough to the city for occasional visits.

"I am tired of single-blessedness too, Harry, but you must not betray my prospects on this score yet; it is all *sub rosa*."

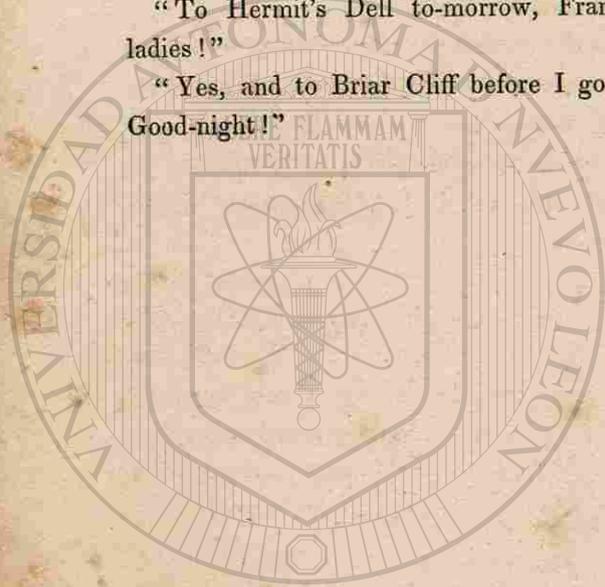
"No, Frank, but do not put the day off any longer than necessary; believe me, you will never think it came too soon, afterward. Profit by a friend's advice and experience. Be a bachelor no longer."

Stopping in the library before we retire, a cold supper, nicely spread, greets our eyes, and over the spiced anchovies, crisp salad, sweet bread and butter, and

iced sauterne, we sit till the small hours commence, and Minnie raps on the floor overhead.

"To Hermit's Dell to-morrow, Frank, with the ladies!"

"Yes, and to Briar Cliff before I go to the city. Good-night!"



UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS

X.

SAUNTERING laughingly along, Frank and Minnie, Blanche and I, went our way downward toward the Dell. We take with us our rods and baskets, ostensibly, for fishing, but that is not our chief object.

Frank is to see the cascade, the rustic bridge, the "big rock," and last, but not least, La Solitaire, if it may so happen.

Reaching the bridge, we stand a while leaning over its side to watch the swift waters beneath it, and for Frank to obtain the best view of the cascade. He marvels at its beauty, and asks me if it does not remind me of something I have seen elsewhere.

"Yes, Frank, one of the cascates which form the great Falls of the Reichenbach; I remember it well."

"It reminds me more," says Frank, "of Tivoli."

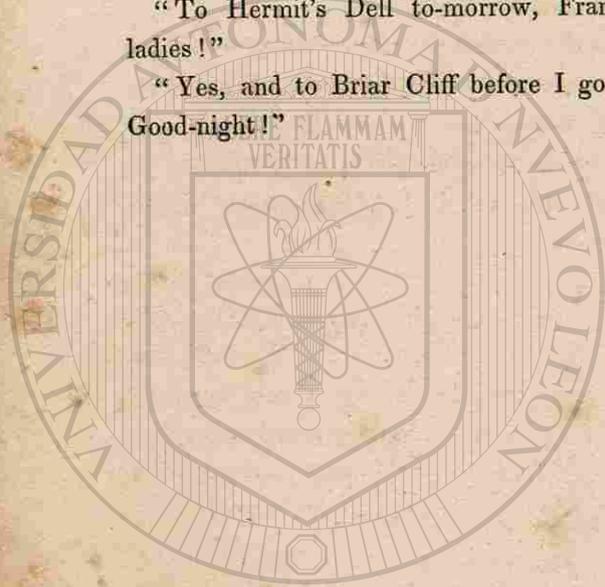
"How proud we should be of our sweet little waterfall!" exclaim Minnie and Blanche.

We climb the steep bank by a winding path amidst the dense cedars and hemlocks, and emerge by the great rock which overhangs the pool. Rude steps of nature's chiselling lead to the platform on its summit,

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where, under the hemlock branches which shade it, six persons may sit comfortably, if there were accommodations for the purpose.

My companions are pleased with my sequestered seat, and give me the credit of its discovery, but I show them on the trunk of the tree, hidden from superficial view, some characters, deeply carved into the bark, and almost overgrown. They are—a heart, and within it the letters, A. M.—K. G.

“There, friends, you see I am not the first who has trodden this ground, ‘hereby hangs a tale!’”

“Let us call it henceforth, the Lovers’ Rock,” says Minnie. “And so it shall be,” we all exclaim.

We linger there awhile, whilst Frank tries his hand with my fly-rod, catching a few fish; and then we roam through the woods, gradually ascending, till we stand upon the summit of a ridge, which, almost bare of trees, commands a prospect of considerable extent.

Northward on the high ground is our picturesque cottage, a mile distant. Beneath us lies Hermit’s Dell with its familiar murmurs. Westward stretches the river, and its opposite shores, sunny and beautiful; whilst nearer by, is the lonely cabin of La Solitaire, and the fair fields of farmer Mead lying along the hill-top behind it.

But the day is getting warm, and it is proposed that we walk homeward.

“I want a taste of goat’s milk,” says Frank; “suppose we go by the cabin, and get some.”

“Who ever heard of such a thing!” Blanche exclaims, for she had forgotten our neighbor’s idiosyncrasy.

“Why Blanche!” answers Frank, “in some parts of Europe you can find no other milk; it is excellent for delicate stomachs. If I get any, you shall taste it.”

We are soon near the cabin door, and admire the neatness of everything around it. The garden, though a mere patch, was well stocked and flourishing; the creepers were fantastically trained over the doors and lower windows, and a few flowering plants, tastefully disposed here and there, evinced careful tending.

Minnie and Blanche seemed mollified, and more kindly disposed than formerly towards the lonely woman. I had never been able to fathom their unwillingness to become acquainted with her, supposing they might have heard some scandal, or perhaps were in awe of a person living so incomprehensibly as La Solitaire.

The door was open, but no one discernible; and as our approach had been quiet, we were not perceived. Frank, free and easy as he is, advanced to the door and knocked. His summons was quickly answered by the woman, who seemed a little surprised on discerning us standing near by.

Frank gave her no time, however, to inquire his business; for, without ceremony, he made known his wish for a cup of milk, if she had it to spare. It was quickly brought, and a gracious invitation extended to us to come and partake of it also. Frank took the draught with all the gusto of a Swiss herdsman; and when another cupfull was offered to us, Blanche and Minnie each took a sip out of compliment to the donor, leaving me to finish it.

"Signor," said La Solitaire, "will not your friends sit awhile?" As the ice now seemed broken, the invitation was accepted: chairs were brought, and we sat, partly in the room and on the little porch without. After apologizing for our abrupt visit, Minnie and her new acquaintance were soon chatting sociably on various topics. Blanche had won the heart of Pedro, the dark-eyed boy, who had escaped our notice before, whilst Frank and I employed ourselves in taking observations of the fanciful interior within our view, and catching an occasional sentence of the conversation.

"Would you see one of his pictures? come with me," said La Solitaire to Minnie. They go towards the cupboard, which is formed between the chimney and the wall. The door is opened, and the black shroud, which had so excited my curiosity before, drawn aside by the hand of the Italian.

Our eyes were all turned and riveted upon the gem

revealed to us,—a "Magdalen" of such unearthly beauty, it seemed almost the production of an inspired hand. Frank and I stand amazed at its wondrous loveliness; we have seen many an old master-piece, but never before such a "Magdalen." Our companions share our enthusiasm, and Blanche stands before it with clasped hands, the image of wonderment.

It is indeed a marvellous production; she kneels before a narrow window through which a ray of sunlight is gleaming, lighting up her pale and tearful face, and the golden hair which streams adown her partially covered breast and shoulders in dishevelled masses. The dark grey robe which enshrouds her form and indicates her penitence, shows in fine contrast with the pallid yet life-like skin it touches. It is a picture of sin, penitence, and pardon.

"And this was the work of your husband, Signora?" inquired Frank.

"It was his last work, Signor; but will you not call me Bella?"

"Your husband is not living then? Bella," I continued.

"No, Signor, he has been dead almost six years; before I came here in the valley."

"Our neighbor has been informing me some little of her past life," said Minnie, "and we will not ask her to repeat it. It is time we were on our way home too,

it is almost our dinner hour." As we rose to leave, La Solitaire expressed a desire that we would stop again when in the Dell, for she was often lonesome.

We promised to do so, and taking a parting look at the "Magdalen," departed.

"I think," said Frank, "her history would be an interesting one; Minnie, you have heard some of it, and must enlighten us this evening."

"Did you see the image and the crucifix, Harry?" asks Blanche; "so Italian looking, and she seems to be perfectly happy!"

"Yes, Blanche, but the veiled picture! do you not covet it almost? And how romantic too, shrouded in mourning!—Frank! I wonder if she would part with it."

"No, never till death," replies Minnie; "she told me that it is the only treasure she possesses—except her child."

Full of interest in the somewhat mysterious lot of the subject of our conversation; we reach home again, finding Birdie and Bridget awaiting our coming most anxiously. The cook sends word that the dinner is spoiled, as it should have been served an hour ago. But no matter, we can afford to eat a poor dinner after the morning's enjoyment. Frank and I while away the long, sunny afternoon, beneath the willows by the mill-dam, catching perch and chub which there abound

As the sun declines, we stroll along the stream, fishing as we go, till the swamp prevents our further progress.

About a mile eastward of this, where the stream is wide and deep, there was, some years ago, another mill-dam. The remains of it are to be seen yet, with those of the mill, fast crumbling to the ground; and near by, stands a dilapidated and deserted house, once the dwelling of the miller and his family. They are scattered now; some dead, others wanderers—they who once filled a happy home!

The ruins are still called "Ramsay's Mill;" and the history connected with it is a melancholy one, which may be written in after pencillings. Where, on the face of the earth, may we not see the traces of guilt and sorrow? for

"Sorrow treads heavily, and leaves behind
A deep impression, even when she departs."

As we ascend the hill leading homeward, Minnie and Blanche, with a companion whose form is not unfamiliar to our eyes, are coming to meet us. It is Blanche's lover, who has arrived during our absence. We meet him with a warm welcome, and return to the cottage together. How happy is Blanche to-night! and R—— no less so, of course.

The quiet, delicious evening comes, bringing us on

the porch, Frank to enjoy his Havana, the lovers their quiet intercourse, and Minnie ready to tell us all she knows about *I-a Solitaire*.

"Come, Minnie, let us have your story; we will listen now," says Blanche.

"It is not much to tell, for it was told me hurriedly," replies the narrator, "but this is the import of it. I asked our neighbor, Bella—for we may as well call her by her right name—if she was not lonesome sometimes? She said, 'No, it was her choice.' I asked her how long she had been living in the valley? and she commenced to tell me in a very intelligent manner, all I wanted to know for the time being. You know she speaks with considerable Italian accent, and there were some words I did not exactly understand; so I will give the information I received in my own language. Her native place is near Amalfi, not far from the bay of Naples, and her parents are still living there, together with one or two sisters. Her father is a fisherman, or was when she left there, which was some seven years ago; and the tears came into her eyes when she told me of their white cottage, surrounded by an orange grove and vineyard, which her father, assisted by his children, found time to attend to. Her husband had been a peasant of the country near by, but having a taste for painting, went to Naples, and

found employment sufficient to give them means to buy a plot of ground and build a small cabin for themselves; for, she says, everything is very cheap there. By and by, her husband, she called him Pietro, obtained employment in making copies of paintings in the Royal Museum, to sell to strangers in Naples.

He was very successful, and made considerable money, coming home one or two days in the week, to finish his paintings and attend to their little vineyard, which she was able to cultivate herself.

By and by, from making copies, he painted occasionally originals, creations of his own fancy, or now and then a Madonna or a Magdalen after life. One day, an American gentleman chanced to enter his studio, attracted by some beautiful copies hanging within the door. He made a large purchase of the young artist, and gave him farther orders to be finished and shipped to the United States.

Pietro felt flattered at this appreciation of his talent, and thinking that there must be a rich field here in which to labor, hastily made up his mind to emigrate and seek his fortune accordingly. Gathering up all they possessed, they came to America, full of hopeful anticipation. They landed at New-York, but soon found that an artist's life was one of toil. The few

pictures they brought with them were sacrificed from necessity, and then the trial came. The change of climate, want, and exposure, soon preyed upon her husband's health and spirits, till he was laid up with a lung fever. She, with a young child, and obliged to labor to obtain even the poorest necessaries of life, at the same time nursing her sick husband, was almost worn out. But some charitable persons assisted them till Pietro died, and she was left a stranger, alone in a strange land. She knew not which way to turn, when an opportunity offered for her to come into the country, some twenty miles distant from here, as a domestic or housekeeper in the family of an invalid lady. She had by this time acquired sufficient knowledge of our language to make herself useful in various capacities, but the lady died, and she was thrown out of a home, till wandering hither, the house she now occupies struck her fancy, and as it was then vacant, and she could obtain it for a trifling rent, it was taken; and now by economy and taking in a little sewing or fancy work, she obtains a comfortable subsistence. The picture she showed us was the last labor of her husband, and though often in want and tempted to dispose of it, she still retains it. With her garden and her goats, which last are kept because of their requiring so little care, she lives in comparative comfort. She farther said,

that some call her a fortune-teller, but that is only to amuse the young people who come to the glen in picnic parties.

"There, friends, my story is told, it is just as she told it to me, except with the peculiarities of her language; quite romantic—is it not?"

"Well, Minnie!" says Frank, "you are not far out of the way, for I did not miss a dozen words of her relation to you this morning, though I did not appear to be listening; but I shall see La Solitaire again."

R— is very much pleased and interested, and says that Blanche must show him the way to Hermit's Dell to-morrow; he must make the acquaintance of Bella too.

"Ho! for a sail," exclaims Frank, "see what a glorious breeze is springing up—

'Like the wings of ocean birds,
Flash the white caps of the sea—'

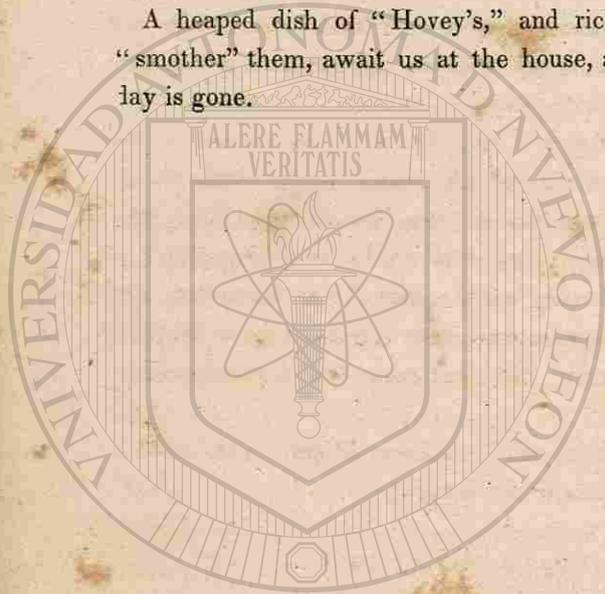
river—I mean.

It is not long before we are at the dock, the white sail of our little "Glide" hoisted, and flying along before the south-east breeze across the wake of a steamer ploughing her way northward.

We round to by the wall of the light-house, and take old Dederich, the Dutchman, and his wife by surprise. We sit awhile on the abutments and watch

the passing craft ; Frank and Blanche sing a gay song ; then leaving the trusty Pharos keeper a handful of cigars, we regain our boat and tack shoreward.

A heaped dish of "Hovey's," and rich cream to "smother" them, await us at the house, and another lay is gone.



UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS

XI.

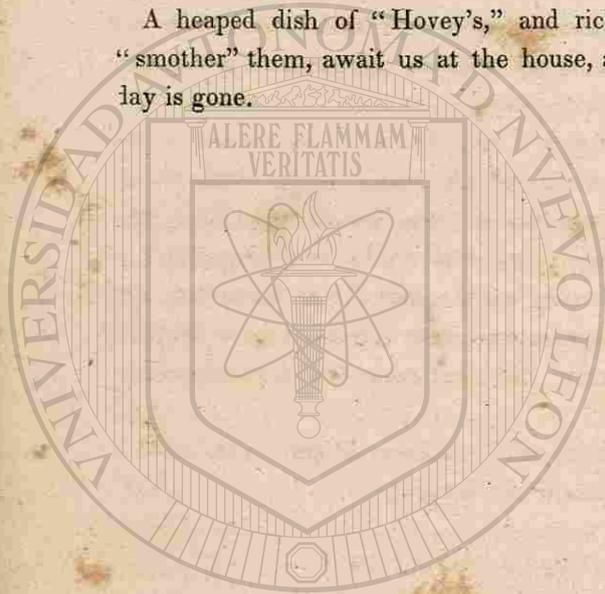
THE dark wing of Death's angel has cast its shadow over our fair landscape. Bessie Pike, the fisherman's daughter, died this morning. Her old mother sent for Minnie at day-break, when the last hour of her daughter's life seemed approaching. It was a sad scene, as a death-chamber always is ; but with the dying girl, all was peace and comfort. There were no shuddering thoughts at the thought of the Dark Valley ; no impatient longings to go or stay. It is the first time that death has entered the lowly dwelling, and it is a hard trial. She was their only child, and they too upon the brink of the grave.

It was a sad task for Minnie to perform—the closing of the eye, the robing for the grave ; but on whom else could they call in their grief and loneliness !

To-morrow she will be buried ; we shall, some of us, follow her to the quiet churchyard, and see her remains decently interred. Till then, oh heart-stricken parents, weep and lament her loss, for she was dear to you, though a seeming burthen in your old age ! yet—

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"She will awake no more, oh, never more!
 Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
 The shadow of white Death, and at the door
 Invisible Corruption waits to trace
 His extreme way to her dim dwelling place."

The event has cast a gloom over our household; for we had felt interested in the family, and had ministered somewhat to their comfort occasionally.

Blanche and her friend spend most of the afternoon amidst the quietudes of Hermit's Dell. Minnie has household duties to attend to; so Frank and I drive by the river road to Hillsdale, stopping on the way to visit the beautiful grounds and conservatories of a neighbor, which I was desirous my friend should see.

We go on to the post office, sit and read our papers for awhile, and drive by a circuitous route homeward as the shadows are lengthening. Frank is becoming enamoured of country life, and it would not be surprising, if another season found him settled down among us, and married too.

"By the by, Harry, can we go over to Briar-cliff in a day or two? I am anxious to see it before I go to the city and make farther inquiries. I have to go to Glen-Clunie too, and my friends in the city will wonder how much longer I am to be absent. You know I came here right off ship."

To-morrow, Frank, the funeral takes place, you

know, and I should attend it. Suppose we leave going to Briar-cliff till Thursday. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly," replies Frank; "Friday night will find me at Uncle's; I can stay there until Monday, and be in the city by Tuesday morning. That will do very well."

When we reach our gate, we see our friends sitting on the knoll above, awaiting us. R—— is obliged to leave us on the morrow, and Frank tells me that the wedding day is appointed some time during the fall. We do not like to anticipate the event, for Blanche has become endeared to us, and Minnie will miss her so much; they have been companions so long. But "change is the order of nature," and we will have to submit.

Joining the party on the knoll, we sit an hour or more, looking at and expatiating on the surrounding scenery, so varied and beautiful. Below us, half hidden amid old willow trees, by the river bank, is the dwelling, wherein Bessie Pike lies cold and still; and as we speak of her, it is a question what the poor old people will do now. Will they live there still, or go among their kindred in the neighboring county? Time will solve!

But a coming thunder-shower, with its precursive gust, drives us to the house. We cannot even remain

on the porch, and by and by the heavy rain comes, beating down the gravel, despoiling the rose-bushes of their lingering flowers, and making a mimic flood to course down our steep carriage road to make work for Teddy again.

On our elevated position, we feel a little fearful of the vivid lightning whenever it comes, although the house is well rodded; still to me, the lightning has always been a sort of terror.

But it is soon over; everything is glittering and bright with the rays of the setting sun, and in the East, a faint tinge of prismatic hues is lingering, but fading.

How delightfully cool and fresh is the air now, and how grateful to our parched garden has been this shower! We will not complain to-morrow of wilted salad or peas, and our late potatoes will commence growing again. The pasture lot wanted it too, and also our meadow, which must be mowed next week.

Another shower, whose premonitory mutterings had been long continued, ushers in the night. We are driven in doors for the rest of the evening, and each amuses himself or herself to their inclination.

Frank settles himself in my study chair and reads Sir Thomas Brown's essay on "Urn Burial," now and then reciting a passage for our appreciation. I have letters to write; Minnie is at her everlasting sewing

and stitching, whilst our interesting couple play chess till Blanche is tired and betakes herself to the piano, to enliven us with the translation of some difficult music, Frank brought her from Par's.

XII.

THE green sods are heaped over Bessie Pike's grave in the churchyard of Hillsdale, and will soon seem as if they had never been disturbed. Her old parents, bowed down and grief-stricken, are sitting lonely enough in their desolate home, perhaps soon to be vacated by them, too, and Minnie is with them, striving to tender all the consolation in her power. R— has taken his departure for a season, leaving Blanche in a saddened mood. The next time he comes, perhaps, it will be for a more satisfactory purpose to both of them, but not so much so to us.

As the afternoon is long, and the ladies have said that they did not care to go to Briar-cliff again so soon, Frank and I purpose going without them. Old Charley is put to the light wagon, and we are soon on our way over the hills.

It is but an half hour's drive, yet a charming one, embracing almost every variety of scenery; and my friend is much pleased with the appearance of the country. Passing by the cottage at which we had stopped on the previous visit, we enter the grounds

and, tying our horse, commence our survey. Everything is in a most dilapidated condition; ground run to waste and well stocked with weeds of every sort, especially those odious specimens, St. John's wort and Canada thistle. The out-buildings are commodious and may be repaired at small expense. The house, which we managed to enter by creeping through a narrow cellar window, is well built and roomy; a little old fashioned as to its finish, but still elegant. The upper windows command a glorious view, not only of the surrounding country, but a range of mountains, forty miles distant, and a broad stretch of the river, not more than five miles away at the farthest.

Frank says his only objection to the place would be its distance from the river, and consequently the difficulty of access in winter or when the roads are bad.

Without guidance we descend into the valley or glen in the rear of the house, and wander through its recesses. There is no waterfall, as at Hermit's Dell, but in its stead a large and deep pond of ever-living water, stocked with choice fish. Traces of gravelled walks winding among the woods are visible, but now choked up with leaves, and barricaded with broken branches. It has evidently been a fair haunt in years gone by.

Bridge-valley cannot be very far from here, and Hillsdale is almost as near as to us, being in a different direction.



Frank appears pleased with the property, and if it can be purchased at a fair price, I doubt not he will buy it and live here permanently.

On our departure, we stop a few moments at the cottage to chat with the old man, who entertains us awhile, and would keep us till night if he could, listening to his manifold relations.

He has not heard that the property is offered for sale, though he thinks "it mout be so," and evidently wishes it were; for he was very anxious to fathom the motives of our visit.

He gave us, however, one item of information which was new; and that is, the probability of a railroad running about half a mile distant, and forming a connection with the city. That would obviate much of Frank's objection to the residence, at any rate.

It is quite late when we reach our home. Minnie and Blanche have been delaying supper for us, which we are prepared to enjoy with good relish, especially as a dish of fine red "Antwerps," the first we have had this season, grace the table.

Birdie climbs upon my knee with his picture alphabet, to show me what he has learned under Bridget's tuition, who is very proud of her success.

The little fellow informs me too that "Auntie Blanche" has been riding his pony almost to the village; and he laughs thinking how "funny" Shag

looked under his unaccustomed burden. But his bedtime has arrived, and off he scampers to dream his fairy visions.

Frank says he must leave us to-morrow for a few days; and then our household will relapse into its former quietness.

"I shall miss you very much, Frank; more now than ever before."

"And so shall we;" continue the others. "But then, not as much as Harry will, you know, Blanche; for we shall have our hands full of work for two weeks," says Minnie.

Frank promises to return soon, and stay till we get tired of him; but notwithstanding this, we—he and I—find matter for converse till the clock strikes twelve—late hour for our simple, country life.

XIII.

It is the sweet haying-time! and the air is fragrant with the odor of drying grass, which Teddy is turning on our meadow-lot. Bridget and Birdie are revelling sportively amidst the odorous winrows, whilst some truant urchins, who should be conning their tasks in the corner school-house, are popping away most industriously at the meadow larks, scattered over the field and perched on the neighboring tree-tops.

It is nearly noon, and I have just returned from old farmer Mead's, with whom it is my pleasure to have a frequent chat, either over the fence which divides our possessions, or more sociably, upon his ample porch, shaded by great locusts, planted by his father fifty years ago.

Hard labor and the burden of years have left their impress on the old farmer. His head is gray and his form bowed, but not with infirmity; for he is as sturdy as an old oak, and likely to live for many years to come. He is a thoughtful old man too, for he has had his share of sorrows and cares, and loves to sit in his accustomed seat within the door, whence he can look

over the greater part of the farm that has witnessed for so many years his untiring labors. Some of those years have been weighty with affliction, but he never repines; though he often wishes "his boy had taken to the farm better than he did."

Looking upon him this morning as he sat musing, but cheerful, I thought of those beautiful lines which he might fitly sing.

"No more to bind the amber sheaves
With the reaper bands I go;
I stand where the rays in the gabled eaves
From the orient softly flow.
I am old, but hope can never decay,
And why should my spirit care:
The sun sheds blessings on locks of grey,
And hallows an old man's hair."

Frank has returned to us again, but is away most of the time, attending to his new purchase, for he is possessor of Briar-cliff. Its last owner, who had been abroad many years, returned a few weeks since, and not wishing to revive old and painful reminiscences, offered the property for sale. The price was less than we anticipated, and my friend became the willing purchaser.

He has bought a horse, and divides his time between us and Briar-Cliff, superintending masons, carpenters,

and gardeners in their manifold labors. I go there with him occasionally, and although it is but two weeks since he commenced operations, a great change is manifest. The old man at the cottage near the gate is highly delighted to see the "haunted house" again occupied, and hobbles back and forth to note the improvements and occasionally tender Frank his advice. He is desirous that his little house should be moved within the gate, so that it may be called "the lodge," and offers to teach his grandchild to be gate-keeper. Frank has promised to think of it, and if he can modernize the house, perhaps he will make use of it in that way.

Blanche is delighted at her brother's good fortune in being able to settle so near us. She is at Briar-cliff frequently, roaming over the grounds and suggesting many alterations and improvements. She says she will have two homes to visit now when tired of the one she is soon to occupy in the city.

Frank has committed to us a confidential item of information too. He is to be married soon after Blanche; and he kept his secret pretty well, for the chosen person is one he met in his travels abroad—a resident of a southern city, and who has just returned.

What with preparations for Blanche's wedding and the entertainment of our metropolitan friends who visit us occasionally, our ladies have about as much as

they can attend to. Consequently Frank and I depend upon ourselves and each other for company and amusement.

When not obliged to be at Briar-cliff, we don our thick boots and shooting jackets, and spend a day scouring the swamps after our favorite game, woodcock. Frank is a glorious shot, and always drops his bird; I cannot speak as well of my skill. It is rather against our principles to kill woodcock before the Fall months; but as our rustic sportsmen commence early in July, we are rather loth to lose the share we are entitled to, as some of the best ground in the country is embraced within the bounds of Briar-cliff.

Frank wants to string up the heads of all we kill as a tally; but Minnie rebels at this innovation of her epicurean taste; she must have the heads for her share.

As we were sitting on the porch last evening, the only part of the day which brings us all together, sounds of gay merriment came up from Hermit's Dell. We proposed walking thitherward to see what was going on.

Crossing the stream which flows into the river, some distance below the cascade, we wound our way through the woods till the path brought us to a point in view of "the Lovers' Rock."

Sitting upon its mossy summit, revealed by the

moonlight were two figures; one clothed in white, the other, a manly form not unfamiliar to me, that of farmer Mead's son. We thought of the mysterious initials on the trunk of the hemlock, and passed on unseen. Below, by the cascade and on the rustic bridge were many others, some of whom recognized us as we passed; the sons and daughters of neighboring farmers. Again, in the doorway of La Solitaire's dwelling, stood a more silent and thoughtful group, listening to the oracle perhaps, or some story of old Italy.

We pass by unobserved, and reaching the cottage, hear for an hour or two longer the voices and laughter of that merry party, ringing through the woods and valleys.

How, in this world of ours, are scenes of gladness and sorrow mingled! Like the changing phases of the kaleidoscope, sometimes dull and clouded, sometimes bright and brilliant. The merry sounds to which we have been listening are scarcely silenced, when a pitiful and travel-worn group come winding up the hill and stand before us. It is superfluous and cruel to ask them their cravings; they are apparent enough. A man of stout form, but wan and wasted, bearing in his arms a child four years old; a woman of like appearance carrying a whining infant, and two older children following after, constitute the group. They

are Irish emigrants, come from their famine-stricken isle, and wandering about the country looking for a relative, whom they have traced to this vicinity. They have travelled thus for many days, sleeping by the roadside when weary and during the night, but they are almost discouraged. They thought this a country where gold could be picked up in the streets, and bread might be had for nothing; but they find it far different.

We can do nothing for them except to give them food and a few articles of clothing, which they sorely need. They do not want a shelter; for they say it is warm, and if we will let them lie on the hay down in the meadow, they will bless us. Poor wanderers! may you find him you are seeking; but it will be a long and weary search; and may be you will wish that you had never left "swate Ireland," miserable as she is, and blighted with a withering curse.

XIV.

How quickly flies time with us! We can scarcely realize that the bright, beautiful summer which has been so pregnant with events conducive to our happiness, has almost gone. Yet so it is.

Frank has performed wonders at Briar-cliff with his stout Hibernian aids. The house has been repaired and repainted, the garden cultivated, the walks freshly gravelled, and the whole grounds put in complete order. The old man's cottage too, stands at the gate, remodelled and quite ornamental, much to the delight of its inmates. Frank and Blanche have spent several days in the city, selecting furniture and decorations which are rapidly arriving and arranged according to Blanche's fancy; for her brother has given her sole charge of this department. In a week or two, all will be finished and the house ready to receive its new mistress, whom we have none of us seen, excepting Frank, of course.

The hall of the mansion is very fine and capacious, as that of all country houses should be. It is panelled with polished oak, and all the rooms on the first floor

open into it. Frank's taste is manifest in its decorations, we can plainly see. As you enter the door from the portico, two knights clad in mail, which Frank picked up in some antiquarian museum abroad, standing on massive pedestals, confront you. On brackets along the wall are placed beautiful models in plaster bronzed, of classic and historical figures, male and female, draped and undraped, whilst over the library door is a finely preserved deer's head and antlers, a trophy from the Adirondacks.

The library—for Frank is a great reader and has a literary turn too—is a *bijou* of a room, not large, but roomy enough and right cozy. It is finished and furnished in oak, with book-cases built on the wall and surmounted with busts of the great and wise. His paintings, some of which are very fine, are not yet hung, neither are his books unpacked, of which he has a valuable collection. He opened a case yesterday packed in Rome, and showed me a "Beatrice Cenci" copied from the original by Mazzolini, as fine a copy as may be found anywhere. "But Harry," he says, "next week you shall see a gem not inferior to La Solitaire's, though a different subject; it is not unpacked yet."

"Ah, Frank, I expect your choice things will draw us here often; Briar-cliff will be the magnetic pole to Hermit's Dell, and I am afraid your grand establish-

ment will make us dissatisfied with our little unpretending cottage."

Then, in his stable, is a pair of spanking blacks, which think nothing of accomplishing the distance between our places in half an hour, though the road is hilly. They do it nearly every day, now that we go back and forth so much.

Frank has his hands full of employment, but does not want for assistants. Minnie and I are only lookers-on; Blanche, like one of old, "is careful after many things;" but in addition to her, there is another helper who has offered his services to Frank, when not engaged with the duties of his vocation. This is a young man, whose sphere of action is in the school-house by the dusty roadside about half a mile distant.

He dropped in to see Frank the other day and welcome him to the neighborhood, at the same time tendering his services in any way that might be acceptable. Seeing that he felt the need of more congenial society than he has for most of the six days in the week, Frank has taken quite an interest in him. His occupation is probably followed more from necessity than choice, for he is evidently a young man of talent and refinement, fitted for a different position than the one he occupies.

There are many such sons of New-England—for he is one—scattered throughout the country, and laboring

for a subsistence which is often begrudged by those who little know the self-denials and struggles which the dependent often knows.

Frank says that he stopped in the school-house a few days ago, after the rude troop were dismissed, for the purpose of ascertaining, in as delicate a manner as possible, how the young teacher was domiciled; for he had an idea that his accommodations were not the most fitly chosen or agreeable, though perhaps equal to his means.

It proved to be so, and Frank has now provided him with a snug little room in the cottage at the gate, for the present.

I have frequently passed the school-house, and noticed some inscription over the door that I could not decipher from the road. I asked Frank if he had ever observed it.

"Why yes, Harry, and a very appropriate motto too, '*Hoc opus, hic labor est,*' but whether it was put up by the present incumbent or not I am unable to say; it is quite an original idea, is it not?"

Frank is superintending the erection of a graperly in addition to his other improvements, and when that is done, I cannot see but that he has all that heart can desire to make a country residence perfect.

"Yes, Harry, by the middle of September I hope to be through with masons, carpenters and all super-

numeraries; then for the weddings—Blanche's and mine; after that, we will have a grand reunion here and settle down to the calm duties of life, like you and Minnie, hey!"

"I trust all your anticipations may be answered, Frank; we shall be happy in your happiness."

So we pass many days, partly at Briar-cliff, partly at Hermit's Dell. Frank lodges with us at night, driving to his place every morning, and returning here in the evening.

Minnie and Blanche find abundance of work to employ them, so that they can hardly spare time to sail with us occasionally; and as for music, the piano has been unopened for a month; our musician has too much else to think of.

There is little for me to look after at this season, as Teddy is diligent and keeps everything in good order, so I amuse myself in "taking notes" of all that passes here and at Briar-cliff.

Suppose I should take a notion to "prent em!" but that is not very probable.

XV.

MINNIE and I are alone again for a day or two; and employing our time in returning some visits to our neighbors, whom we have neglected amidst the excitements of the summer. Our social intercourse is limited, however, for the country is not yet thickly settled, and the "places" of our friends are widely scattered. When the projected railroad is in operation, we may expect many additions and acquisitions to our circle.

This afternoon we paid La Solitaire a visit, the first for weeks. She was happy to see us, and we sat a long while with her, gleaning from her memory many incidents of her past life. She loves to talk of her native village, and more especially when she knows that I have been there, and through all that picturesque country which lies between Amalfi and the Doric temples of Paestum, those wondrous ruins

"Which stand between the mountains and the sea,
Awful memorials, but of whom we know not."

She is a woman of no common mind; not one of those

ignorant Calabrian peasants which you often meet in their hovels over the southern part of Italy. The associations amidst which her husband's employment had thrown her have had their influence on her mind and heart. She reads the books we lend her and takes good care of them. She instructs her child, and is training him to follow his father's profession, for which he begins to show a taste.

She talks often of her lost husband, Pietro; of those days when, a happy peasant girl, she knew no care, except of trailing vines and trees burdened with golden fruit; when love, wakened in her heart by the voice of the dark haired painter, ripened into devotion, and they were wedded. She speaks of the blue sea and the sunny bay over which they often sailed in the swift felucca, and how

"On the sea-shore

They watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;"

then of their after trials and his death, and now of the hope she cherishes that one day she may be able to return and see her old father and mother, who may yet be alive, though she cannot tell.

There is a certain charm in the intercourse with her which we cannot define, and we wonder not that the young people love to visit her sometimes and call her a "fortune-teller."

I tell her, if she ever leaves us and returns to Italy, she must let me make her an offer for "the Magdalen" we love to look at so much. "Ah, Signor, you have been so kind; if ever I part with it, it shall be yours." I tell little Pietro, that if he will continue to improve in his sketches, I will give him a paint-box with brushes and paper all complete. It is really a joy to see his dark eyes dance with delight at the promise; but he shall have it at any rate.

We return home by the way of farmer Mead's, and sit awhile with the old couple; for it is a long time since Minnie was there.

The thrifty dame, good natured and gossiping as she is, keeps Minnie entertained in the best room, whilst the farmer and I walk over the pasture-lot to look at a famous cow he has, that gives twenty-two quarts of milk a day, and ten pounds of butter a week then I must see his wheat, which is especially fine and promises a good yield. He is very busy now, trying to reclaim a large piece of swamp land, which has long been worthless, but he expects not to live to see it done. He says he cannot get any one to work now as he used to in his young days.

When we reach home, Frank and Blanche, who have been at Briar-cliff since Monday, greet us on the porch, and ask how we have got along without them so long?

Frank says he can now receive us at Briar-cliff; the furniture has all arrived and been arranged; carpets down, pictures hung, and everything in order, but one thing wanting to make the house complete—servants; and he is going to the city to-morrow to get them.

We chat on topics connected with his plans, over our tea-table, on which is a goodly bowl of peaches and cream, the products of our orchard and old Brindle Frank has brought a basket of peaches from Briar-cliff too, which are very fine, though he says most of the fruit has been appropriated by others.

“When I get back from my city expedition,” says Frank to me, “I want you to spend a day with me at my place, and give your opinion of the *tout ensemble*. There are some little matters to be considered yet; and then, next week, you must all come over and dine with me, a sort of house-warming you know.”

“Now Frank,” I say, “you have everything around you so choice and elegant, go over some time and buy our neighbor Mead’s great cow that I saw to day. I do not know whether you can or not, but if you offer him an hundred dollars, I do not believe he will hesitate.”

“I will try any how, Harry; you have a *penchant* for fine cattle, and you know what is good. How many quarts does she give?”

I tell him what I have heard from the lips of her owner, but he does not believe it, although he is unwilling to impeach the good farmer’s veracity.

“I have heard of such things, Harry, but have never been able to see for myself; but now I have an opportunity, and will embrace it.”

It is a clear, breezy evening, just the one for our little “Glide” to prove her sailing qualities. Minnie and Blanche are fairly caught idle, so they have to join us. Frank pockets his flute, which from its long inaction requires a good soaking, and away we go for the river.

The tide is very low, and we find some trouble to work our vessel out of the creek and through the grass on the flats; but after hoisting her broad sail, and getting away from the shoals, we fly through the water at a glorious rate before the ten-knot breeze. Our destination is a cove on the other side of the river, some three or four miles below. It sets in between two high mountains, from which the echoes are very fine. It is not our first visit there, and as we cross the river, Frank plays, whilst Minnie and Blanche accompany him with their voices. By and by, the echoes are awakened, and we lay motionless on the smooth waters of the cove, listening to the prolonged answers of imaginary Dryades. We are told that from the summit of the mountains, the view is very extensive,

reaching to the valleys of the Delaware and Connecticut; but the fear of rattle-snakes, which are also said to abound upon them, has prevented our going thither.

On our return, we stop a few minutes at the lighthouse, where the Dutchman and his family live the year round, isolated and lonely enough, rarely seeing any one, but those who take pity on them and drop in as we have done.

The old fellow has had an eventful life, incidents of which he frequently tells us. He ran away from his father's house in Holland, when a boy, and became a sailor. There is hardly a part of the world he has not been in, even to the arid isles that lie under the Equator, and away north amidst Arctic icebergs. Now, he has a quiet berth, with nothing much to do but light his lantern at night, put it out in the morning, and spend the rest of the time in smoking his pipe, making nets, and dreaming over his past freezings and scorchings. I do not wonder he is satisfied with his situation, for he has probably seen as much of the world as he cares to for the rest of his life.

There is little excitement in his vocation. It is not like being on an ocean lighthouse, where the waves make continual dash, and sometimes thunder against its base with fearful violence. Here there are no breakers, no noble ships sweeping by before the gale, no roar of winds and waters. But once has any inci-

dent of exciting nature happened since he has been here, and that was some years ago.

During a violent squall, which are not unfrequent on the river, an Eastern sloop with a cargo of brick became unmanageable, and ran head on against the stone abutments. She was shivered into fragments, and two of her crew drowned. "I shall never forget it," said Diedrich, "how wicked she pitched on; it most made the lantern crack, when she struck; the poor fellers hollerin too for me to put out my boat; two on em never came up alive, they got mashed in the brick."

We always take the old fellow some tobacco, which is his greatest comfort, and occasionally the children, now growing to be boys and girls of ten to fifteen years, get some acceptable gifts.

A few minutes more, and the "Glide" is moored by the dock, and we sauntering up the long avenue, weary and sleepy.

Frank says I must have him up bright and early in the morning, to take the boat which stops at our landing by eight o'clock. So we go, now here, now there; it is the way of life

XVI.

"THERE, Harry, is not that a superb copy? Look at the eye and the tint of the hair—is it not life-like?" We are sitting in the library at Briar-cliff, before the painting Frank calls "his gem;" and it is indeed a treasure: not a copy either, but an original by some unknown master.

The subject is Judith and Holofernes, never a pleasing one to me; but as a picture, equal, except in age, to the great original. It came into his possession merely by accident; for Frank is one of those "lucky dogs," who always appear to be under the tutelage of dame Fortune. Diving into the shop of an old virtuoso in Rome one day, this picture caught his eye, peeping out from a heap of other rubbish, as if for his special benefit. The owner was miserably poor, and it was not long before a bargain was struck, the picture cleaned of dust and in Frank's possession. He had it revarnished and framed in the heavy Roman style, and sent out of the country as soon as possible, for fear of losing it. He has a copy of the "Cumæan Sibyl" too, from that in the Borghese palace, which is

very beautiful, with about a dozen others of lesser beauty and merit.

Then he has a parcel of old manuscripts, black-letter volumes, and ancient prints; a copy of Tasso published in Venice 1670, and a history of the sacred wars of Jerusalem, published in 1562—pretty venerable books of their class. I can find nothing to criticise in any of my friend's arrangements; everything is in good taste, plain, substantial and for use, not show. His grounds look in fine condition too, though the season is too late for a great display of flowers in the parterres, but there is fruit in abundance.

"Now, Frank, for the wife, and you will be settled for life as comfortably as any one I know. When does the wedding come off?"

"Next week," replies Frank, "I shall go away again to-morrow and be back with my wife in a fortnight from to-day. I will write you in a day or two concerning my arrangements. Come this way and see what I purpose doing."

The face of the cliff in the rear of the house is too precipitous for any one to descend without considerable agility; so Frank intends building a staircase, with one or two landings, from the lawn above to the shady depths of the glen, through which are winding walks of miles, pleasant views, a stream, and the pond mentioned before. These little valleys, hemmed in by

wooded hills, are frequent features of our country hereabout, and some of them are very lovely; a few trees cut away to make winding walks, and Nature does the rest for your pleasure ground.

"It will be an improvement, Frank, but let me suggest an addition. Over the commencement of the stairs—here, where we stand, build a tower twenty or thirty feet high, with an ascent to the top inside. See what a splendid view you will have—the river there, mountains here, and the depths below—I should think five hundred feet from the top of the tower."

"A good idea, Harry, but I cannot do it this year, my purse is not long enough; another season we will think of it again. You had better sell out at Hermit's Dell and build on that lot south of my garden. I won't charge you much for the ground, in fact I have more than I really want. Come now, think seriously of it; how pleasant it would be to have you so near—and we could improve together; have a Paradise here one of these days. I guarantee Minnie would approve of it; you know she will be very lonesome after Blanche leaves."

"I will say as you do, Frank—I will think of it. We have not lived long enough at Hermit's Dell to become very strongly attached to it, though it is very pleasant, and I have no doubt it would bring a good price, if put into market. I agree with you that it

would be delightful to live so near each other, especially on Minnie's account, and I shall hardly dare to broach the subject to her; but I will as soon as I get home."

We spend the afternoon at the pond, fishing, and take some fine lake bass which have been bred here, originally transported from the northern lakes. The old man tells us afterward, that his boy has caught them weighing seven pounds. Frank will not have to depend upon the river for fish. Then the streams abound in trout, though not very large.

We take a basket full with us in my wagon, for Frank returns home with me to-night, wishing to see Blanche before his departure South. He says it is the last drive he will take with me as a single man; for he does not like to be called or to call himself a bachelor. He thinks he is too young for that.

"Yes, Frank, but I hope we shall have many more rides and walks together, and hunts too. I was in hopes we would have been able to go to Indian lake or the Adirondacks this fall, and revive some of our old memories. I often think of old 'Uncle Josh,' don't you? and 'little Kate,' as we used to call her. How time does go? just think how long ago that was. But I cannot ask you to go deer-hunting this fall; but in June, if we all live, we might go to the Saranac lakes, trout-fishing, and bring home a can full to put in your pond. They would thrive here famously."

"I should like nothing better, Harry, if it can be so arranged; as for deer-hunting, that last tramp we had through the snow in those swamps and over the "wind-falls" about Indian lake, I am almost sick of it; but we were too late that season. Do you remember Bill Tanner, and "Ike" as the loggers called him? What a genius he was! that fellow would have made something more than a hunter, if his opportunities had been good. And don't you often think what a trick that crack-brained Tim played us, the time we treed a bear after he had killed one of the best dogs. How true is that saying the Chinese have, I saw translated the other day—

'To place in danger's foremost rank
A feeble man,
Is but to use a locust's shank
For your sedan.'

"To change the subject, Frank, I have a promise from La Solitaire—I cannot help calling her by that title—that if she parts with that "Magdalen," I shall have it. She appears to have a fancy to go back to Italy again, and I do not blame her; if she could afford it, I think she would sail to-morrow. I have an idea of sounding her a little farther on the subject, and if her poverty is the only hindrance, why we could soon make up an hundred or two dollars in the neighborhood, and that, with what I would give her for the

picture, would make her comfortable till she reached home."

"I will do my part towards it, Harry, for I think the woman is deserving of sympathy and aid, and she always appears grateful for any little attention shown her; I hope you may get the picture, but she idolizes it so, I doubt if she will part with it. She has had temptation enough to induce her to sell it, if her story is true, which we cannot doubt."

We are home already, or nearly so. The ladies are on the look-out for us from the summer-house; though they know very well from past experience, that when Frank and I get off together, there is little calculation to be made concerning our movements. "However, this time we are home in good season, are we not Minnie?"

"Very dutiful young men," she replies, "and how have you spent your day? charmingly, I presume."

Of course we have to enter into all the particulars and descriptions necessary to the edification of our friends till we are "spun out," and even then Blanche asks, "Have'nt you something more to tell us?"

XVII.

THE summer is waning, and Nature has lost much of that freshness which so enhances her beauty. The sheen of ripeness is over woods and fields and garden, awakening thoughts of Ceres and Pomona, and the yellow-haired Bacchus.

It is a season of both labor and joy to the farmer, for his toil is rewarded with rich promise and opulent yield.

This is perhaps the last harvest season that my good neighbor Mead may ever know, unless it be in that unknown clime, "where he shall come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

He sent over for me yesterday, to come and sit with him awhile; for he has been complaining, during the past week, of symptoms which seem to indicate a mortal disease.

He has been a hard-worker all his lifetime, and it is telling on his frame now, though to a casual observer it would not be apparent.

Sitting on the porch in his large arm-chair, he looks with me over the fields which he has tilled so long and well, and heaves a sigh.

"He hears the Autumn rustling in his corn,
Cloud chases cloud across his bending grain;
The reaper's scythe-song greets the golden morn,
The soft eve welcomes home the loaded wain."

But he cannot go as he used to, and reap or bind with as stalwart and tireless arm as the youngest.

He is beginning to despond, but I endeavor to cheer him with the hope that his day is not ended yet.

He cannot think so, and begins to talk more familiarly with me than ever before. "I see it all ahead," he says; "yes, I know well when I am gone that the old farm will run down and go into other hands before long. The old woman will soon follow me, and Abel is young and foolish, always wants guiding—running after new notions all the time, and yet I've done my best with the boy—but it's his nature—yes, I see it all."

In some such strain the old man talks since he has been complaining; he cannot bear the idea of the farm passing into the hands of others, and his prescience may prove true. It is very doubtful if his son follows in his footsteps.

Frank is married at last! His letter conveying the news arrived to day, and we are all to meet him and his bride to-morrow at their beautiful home. Blanche is very happy of course, and fairly nervous with impa-

tience to welcome her new sister, whom she has never seen.

"I wonder what her style of beauty is," she says; "Frank never would tell me any particulars; he said I must wait and see; Frank is so funny sometimes."

"No matter now, Blanche, you will see for yourself in twelve hours or so. Come! it is too cool to sit on the porch any longer; the dew is very heavy to-night; let us have one of those 'fantasies' Frank brought you; the piano has not been opened for a month. I want to write a little to-night, and you know that music is suggestive."

My fair cousin is always obliging, so I have music to my heart's content for the rest of the evening, beginning with "Les Fugitives," and ending with "Don Pasquale." Blanche sings delightfully too, but has never forgiven me for what she pleases to call "a piece of my flattery," in my writing on a page of her scrap book, "Inscribed to Blanche,"

"So sweet in her is music's power,
Her mouth breaths fragrance like a flower,
And the bee passing, as he sips,
Makes honey from her odorous lips."

Minnie, always busy, is embroidering some fanciful article of apparel for Blanche's wardrobe or *trousseau*,

which, from the quantity of work and material I have seen for the last six weeks, ought to last her half a lifetime. But it is nearly finished now, for in two weeks, the eventful day will arrive

But here comes Bridget with a dish of luscious grapes, such rich Catawbias as Bacchus never knew. "Put away your work for to-night, Minnie; and Blanche, you think you are consumptive sometimes, eat your fill! Are they not delicious? and these Heath peaches! why, Minnie, you should keep these to brandy, they are far better than those 'Morris whites' you bought at the nursery the other day."

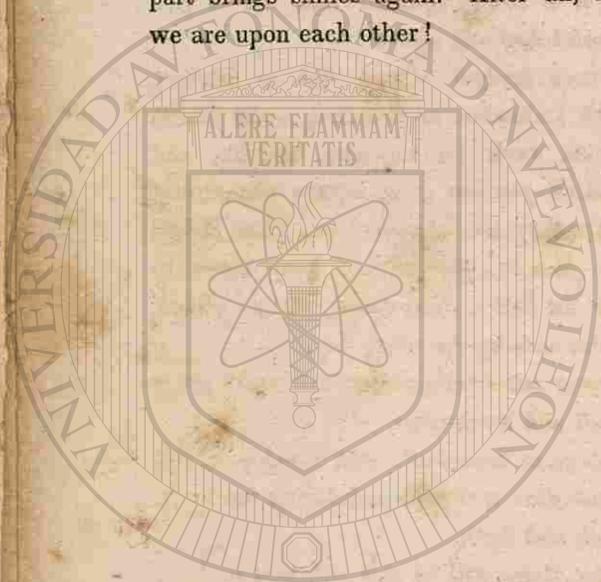
We sit long over our evening feast, and make plans for the next week and week after.

To-morrow we go to Briar-cliff. On Monday, Frank and his wife must dine with us; and during the week we will visit back and forth.

The week after, there will be this and that to do in preparation for Blanche's wedding, which is to be very quiet. After Madame R— returns from the Falls—Niagara of course—she is to make a visit at Glen-Clunie, then spend a week with us and receive her country friends.

"Then, Blanche," says Minnie, and the tears come into her eyes, "you will go to your new home; and when shall we see you again? I cannot bear to think of it!"

This makes Blanche feel pathetic, and we have quite a "scene" for awhile; till a little philosophising on my part brings smiles again. After all, how dependent we are upon each other!



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XVIII.

ANOTHER month has gone! and how much that was dear and beautiful to us has gone with it from our view! some, for a season—the rest, for ever!

The birds of summer are flocking to take their accustomed exodus towards the sunny South; the flowers are fading, leaves beginning to wither and fall. The woods are gorgeous with those countless tints which no painter's pencil may copy, and which nowhere else in the world are half so beautiful as here.

Blanche has gone too, and more than birds or flowers, we miss her. Our old neighbor Mead, worn and wasted at last, is receiving his reward. Whilst we were gay and happy, whilst sounds of mirth were in our dwelling, sadness and sighs were in his; yet we miss him and sorrow with those who mourn a good man, a kind father, and a warm friend gone.

At Briar-cliff we have been frequent and welcome visitors. Frank and his wife are as happy as our warmest wishes could have them.

I cannot picture, on the pages of my diary, the face and form which are my friend's delight, or echo in

other ears the voice that is his music. Enough it is to say, that she is all his heart could crave—all that can bless his life.

We have all been in such a state of excitement during the last month, entertaining, and being entertained, "marrying and giving in marriage," it is difficult to settle down again to our usually quiet life. Blanche is coming back to stay with us awhile, before going to the South; though she has promised to spend her summers with us. She is happy, except in leaving us, and Hermit's Dell, so rich in dear and pleasant associations.

Frank is making a paradise, almost, around him; it would be difficult to find a lovelier spot.

He has acted upon my suggestion made some time ago, and is building a tower upon the verge of the cliff, which will command a beautiful view, not only of his grounds, but the surrounding country, and the river gleaming in the distance.

The ravine below is a peaceful resort, and capable of being beautified also. Yet Nature has done her part, and at this season—

"There,

The children of the autumnal whirlwind bear
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,

Rival the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity."

Frank and I spent a day in and about Hermit's Dell last week, shooting quails, with which the thickets abound this season. We were very successful, and on our way home, stopped to chat with La Solitaire, as we still call her, and leave her a few of the birds. She still talks of going back to Italy; her heart is evidently there. Frank asked her if she would not leave Pietro with him, and he would educate him; but she prefers that her boy shall go with her, if she returns, and follow his father's occupation, for which he has a decided talent. He is highly delighted with the box of colors which Frank gave him, and is commencing to use them.

Frank says that he has no doubt I most heartily wish for La Solitaire's departure, hoping I may get the picture she has promised me conditionally; but I do not plead guilty to being as selfish as he insinuates: though I must acknowledge I look at the painting with a covetous eye whenever I visit the owner.

Poor, lonely woman! she may be happy in her self-chosen and peculiar solitude, but I do not believe she is; and we decide that the next time Minnie goes to see her, she shall inquire more fully into her wants and wishes.

Winter will soon be here, and how much better for her to be amidst the orange groves and vineyards of her native valley, than in this lonely glen. I am sure her heart would leap with joy were the prospect before her; but she has too much delicacy to ask assistance: or it may be—pride.

There are many little improvements and alterations I contemplate making this season about our grounds, provided that Frank and his wife do not prevail on us to build on that fair site he has at Briar-cliff. There is no telling how it may be; it all rests with Minnie, and she is cogitating on the subject. One advantage at any rate, would be in having a good school near at hand for our little Birdie, one of these days; and there are other matters too to be considered, which make it desirable.

Minnie and I were caught in a storm there a few nights since, and obliged to stay till morning. How comfortable it was in the library, with its glowing pictures and high-piled book-cases! What a scene of quiet and domestic comfort! Frank at his desk, writing something "funny," as Blanche says, for the "Spirit of the Times," *currente calamo*: Minnie and the lady of the house, buried amidst the cushions of a luxurious sofa, engaged in confidential chit-chat; and my humble self, stretched out in the reading chair,

absorbed in "Michelet," excepting the few moments in which I survey our *tableau vivant*.

By and by, when the wind whistles louder, and the rain beats faster against the windows, we get up a concert of our own; Frank with his flute, his wife on her guitar, and Minnie at the piano—together with their voices—discourse

"Soft Lydian airs
Married to immortal verse."

But one rich voice is wanting to make the harmony complete, and that is Blanche's; but next week she will be here, and there will be a grand reunion."

The storm is over, and what a change it has wrought in the appearance of our country! The trees are almost leafless, and a phase of cheerlessness is cast over the face of Nature, before so smiling.

In another month, it will be winter, dreary and cold in our northern latitude, and we shall be more than ever dependent upon each other for comfort and enjoyment.

Another season, and much of our interest in Hermit's Dell and its surrounding haunts may have ceased. Change is over all!

"But the unborn hour,
Cradled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
Who shall unveil? Ner thou, nor I, nor any
Mighty or wise."

XIX.

THE winds of winter, laden with snow and sleet are sweeping over the hills and through the glens between them, piling up great drifts along our hedge-rows and shrubbery, and shrouding the young evergreens which were looking so verdant and cheerful.

One only, a graceful hemlock, remains uncovered. It stands in a sunny corner, where the north wind cannot reach it, and was planted by our cousin Blanche on the day of her departure.

"Something lively," she said, "to remind you of me in the dreary winter, dear Minnie."

Yes, Blanche, we will often look on your little *immortelle*, and think of you in your sweet southern home around which no snows gather: but as yet our memories need no prompter.

It has been a long storm, and we have been penned in-doors to profit and amuse ourselves as we best could. The snow lies over a foot deep, and Teddy and I, with the aid of "old Charley," have been striving to break the road through the dense drifts which cover our approach from the road houseward. It is very cold and

severe work for us all, but it is over at last, and that necessary purveyor, the butcher, is the first one to reap the advantage of our labor. He brings the mail of four days with him too—a most acceptable packet, and which will be the means of making one evening at least pass speedily enough.

I go to the house and shuffling off my moccasins on the porch, doff my rough frieze overcoat, and donning my wrapper, compose myself in the great chair before the fire for uninterrupted enjoyment of my news-budget.

Opening the wrapper I find a letter from Blanche to Minnie, who is sitting near me engaged in knitting a pair of Polish boots with which to encase her feet when sleighing, of which from present prospects we shall enjoy a superabundance.

The work is thrown aside and she is soon absorbed in the perusal of Blanche's epistle, an eight-paged one, closely written.

I look up from my paper occasionally upon her face, over which expressions flit changeful as the gleams and shadows of an April day over a fair landscape. If I read them aright, Blanche must be as happy a bride "as the sun shines upon," her lot bright as the skies which bend over her. By and by Minnie reads to me a sentence here and there. May I not transcribe one?

"Yes, Minnie, I am very, very happy, my spirit is in sunshine all the time, but I often find myself asking—Will I always be thus happy? Are there no clouds in view?"

"What a blessed thing it is that we cannot look into the Future! Sometimes I feel a little lonesome, and then I think of you all and wish I were nearer to you: but how can I be dissatisfied with my lot!"

"I am looking forward already to the summer, when I hope to make you that promised visit. I suppose you are enjoying sleigh-riding now to the utmost, but I wish you were here to enjoy the bananas you are so fond of."

It is a joy to us that Blanche is thus happy, for upon a nature like hers anything like disappointment falls with a saddening influence. The letter is laid away to be re-read and answered, and I return to my papers.

As the afternoon wears away, the sky clears up and the wind begins to rise again, making the air bitter cold. Our cottage stands exposed to the full force of the northern wind, and, being intended only as a summer residence, we have great difficulty to keep ourselves comfortable.

There is a rap upon the outer door: who can it be braving the snow and wind? I go to the door and find that it is Pietro, the child of La Solitaire.

He is warmly clad, but he has been up to his waist amidst the snow-drifts and shivers like a leaf. I take a broom to him and beat off the clinging snow, then bring him to the fire. He has a book in his hand, one I lent his mother some time since, but his sole errand is not to return that.

Well, Pietro what is it? His lip commences to quiver as he tells us that his mother is sick and wants to see us. She is in need of tea and sugar too, and doubtless of other necessaries, for she has not been able to go to the store very lately.

It is cold and disagreeable enough, but it is our duty to go. Teddy is ordered to bring up the light sleigh, for we cannot walk there, and whilst he is getting ready, we fortify ourselves as well as possible against the searching wind and drifting snow.

Teddy comes with the sleigh well stocked with robes, and Minnie has had the wisdom of providing a bottle of hot water to keep her feet warm. She has packed a basket too with little delicacies and necessaries for Bella, which she knows will be acceptable and thankfully received.

We place Pietro between our feet and Teddy arranges the warm furs so that not a crevice is left for rude Boreas to pry into.

Though our destination is but a few moments' walk from the cottage by the foot-path, we are obliged to

drive a circuit of some four miles to reach it. We find the road unbroken after leaving our gate, and Charley has about as much as he can do to flounder through the drifts and draw us after him.

The road keeps the river bank for a mile or two and then enters the woods. How beautiful are the cedars and hemlocks, clothed as in winding sheets! Now and then a limb bursts through its shroud, emerging, as it were, into life again, and seeming to say—

“Oh year! we are immortal, we die not with thee.”

It is almost evening when we reach the narrow defile forming the entrance into the glen, and in a few minutes' time we are at the cabin door. A taper casts its feeble glimmer through the window: no human form is visible; the scene is one of utter loneliness.

Pietro emerges from his warm muffings, and fearlessly jumping into the snow, opens the door. I lift Minnie out, and placing her on the threshold, hand her the basket of provisions, and then make our faithful co-worker, Charley, as comfortable as possible.

As I am about to enter the cabin, Minnie tells me there is no wood within, and the fire is expiring, that I must hunt up some fuel.

I find a heap of dead branches against the southern house-side, and with the aid of Pietro a goodly quantity

is brought and soon cracking and blazing upon the hearth.

Poor Bella! she is very sick, and can scarce express her thanks for our coming to her. She has a racking cough, and already looks wasted with fever, the effects of too much exposure to the inclement weather.

“Ah, Bella! you were born and nurtured under a warmer sky than ours! Would that you were now where your thoughts are oftentimes—amidst the orange groves of sweet La-Cava.”

“Yes, señor, it is my heart's wish—but how can I return!”

As the night gathers, Minnie proposes that she remain with the sick woman, for there is no one to wait on her, and that I return home to bring some other necessaries in the morning. The doctor must be sent for too, but that cannot be done to-night. Minnie's plan seems the wisest under the circumstances, and after making everything snug I start homeward alone. It is bitterly cold, and I rejoice to reach my own fireside again, for I am perfectly impregnated with the frosty air; but the fragrant tea is steaming on the hearth, and I am in a mood to enjoy it.

Birdie misses his mother, and most pertinaciously asks me again and again when she will come back. Her absence is a novelty to him, and the reason I give for it is incomprehensible to him.

How blissful is childhood's unconsciousness of the pains and sorrows of humanity! Its sky is ever bright, its flowers ever blooming, and as we look upon the smoothly rounded cheek, the lithe and dancing form—as we hear the joyous prattle and unstudied laugh of childhood, how few of us often sigh not—

“Oh! what a world of beauty fades away,
With the winged hours of youth.”

But Birdie's prattle is soon hushed in slumber, and I am alone. The wind sweeps and whistles drearily round the cottage, begetting a feeling almost of melancholy.

I take up a paper, and turning to its “fun corner” strive to laugh over its oddities, but it is futile for me to make the endeavor. My thoughts are in the gloomy depths of Hermit's Dell—the sick chamber wherein Minnie is administering to the invalid Bella.

She will not sleep to-night I know; what a cheerless vigil she will keep in that lonely dwelling! Oh, woman! frail and gentle as thou seemest, thy spirit is brave and strong!

I have a letter in my desk which I prize very much. It was written by a friend years ago, and I read it very often still. His heart was almost broken when he traced these lines:

“Yes, my young wife is dead: she was very dear to

me you know. It was very hard for me to give her up, and I cannot realize that she is gone. The piano is still open as she left it the day she sickened. There is her sewing-chair and work-table, and the little garment in the drawer still unfinished. Her moss-rose and mignonette are blooming under the window, but their fragrance is wasted. Only a year gone since she was a bride; you remember how lovely she looked in her wreath of orange blossoms.

“I was sick once, and she tended me. Many a long hour she sat by my bedside, bathing my pulses when they were wild with fever: and when I was well again, how happy she became, how radiant were her smiles. Here is the garden, and the little arbor overhung by the passion-vine and clematis, where we used to sit and talk of ‘days gone.’ Oh! my friend! I am very lonely—may your heart and home never be thus desolate.”

Poor Fred! years have gone since he met his great loss, but he often talks and writes of his “angel wife,” and has never married again. With all its wretchedness, his heart could not wail with Edgar Poe—

“Respite, respite, and nepenthe,
From the memories of Lenore,
Quaff! O quaff this kind nepenthe,
And forget thy lost Lenore.”

XX.

With the morning light Teddy is despatched for the physician, with a request from me that he will visit Bella as soon as possible, for I know not how important his services may be.

As Charley will be in use for an hour or two, I put on my top-boots and walk by the nearest route to the cabin. The path runs along a steep hillside the greater part of the distance, and as the snow is very deep and I am the first one to break the surface, my walk is toilsome enough. The little dwelling of Bella is soon visible, and I perceive a thick column of smoke curling upward from the chimney. They are not suffering with cold at any rate, and it has a cheerful look too. When I reach the house Minnie replies to my summons at the door, and if her face is an index of her patient's condition, all is still well.

She tells me that Bella passed the night very comfortably, though suffering some pain and oppression.

"I did not sleep a wink the whole night through," she continues; "you have no idea how lonesome I felt here, though I did not feel afraid of anything. I spent most of the time in reading, and when I became tired

of that, I stood the light under the Magdalen and studied it for an hour. I never appreciated its beauty before. Did you send for the doctor? Bella intimated last evening that she would like to see the priest—but I have had a serious talk with her, and I think she is indifferent now to his coming at all. I find that she is not a very rigid Catholic."

The doctor arrives soon, and pronounces Bella in no danger at present, though her lungs are slightly affected—a little medicine, quiet, and good nursing are all that is necessary, and those she will have.

Minnie suggests that I return home and send Teddy after old Mrs. Pike, who is a capital nurse, to come and remain at the cabin till Bella is convalescent.

This meets my approval, and after replenishing the pile of fuel by the hearth I again tramp and flounder through the drifts homeward. I find my breakfast awaiting me, and it is discussed with a most capital appetite, for I have done hard service since daylight. A covey of quail are running over the snow before the door half famished, and Birdie and I amuse ourselves with feeding them. Hunger has tamed them so that they venture within a few feet of us. If Bella were well she would soon entice them to her traps, and it may be their fate still to get into them.

"Teddy has gone after the nurse, and when he returns, Birdie, we will go after mamma."

The little fellow says it is cold, but I tell Bridget to bundle him up in shawls and I will see that he does not suffer in the sleigh.

In due time we are off, Birdie nestled among the furs and blankets, his little face only visible, reminding me of a tiny chicken peeping from beneath its mother's wings. It is his first sleigh-ride, and he is delighted with the jingle of the bells and the fine snow that Charley flings up for the wind to dust us with.

We find good Mrs. Pike installed into her office, and Minnie waiting patiently for us to take her home. Telling the nurse to send us word by Pietro if we can be of any service, we drive rapidly homeward.

Minnie is tired out, and is glad to reach home again, but there we find Frank and his wife, who have arrived during my absence, and promise to spend the rest of the day with us. They are sorry to hear of Bella's sickness, for they already feel as much interest in her as we do. Frank suggests that we delay the project no longer of trying to enable her to return home when the Spring opens. We know she is longing to do so, and only wants the means.

"Two or three hundred dollars, Harry, will cover all expenses, and provide for contingencies; I will give a quarter of the amount, and I know you will second me: the rest can soon be raised among our neighbors."

Minnie and I promise co-operation, and in a few

weeks Bella's heart will know a new joy, if our promises are good.

The river is covered with an unbroken sheet of ice, and we see the fishermen going out to lift their "fykes" which are generally burdened with fish. The wind has swept off the snow, and Frank proposes that we drive over the river and back for the sake of a good trot. His horses are brought up and we are off. The river is over a mile in width, but in five minutes we are across and warming our fingers at the fishermen's fire in the hut upon the shore.

We buy some fine perch of them, and retrace our way, stopping to see old Diedrich, the genius of the lighthouse. He does not have to light his lantern now, but he lives beneath it because it is his only shelter. He is busy at his old work, making nets to sell to the shad-fishers, and smoking his pipe by way of recreation. He speaks very highly of that last tobacco we brought him, which insinuation we understand: but unfortunately have omitted taking any with us this time. "We will bring some the next visit we make you, Diedrich," says my companion. "Gute!" is his laconic reply, tinged with a tone of disappointment, and we are off again.

We are at home in time to find dinner on the table, and the ladies looking out for us, for with the glass they could see all our movements.

"Harry, what do you think," says Minnie, "we have an invitation to domesticate ourselves at Briar-cliff till the weather becomes milder. Kate will take no refusal; she says she knows we are suffering with the cold here, and that you won't refuse."

"Well, Minnie, as far as the cold is concerned, it is true enough. The house is not proof against these northwesterners, and as far as our comfort is concerned, I think it a very desirable change, but" —

"No 'buts' are necessary at all, cousin Harry," replies Kate; "there is nothing to keep you here whatever; the servants are trusty, we have abundance of room, and to spare, and it will add much to our happiness to have you with us. You must go over with us this afternoon, Bridget and Birdie, bag and baggage."

Frank is not only as decided but quite peremptory in trying to persuade us, and at last we assent to the arrangement.

We leave the house and its appurtenances under the charge of Teddy, promising but a week's absence, and all packed in Frank's commodious sleigh we speed towards Briar-cliff.

The road is now in fine order from frequent travel, and in half an hour we are at the mansion. What an air of comfort there is about it: a veritable Arctic atmosphere could not penetrate its thick stone walls.

There is a great stove in the hall whose capacity is suggestive of never-failing coal-fields: and in the library a hickory fire that would put "Uncle Josh's" to shame is fiercely blazing.

Intimately acquainted and connected as we are with the dwellers here, Minnie and I soon make ourselves perfectly "at home," complying with the spirit of our friends' often repeated wish that we shall do so.

Evening comes with its social tea-quaffing, and afterward we gather in the library to a cozy game of chess or bagatelle.

By and by we have music—the spirit-stirring drinking song, *Crambamboli*, which Frank sings finely.

It is echoed from the kitchen, in which department of the household a young German is instated. As the notes of a tuneful *lied* which we sing afterward come to his ear, I can divine his thoughts if he cherishes fond memories of the Fatherland. He is again amidst the vineyards by the Rhine, or beneath the lindens that o'erhang the Neckar. He remembers the day when, embarking for his new home, he listened tearfully to the melodies of the old. There were others with him too: some perhaps were his kindred: but where are they now? Away through the valleys of the West, by the banks of the Ohio and the Rio Grande, they build their quaint cabins, and gather their viny harvests.

But our songs are over, and whilst our fair compan-

ions draw their lounge aside for a private *tête-à-tête*, Frank takes from his writing-desk a box of old letters which he wishes I would assist him to sort and file. They are the accumulation of years, and some are to be garnered again—others, to feed the fire.

How many memories do those rustling pages awaken! how varied the phases of life they chronicle! Some are worn with frequent reading—others unrumpled and scarcely opened. Of those who wrote them, a few, very few were friends: the rest, not foes perhaps, but selfish and calculating scribes. The characters upon some of those chequered pages were traced by fingers which shall hold the pen no more. Their writing is familiar as were the faces of those who wrote—faces we have looked not on for many a long year. What so recalls the voice and smile of a lost friend as a letter of his inditing? Others have forgotten him—but to you he seems to speak with silent tongue—you hold in yours his invisible fingers.

“Here, Harry,” said Frank, as he handed me a letter of several pages, “is one I prize highly and often read. It was written by a chum of mine only a few months since. He was a noble fellow, and had his health been spared him, would have made his mark upon our country’s page. I do not know of any one more thoroughly educated or possessing more general information. He was a deep thinker and a great ob-

server of men and things, neglecting nothing that could add to his fund of useful knowledge.

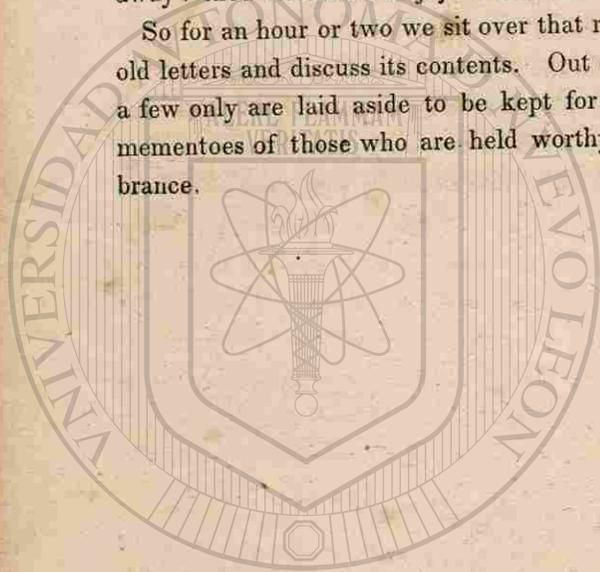
“He used to take a great interest in politics, and I have often heard him say it was his ambition to shine in public life. Poor fellow! he died of a cancer before any of his hopes were answered. I think that is the last letter he ever wrote, and I never read it without thinking of that touching sentiment uttered by Henry Clay when he felt that he was failing. What a depth of regretful feeling is contained in those few lines! Do you not remember them? I believe my memory serves me right—‘If the days of my usefulness be indeed past, I desire not to linger an impotent spectator of the oft-scanned field of life.’

“There are passages in that letter imbued with the same spirit. After all, Harry, how vain are our calculations and endeavors.”

I read the letter so full of regrets, yet not repinings, and then Frank hands me another written in a different vein. It is from “a musical genius” studying abroad, and is full of the spirit which characterizes the works of Beethoven and Mozart, and others of their school. Its pages, written almost in rhythmical measure, give evidence of a mind gifted with an intense perception of all that is beautiful and divine in music. It remains to be seen whether, master of his art, he will one day exclaim with the dying Mozart—“Now I begin to see

what might be done in music :” or, disappointed in his aspirings, sigh with Jean Paul Richter—“ Away, music, away ! thou tellest me of joys I shall never realize.”

So for an hour or two we sit over that receptacle of old letters and discuss its contents. Out of hundreds, a few only are laid aside to be kept for reperusal—mementoes of those who are held worthy of remembrance.



UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN
DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS

XXI.

“ COME, Frank ! it is a fine, still morning : what do you say to a drive over to Hermit’s Dell ? I promised Bella that we would not neglect her, and at the same time there are matters at the cottage I wish to look after.”

Such was Minnie’s salutation and proposition to our host at breakfast this morning.

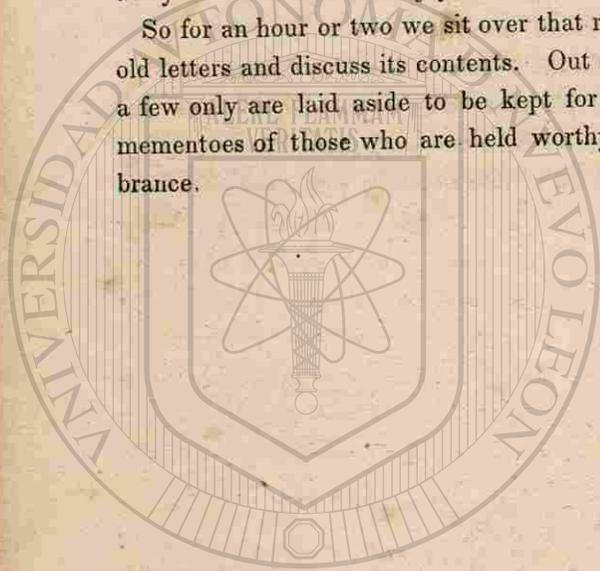
“ Only grant me an hour to scribble off a letter or two, and I and the horses are at your service for the day,” is Frank’s reply.

It is indeed a pleasant winter’s day ! The snow lies dense and level over the lawn ; here and there a hemlock or pine relieving its glistening surface with its dark shadows, and giving a phase of cheerfulness to the else gloomy woods. The sunshine falls warmly into the winter conservatory on the southern porch, and sitting within it, inhaling its delicious atmosphere, laden with scents of geranium and orange blossoms, we fancy that the breath of a summer’s day is here caged and kept for our enjoyment.

Frank comes here sometimes to enjoy his cigar

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which his wife declaims against most forcibly; but he defends himself with the plea that he drives away the spiders which are particularly obnoxious to her: so he gains his point. But the horses are at the door. Frank has finished his epistles, and whilst the ladies are pulling on their Polish boots, we arrange the hot bricks in a damp blanket on the bottom of the sleigh, and otherwise consult the comfort of our companions; for Frank slyly whispers in my ear, "I'm going to give them a drive to Leeville."

Our destination, then, is nearly thirty miles distant, and the prospect is that we shall not get home again to-night.

Frank takes the reins, for our vehicle holds but four persons comfortably, and in half an hour we are at the door of Bella's cabin. Minnie runs in for a few moments, and returns with tidings that the invalid is fast improving and very comfortable, wanting nothing but a few more days of good Abby Pike's nursing.

As the cottage we call our home is on the route we intend taking, Minnie tells our Jehu not to drive by without stopping, for she begins to suspect that Frank and I have had our heads together, concocting some scheme or other for their surprise or amusement.

At home we find everything as it should be in-doors, but have to force a perfect barricade of snow, piled upon the porch by the busy winds, before effecting an

entrance. Teddy is now sole occupant, for during our absence his kitchen companions have gone to visit their friends elsewhere. A good hickory-wood fire is blazing in the kitchen, whither we descend to warm our fingers preparatory to a start, and at the same time inspect the larder, which we fear is nearly empty. It is rather soon after breakfast for us to be hungry, but the ladies being admonished that they have a long ride before them, think it best to fortify themselves a little. Minnie produces part of a smoked salmon from a dark corner, and Kate has spied out a jar of pickles, of which, with most of her sex, she is uncommonly fond. There is no lack of bread and butter, so whilst our fair companions take their "cold snap," Frank and I imbibe a warm potation whose flavor awakens memories of "old Schiedam."

But Teddy calls out, "Mister Frank, the beasts are shiverin'," despite of their blankets, and so, once more snugly tucked in, we are off again.

Away through the woods, along the river bank, and then into the woods again, we speed at a gallant rate, till we reach "the Point" where we are to cross the river. The snow covers the surface only in detached places, and keeping watch for the air-holes we drive straight across. The river is here almost a mile in width, but the ice is nearly a foot thick, and perfectly solid, so we feel there is no risk in

crossing on it. As we near the other shore, we find the tide has overflowed the surface, to the depth of several inches, and become frozen again. Our horses break through it, which alarms the ladies some, but it is soon over.

We take the shore near an old-fashioned tavern, which Frank and I well remember as the *rendezvous* of a sleighing party in which we were prominent actors a few years ago. There is the same flaunting sign swinging and creaking, the same tall porch, and there is the identical woolly-headed "Cæsar," who rubbed down Frank's horses so faithfully on that eventful night.

"We must stop for the sake of old times, Harry," said Frank, and so we do. The old negro recognizes us, but says, "Dem ain't the hosses, massa—yah-yah!" No, Cæsar, and where are the fair forms which they bore that night? where is Mabel Lee, the belle of the frolic; where her fair companion? Are they living still, mindful oftentimes of by-gone days, or are they in that realm where retrospection neither gladdens or saddens the spirit!

Leeville is still some ten miles distant, but we are on the post road, now beaten smooth and hard by constant travel.

A fine farming country here stretches for miles westward from the river. Great red barns are visible

from the road, doubtless heaped high with hay and grain, for there are stacks without—the surplus of garnered crops.

Our road courses amidst varied scenes: now, through a piece of woodland; now ascending, then descending; here, over a wide stream, on stone arches; there, through a region of broad and level meadows. The snow lies deeply over all now, but in the summer time it must be a beautiful country that surrounds us.

The moon lights us into Leeville, that quiet little village in which Frank and I have spent so many pleasant days. We pass by the old homestead, standing away back from the road, and dimly seen through the dense locusts and elms which surround it. My friend's right and title to that substantial old mansion has been long since conveyed into other hands, and nothing about it belongs to him now but its pleasant associations.

We stop for a moment upon the bridge that crosses a little stream flowing near the village. "There, Kate," says Frank, pointing to the spot where the willows thickly cluster, "there is a deep pool in which a poor misguided girl drowned herself a few years ago. I will tell you more about it when we reach the tavern."

We have had a long drive, and though not suffering with cold, thanks to the hot bricks and thick furs, it is

pleasant to gather round the wide hearth in the parlor of the tavern, which the family have vacated for our accommodation.

Old Walton is the landlord still, and recognizing us as friends, strives to make us comfortable.

Supper is soon prepared, and a good supper too, consisting of coffee, buckwheat cakes, fresh pickerel from a neighboring lake, and sundry other accompaniments; to all of which we do ample justice.

The dry wood is heaped upon the fire, and cozily disposed around it, Frank and I revive old memories. We remember the harvests-home, the corn-huskings, the apple-peelings, and all the other frolics in which we once took a part. An hour or two passes away in such converse, till Frank is reminded of the little history he promised to give concerning the suicide girl.

"I shall tell it hastily," Frank says, "for it is getting late, and we are all tired."

"She was the daughter of a rich farmer in this vicinity, and it may be that her parents are living yet, although they were pretty old people at the time the affair happened. During the summer, a party of young men from the city came here to rusticate, fish, and shoot woodcock, for the country abounded in game.

"They were wild boys, full of fun, and ready for any frolic: cruising about in every direction, and

making the acquaintance of all the pretty girls for miles around. Every few days they would get up a pic-nic or a fishing frolic, or something of the kind. The girls felt flattered with the attentions of these city beaux, though I don't suppose any one of them had the remotest idea of picking up a wife here. At any rate they all had their favorites, and it is only to be wondered at that there were not more broken hearts than Bell Darragh's. Poor girl! she was young and very susceptible, and was deep in love before she knew it. The young man who waited on her most was well calculated to win a girl's heart, but I am convinced that he was not aware how deep an impression he had made. It was the talk, however, of the whole neighborhood, how deeply the girl was in love with him, till by and by it reached his ears. He did not give it much attention, but rather laughed at it as only a passing fancy, though at the same time withdrawing his attentions to a certain degree; for I believe that he was strictly honorable. It was different with the girl; and though her companions laughed at her and called her foolish, it was soon evident that she was serious in her attachment. Her temperament was peculiar, and she became quite melancholy; would not go out, and refused to join any more of the parties that were made up.

"Her father sent her away to an uncle living in a

different part of the country, thinking a change of scene would have a good effect upon her; but it was of no use. When she came home, the young men had all left, and the one to whom she was attached, not dreaming but that her fancy for him would cease on his departure, had thought it needless to enter into any explanation. This was a twofold disappointment to her. She became moody and mopish, and subject to melancholy spells, so that her parents were obliged to watch her constantly.

"She went on so for several weeks, till one morning she did not make her appearance at breakfast, which was very unusual. Her mother went up to her room, but it was vacant and the bed had not been disturbed. The old people were much alarmed, and the news soon spread through the village that Bell Darragh was missing.

"Her body was found in less than an hour. It lay upon the pebbly bottom of the pool under the willows that I pointed out to you near the bridge. Her face was turned upward, and those who saw it first said that it glistened through the clear water calm and beautiful in its expression. Every means were resorted to in the hope of restoring her, but she was perfectly lifeless.

"I saw her soon after she was taken from the water. Her bonnet hung upon the willows, as if to show the spot where she laid herself down to die. She had

dressed herself in a white robe, with more than usual care, and had even twined some white rose-buds in her hair. It was a fair but sad sight, and as I looked upon the lifeless form, surrounded by wailing friends, I could not but think and exclaim, how soon

"The illusion o'er, the spell dispersed,
Life and life's bubble burst."

"It cast a gloom over the village for weeks, for Bell was a general favorite with young and old. I have often thought how sadly her young love was wasted and quenched, and how many of us would give the world, if we could, to be the object of such devotion as hers."

Such was Frank's relation, and strictly true. I remember well when it occurred, but our companions had never heard of the incident before.

"It is a sad story," says one, "but such things happen oftener than we know of. The world scoffs at there being such a thing as a broken heart, but I know of two in my own experience. Harry, you remember Julia C——! you know the doctor said she died of a galloping consumption: but her intimate friends knew better."

It is late before we retire, although our breakfast is to be ready by daylight, so we can reach home in good season. And a good night's rest we have on the laven-

der scented beds, yet promptly obeying old Walton's summons at our doors ere daylight.

The horses, equally refreshed and well cared for as ourselves, are at the door, anxious to turn their heads homeward again, and it is not long before they are doing so. We propose taking the road running parallel with the river now, and cross it some ten miles farther down than we did yesterday, consequently nearer Briar-cliff.

The road is tortuous and hilly, and the ride rather tedious, but we reach Briar-cliff before evening, much to the relief of the domestics and delight of Birdie, who could not divine the reason of our absence.

Again in the library with its warm atmosphere and glowing hangings, we find our city papers and a letter from Blanche to her brother. He reads to us passages from it, and she is amidst our circle again, but impalpable, invisible. She has been journeying a few days in Florida, and gives us charming descriptions of its almost tropical scenery and climate.

"Why cannot you all make me a visit before spring? it is only a trip of four days from Briar-cliff here," she writes.

We all agree that it would be very pleasant to do so, but then there are good reasons to prevent us this winter.

"But we can go to the city at any rate, can we not, Kate?" Minnie says, half inquiringly, half decidedly

"I see there is a fine opera for Friday night, and the 'Philharmonic' on Saturday, so let us go down this week."

Frank and I are content to remain perfectly passive in this arrangement, so it is decided that day after tomorrow we leave for town, where we shall spend the holidays.

Minnie has some preparatory needle-work to do, and forthwith sets about it with borrowed materials. She intimates, too, that I must go over to the cottage in the morning and pack her bonnet-box with some necessary habiliments.

Kate draws her easel to the light and gives the finishing touches to a sketch of Hermit's Dell, which she wishes to have framed in the city; whilst Frank and I light our "Noriegas," and each with a paper in hand "place" ourselves as our notions of comfort indicate.

"Aha! so Nellie C—— is married at last," exclaims Frank: and he reads the notice from the paper he holds.

"To a foreigner too, Frank! Well! her fancy is gratified at last. I am sure you remember as well as I do that flitting summer of ours, when we met her at the Springs. I suppose you have long ago told your wife of that famous flirtation you had with the fair Nellie! for like most of us married men you have doubtless made confession of all pre-hymeneal strayings

and preferences. Has he not, Kate? You needn't give Minnie the wink, Frank, for she knows who I was enamored with at the same time that you was so desperate. That was a pleasant time nevertheless, though we wasted so much attention and —, I was going to say something else more valuable: but no matter for that! if it had not gone one way, it would another.

"That *was* a golden season to us *then*, Frank, however we may think of it now.

"What glorious gallops and drives over the hills and through the valleys of fair Berkshire! What stolen glances and smiling recognitions by day—what roving and whisperings on moon-lit eves under the old trees—what dreams by night!

"All gone—wasted, my friend! We are not sorry though, are we? we do not miss them, do we? There are fairer forms, and whiter hands, and darker eyes nearer and dearer to us now, are there not?

"We were married, too, before either of them, the sweet coquettes, and they know it. I wonder if it made them feel they were growing *passé*.

"Perhaps the old proverb proved true in their case! but no! let us be generous, Frank; such creatures as they were never grow old: let us hope they have gone farther to fare no worse.

"Ah! you shake your head—cannot forgive her, hey! Well it was rather provoking to be shuffled off like an

old shoe, and discarded for the sake of that *parvenu* Count. But you were well avenged at any rate, Frank; what was he after all, and how every one laughed at her, and none pitied her. I wonder if she has caught a real Count now!"

"You have made quite an *exposé*, Harry," says Frank's wife; "he never told me the whole affair, or why he was jilted. Ah! Frank, you need never tell me you are not conceited after this."

Frank pretends to be very stoical, and, absorbed in his paper, says nothing: but I fancy that his thoughts are running back to that gay summer and its flitting memories. I know that in his life-view the growing years have left a vista through which a reach half shady, half sunny, sometimes opens to his spirit's vision. Like the bit of landscape which the Claude Lorraine mirror pictures, it is clothed in a warm and dreamy haze—the haze of the Past.

Unto what spirit is retrospection not pleasant! Over the long review the shadow and the sunshine are not unequally cast, "and every cloud hath a lining of silver."

In the careless days of boyhood we listlessly read from our dog-eared Martial the truthful line

"Hoc est
Vivere bis, vita posse priore frui."

but it is only in after years that we realize its meaning

XXII.

THE Christmas holidays are over, and we have been spending them in the city, renewing some old acquaintances and dissipating in various ways.

Again amidst the quiet comforts of home we are recovering from the effects of the week's excitement, and enjoying ourselves as we are wont to do.

The weather still continues cold, but we are so comfortably domesticated, day after day passes by and we linger, loth to return to Hermit's Dell.

Teddy came over this morning, and brings my accumulated mail, with tidings that Bella is now well; and we send back by him an inclosure for the good old nurse who has attended her so faithfully.

It has long been a matter of cogitation and consultation with Minnie and myself whether we shall embrace Frank's offer and build near him. There are many matters to be taken into consideration, but on most accounts it seems desirable, and we have almost decided to do so.

It is a beautiful site that he has selected for us; few

could be more delightful. At a short distance from his own dwelling, yet screened from sight of it by a dense grove of old forest trees, it commands a lovely and wide-spread inland view of hill and valley, with a glimpse of far-off mountains, and from an elevation the river may be seen also.

A wide stretch of greensward is capable of being made a beautiful lawn, dotted as it is naturally with fine deciduous and evergreen trees. Near by is the glen with its stream and fish pond, its sequestered walks and shadowy nooks—a resort which the hand of nature alone has made lovely in the extreme.

There in the summer time one may imagine himself far removed from the haunts of men, amidst the solitudes of scarcely trodden forests, for there are

“Dark owlet nooks, and caves, and battled rocks,
And winding valleys roofed with pendant shade.”

We are talking it all over this evening, and Frank's wife volunteers to draft a plan for us to build after—a Gothic cottage, an Italian villa, or any style we may fancy.

She even brings her drawing materials and carelessly pencils a fanciful outline for Minnie's consideration: and Minnie is none the less in the spirit of it, for she lays out the form and dimensions of the dining-room and library, the size of the hall, and expresses her

opinion of the best exposure for the parlor with its bow window and French sashes.

Then there must be a winter conservatory, for she has a passion for flowers, and the porch must have trellisses for her favorite wistaria and trumpet-creeper.

I even find myself becoming more interested, and confer with Frank in the most serious manner as to the best location for the garden, the most effective disposition of the shrubbery and flower borders, and the easiest route for the approach.

Then there are the out-buildings and fruitery, the pasture lot, and sundry other matters to be considered.

How easy it is to plan and suggest! how interested we can often become in what, after all, is uncertain and perhaps impossible!

This thought strikes me, and I look at Minnie. She is more enthusiastic than I am, and sits dreamily looking at the fairy creation already made by Kate's agile fingers.

Already in her fancy the graceful cottage is reared on yonder knoll. The summer's sun, shining through the foliage of overhanging trees, flecks its roof with gleams and shadows.

The lattices are shrouded with dense festoons of odorous creepers, amidst which her canary hangs and gleefully warbles. The breath of June has blown open the buds of her prairie rose, and the "Bourbons"

on the lawn are out in all their brilliancy. Velvety glades, their surface chequered with sunshine and shade, and bossed with beds of flowers, stretch away amidst the tree-openings forming long vistas of varied beauty.

Ah! my dreamer, I almost say, your eyes see fair visions, your thoughts wander in a mimic fairy-land! will your feet ever tread it, think you?

"Well," says Frank, "we will say no more about it now, but leave it an open question for you to decide before spring. I am sure we have offered you every inducement to be our near neighbors." And so we leave the subject for farther consideration.

During the evening Frank's protégé, the young school-teacher, joins our circle. He is a frequent visitor here, and finds it pleasant to associate with those whose tastes are congenial with his. Young as he is, he has seen considerable of the ups and downs of life, and experience has been his teacher in much that most of us only casually learn.

He has made Frank acquainted with many circumstances which have conspired to place him in his present position. He has truly been reared in the school of adversity, and it is only to be wondered that he has not long ago become disheartened.

His family were once in affluent circumstances, and his father held a high position in one of the New Eng-

land States: but by some misdemeanor of persons connected with him in financial operations, he was completely ruined.

His reputation was blasted too, but as is too often the case, the aspersions cast upon him were unjust and without a shadow of reason.

The world makes few allowances, and public opinion is often too hastily formed and biased. It was so in this case; but the amendment came too late at last; for soon after his reverses, the injured man filled a suicide's grave.

A wife, daughter, and only son were left to struggle on as they could; the son, our present companion, the youngest of the children.

His mother removed from her native town, and went to a neighboring city, where she found employment in a seminary for young ladies. Her daughter became instated in a private family as children's governess, and the son, prepared already to enter college, was admitted as a charity student, an unenviable position generally. He applied himself though to his labors, and graduated well, blessed with a good education and naturally gifted, as we have seen, with talents of a high order.

Since then, his mother has died, and he is endeavoring to the utmost to place his sister in a position above dependency. Whatever he could find to do by which

he might gain an honest livelihood, he has not scorned or neglected.

He has been an engineer in a cotton factory, a conductor on a railroad, and now a village school teacher but brighter days are in store for him. Frank has interested himself in his behalf, and a station of trust and honor will soon be opened for him to fill.

He sits long with us this evening, and recounts many incidents in his past life. For one so young, he has tasted much that is bitter, little that is sweet, and early trials have left their impress on him. We can only wonder that he has braved and borne them so well, better than many older and wiser than he is.

It becomes us to encourage him in his onward course, which bids fair to be successful if he does not neglect his opportunities.

It is not likely that he will. When we once weather the storm, confidence is gained and strengthened, and we almost long to brave another, so the mastery may be more perfect.

"Yet after all," says Frank, who is in his moralizing mood, "what is our joy and glory? We live our little day, 'robust ephemera' as the poet says we are, we die, others fill our places, and we are soon forgotten, unnumbered.

"Do you remember what that quaint old English poet,

Edward Bolten, wrote two centuries ago?" and taking from his book-shelf a rusty volume, he reads —

As withereth the primrose by the river,
 As fadeth summer's sun from gliding fountains,
 As vanisheth the light-blown bubble ever,
 As melteth snow upon the mossy mountains,
 So melts, so vanisheth, so fades, so withers,
 The rose, the shine, the bubble and the snow
 Of praise, pomp, glory, joy, which short life gathers.
 Fair praise, vain pomp, sweet glory, little joy.
 The withered primrose by the mourning river,
 The faded summer sun from weeping fountains,
 The light-blown bubble vanished forever,
 The melten snow upon the naked mountains
 Are emblems—that the treasures we uplay,
 Soon wither, vanish, fade and melt away.

STRAY CHAPTERS.

"I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
 And in no careless heart transcribed the tale:
 * * * * * So—did I gather food
 To feed my many thoughts—a tameless multitude."

SHELLEY

UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

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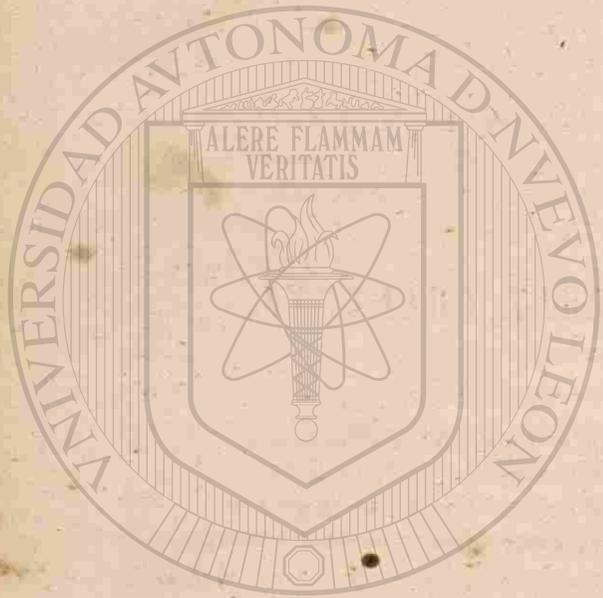
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I.

"The days of our youth are the days of our glory."

"Years steal

Fire from the mind as vigor from the limb,
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim."

Thus wrote Byron! he who had quaffed life's cup even to its dregs, and taken his fill of every pleasure which could sweeten or embitter his existence. How comprehensive are those stanzas of the poet—what a depth of thoughtful meaning lies hid beneath their tuneful sadness.

In the sensitive and morbid spirit, they would stifle every dawning of ambition and cloud every hope, or cause him who is bearing the "heat and burden of the day," yearn with heartfelt longings to live over his long-past spring-time.

I remember well the first time those thoughts of the poet woke dreary feelings in my own earnest spirit. I was a youth then; schoolboy days and sports were over, but the present was bright as sunset clouds with anticipations of college-life—the romance of prospective travel, and the thousand airy schemes which haunt the fancy of youth.

It was a hazy, dreamy day in early autumn; the sun still shone warmly on the hill-sides and in grassy dells, as if loth to leave the wealth of fields and orchards which had flourished and ripened under its summer sway.

The corn-fields were growing "yellow unto the harvest," and here and there among the woods flashed the brilliant foliage of some tender vine which untimely frost had touched. The bustle of men and the hum of the work-day world were afar; no sound broke the Sabbath stillness save the whispering of the breeze amidst the high tree-tops, the tapping of the wood-pecker upon some hollow trunk, or the lowing of cattle on the distant meadows. It was to no new haunt my steps were tending; near by rose the ruined walls and mossy wheel of the old mill, which, long disused and deserted, had been my favorite resort. Near by, flowed the bright Neshaminy, winding like a silver thread amidst the woods and meadows towards the distant Delaware; above and around me were the dim-lit woods, into whose depths of shade the sun seldom shone.

It was a spot I loved with youth's excess,
Not for itself, but for its loneliness.

Fired and warm, I sat down to rest upon the twisted
root of an old sycamore, which threw its white arms

far across the stream; my dog lay at my feet, warm and panting too, from his fruitless chase after a grey squirrel, which, nestled safely in the crotch of a high oak, looked down upon his baffled pursuer in quiet security.

Taking from my pocket the well worn book whose pages had whiled away many an else idle hour, I opened it at random, and these lines first met my eye

"Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story;
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two and twenty,
Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty."

The stanza was deeply scored too, with an heavy ink mark; it must have been by the hand of him who was the chosen friend of schoolboy days.

The book had been his parting gift, but his grasp, once so warm and true, is powerless now!

Ah, Herman! thought I, who shall atone for thy wild errors! Well I know "*carpe diem*" was your motto, but did you sieze the day for any good purpose? Yet the grave covers every error; peace be with thee; but thy legacy may teach thy friend what it never taught thee!

As I read again and again the half sad, half joyous lines of the poet, I pondered; then closing the book, leaned over the clear waters that were flowing gently

by me, unrippled by a breeze, and in my reverie, me thought I was gazing into the magic crystal of the Eastern Fakir, wherein I might read my fate. I saw myself a child again, sporting along the streamlet's bank, or amidst bright gardens, plucking gay flowers—now swinging on the willow's pendant boughs—now sleeping on a mossy bank, dreaming sweet dreams. Insensibly I glided into early youth; familiar forms were round me, glad faces met mine. I knew no care or sorrow! the present was all light and joy—the future, bright with hope; but one little cloud swept over my unstained mirror. Amidst its shadowy folds there gleamed for an instant a pale and agonizing brow, and methought a wailing voice cried, “carpe diem—carpe diem.”

My reverie was ended; the spell was broken; yet a “still small voice” seemed whispering in my ear, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” And my heart replied, yes! “Live while we may,” is the creed of the pleasure-seeker, the proverb of the boy; yet it is the language of the worker and philanthropist too, but abused and perverted by the one, valued and improved by the other.

So musing again, yet with a lightened heart and clearer understanding, I rose from my shady seat and retraced my way homeward.

No longer, thought I, shall the morbid sentiment of

the sated sensualist cast a gloom over *my* untried future. Let those who will, seek pleasure, and when sated with its nectar draught, sigh that the “days of their glory are over,” as for myself, I will strive for a nobler destiny, and time shall solve whether the teachings of my spirit have been right or wrong.

The sun was setting behind curtains of crimson and gold, and lighting up my quiet study-chamber with hues bright as the new-born hopes which filled my spirit.

Taking from my book-shelf an unpretending volume, I read by the roseate light these thoughtful lines from the “Psalm of Life.”

“Not enjoyment and not sorrow
Is our destined end or way:
But to act, that each to-morrow
Finds us farther than to-day.

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And departing, leave behind us
Foot-prints on the sands of time.

“Let us then, be up and doing
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.”

II.

THE wild and silvery Beaverkill winds its way through a wilderness as yet untrodden save by the Indian and the hunter. In its clear depths the wily trout finds a seldom-disturbed retreat, and to its grassy brink the timid deer and his tired hunter come, to slake their thirst with its pure and unsullied waters. There are haunts of rare loveliness by its wooded banks which it would be hard to match the world over, tempting the "world's tired denizen" almost to be an anchorite, and forsaking the beaten thoroughfares of life, say with the poet :

"To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forests' shady scene,
Where things that own not man's dominion, dwell
And mortal foot hath ne'er, or rarely been ;
To climb the trackless mountains all unseen,
With the wild flock that never needs a fold :
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean :
This is not solitude—'tis but to hold
Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores
unrolled."

It was early in the autumn of a year long past,

when, with a cherished friend at my side, I sat upon the brink of a wooded cliff which overhung the flashing waters of the Beaverkill.

We had been hunting from early dawn, and as the shadows lengthened on the hillsides, and the gloom deepened in the valleys, had slowly loitered on our way to the logger's cabin, which had been our home for days. The sun was near the horizon as we reached the lofty ledge that formed the precipitous side of a wide ravine, through whose shady depths the stream was murmuring.

The beauty of the view won our tired feet, so, seating ourselves upon a mossy rock, we gave up the hour to memories of the past and plans for the future ; such a communion as only well-tried friends can know. We were young in years, but world-wise withal. We had roamed the old world together and seen every phase of life, from the rude *châlet* of the Alpine herdsman by the glacier's side, to the gilded halls of royalty with their proud attributes and gay surroundings.

Alike in disposition and congenial in tastes, we had made mankind our study—lookers-on rather than comminglers in the turmoil and bustle, the strife and competition, amidst which so many find their highest joy. The leaves of our journals on which we had faithfully inscribed the chequered experiences of our many sojournings, seemed often-times like the pro

phetic tablets of the soothsayer, by whose silent teachings we might follow or avoid the paths which had led others either to their making or undoing.

As we sat upon the cliff, the warm glow of the autumnal sunset, which is nowhere else so beautiful, lighted up the forest that surrounded us, and shining through the frost-dyed verdure of the tenderer trees, clothed every object with its roseate hue. We thought of many an old cathedral chapel, with its stained windows, and the "dim religious light" streaming through them upon the altars and paintings and worshippers.

As we still sat and musingly talked, the twilight came, and with it the evening breeze, gently at first, then freshening, and ere long rising almost to a gale. As it soughed and wailed through the dense pine forest which stretched around us, and the twilight began to deepen, we thought of the solemn *Tenebrae* and the wail of the *Miserere* in dim Roman chapels. Who that has once heard that shrill cry of seeming agony, which is almost supernatural in its wild notes of sorrow, has not in after years heard it again and again in fancy! Like the fearful scream which the terror-stricken steed is said to give, it is a sound never to be forgotten.

Night was coming on and leaden-hued clouds were gathering in the west, when we reached our rude place of shelter; but the logger's fireside was as warm as

his heart, and throwing off our hunting gear, we sat down to our hearty supper and talked of our day's success. The goodly array of game which hung from the rafters of the wood-shed, attested that the busy world was still far distant; yet, in a few years, the old forests will be cleared away, and those now quiet solitudes echo with the sounds of every-day life.

And we, too, were never more to tread that ground together. That night was our last in the hunter's cabin, though we promised the old man that we would come again the next season and make a longer stay. Little did we dream that one of us would be where no plans are formed, no hopes blighted; so true is it that we must

"Trust no future, howe'er pleasant."

There are not many who can truly realize or fitly appreciate an all-abiding and enduring friendship, and still fewer are they, who when they gain a friend, may keep that friend for ever.

The ascetic and the misanthrope may scoff at friendship and call it but a name, a fleeting fancy of the hour, but it is not so. There are those whose hearts are bound by ties which even the grave cannot sever—ties which have stood every test of life unchanging and unchanged.

The month in which we had promised to revisit the

hunting ground, again arrived, but my friend could not keep his promise with the old woodsman. The companion of my last hunt, the best friend of my boyhood and youth was beneath the sod. Loving him with almost a woman's love, it was hard to give him up to the grasp of the spoiler, adding another to those

"Who, like to autumn leaves by tempests whirled,
Are swept forever from this busy world."

With another companion I have revisited the scenes above described, and we have sat upon that same pine ridge and listened to the same sighing wind, fancying that a familiar voice came to our ears upon its "wings," reminding us of bygone days.

III.

BENEATH a rough and unseemly exterior, how much that is intrinsically valuable or lovely may be hidden! The fire of the diamond is clouded by baser soil, till revealed by the hand and skill of the polisher; the water that is purest and coolest, wells from the roughest and hardest rock.

As in nature, so, oftentimes in life. There is many a roughly-clad pilgrim, journeying earth's pathways with us, who beneath his tattered garb, wears a brave and noble heart.

He is an unstudied masquer, yet the world, which with cursory glance,

"Weighs all things in custom's falsest scale,"

will, too often, denounce him as an outcast, or despise as a misanthrope. He may, and he may not be, deserving of that merciless ban. "A word fitly spoken," a little heartfelt sympathy invested in his behalf, may reveal that though.

"The tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind
Chapped by the axe looks rough and little worth,
The sap still lasts."

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There are few men so utterly lost and degraded, as to be insensible to kindness or sympathy; there are few so rough-hewn, who may not suffer some gentle hand to round off and polish here and there an unsightly corner. With skilful pruning and careful nurture, the roadside bramble may adorn the parterre; so too, may the scraggy oak be taught to assume almost the innate grace of the maple and elm.

Necessity, and may we not say, destiny oftentimes make men belie their very nature.

With the high-souled of such, life is a continuous struggle. "To be, or not to be, that is the question," the *casus belli* between the spirit and the flesh—whose arbiter is too often—Death.

With one thus constituted and thus situated, I was once familiar. A genius and a scholar by nature, but by the misfortunes of his family compelled to forego those opportunities which in early youth he had been led to expect, and which he would have improved so well, he was thrown upon the world, dependent on his own exertions; fitted for some callings—unfitted for others, yet compelled to do something for a livelihood.

His birthplace and early home was in a secluded and mountainous district of New England; of his parentage I knew but little.

"Suffice it, that perchance they were of fame,
And had been glorious in another day,
But one sad losel soils a name for aye,
However mighty in the olden time."

By a misdemeanor of an elder and only brother, was *his* name soiled, his father's hard-earned property lost, and a happy home vacated.

The mother, heart-broken and hopeless, died soon after the disgrace of her son; the father, taking with him Herbert, my after friend, emigrated to the far-west, where amid the toils and dangers of a pioneer's life, he reared his rude log-cabin, and in the excitement of a hunter's life strove to forget his past troubles.

Amid such scenes, Herbert grew from youth to manhood; by such associations his tastes and habits in after life were indelibly tintured.

The old man lived to see the forests through whose solitudes his axe had first resounded, cleared away and replaced by a thriving village; but ere long he died, and the link that bound Herbert there was broken.

Yearning for a life more in unison with his earlier tastes, and longing to ascertain somewhat of his brother, who had been lost to him for five long years, he shouldered his rifle and knapsack and retraced his steps toward the home of his childhood. It was a long and weary way thither, but at last the goal was reached, though the hope that led him on was doomed to dis-

appointment. The erring and forsaken brother was in a nameless grave, and of all who once filled the old homestead, Herbert alone walked the earth.

It was soon after this when I first met him—dispirited, but not despairing: world-sick, but not misanthropic. He had been seeking some situation, where, earning enough for a mere support, he might once more apply himself to study, and become fitted for a sphere of influence and mayhap—renown.

The hardships and habits of a frontier life had given him a rough exterior; for this he had met many rebuffs and in some cases, insult, from those to whom he had applied for advice and aid. They little knew how superior in intellect was the being they despised, or how at a future day he would tower above them all. *He* was conscious of the truth, that

“He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.”

For a month or two I saw much of him, and as acquaintance ripened into intimacy, I could not fail to discover that he was possessed of talents brilliant to a pre-eminent degree.

With the exception of a few hours a day, devoted to the business of a trifling agency, which afforded him a small income, the most of his time was spent in hard, untiring study.

He was a passionate lover of Nature, but chiefly in her wildest forms. He loved to roam the deep woods, and climbing the loftiest hills, gaze upon the distant river, for it reminded him of his father's cabin by the banks of the Missouri, and of his deer-hunts amidst the forests of the West. His fondness for study made him a lover of solitude; the soothing murmur of a mountain stream, or the whisperings of the breeze through the leafy woods, were far sweeter to him than the hum and bustle of the crowd. For this, the world called him misanthropic and stoical; as if all men are constituted alike, and no happiness may be found save along the beaten thoroughfares of busy life.

Ere long an opportunity for more engrossing employment offered. It was in taking charge of a district school situated in a newly settled county of an adjoining State.

The enterprise, though holding out little inducement as to pecuniary advantage, accorded well with his tastes and habits. The country itself was new and wild, its inhabitants plain and unassuming, and the desk might be the stepping-stone to a position which his ambitious spirit had long coveted. So once more starting on his pilgrimage, he trod his way thither, with a hand ready for any good endeavor, and a heart nerved for any fate.

Though corresponding at short intervals, and the

distance between us but a short day's journey, I saw nothing of my friend for more than a year: yet wishing to see him again, and knowing it would afford him pleasure, I packed up my hunting habiliments one fine day in early autumn, and ere many hours had elapsed, again felt the warm grasp of my friend's hand.

The rude house of the raftsmen, in whose family he was living, stood in a wild and lonely glen, not far from the little village which had sprung up and flourished like a mushroom on the banks of the Delaware. A few months previous, its site had been a part of the wilderness, but armies of sturdy men, marshalled by all-conquering Progress, had marched thither, levelling the hills, bridging the streams, and filling up the valleys, to make a pathway for the iron horse to travel, whose deep pantings woke strange echoes amidst the woods and mountains.

I found my friend, unconscious of my coming, poring over the pages of his well-worn Virgil.

The small yet comfortable chamber allotted him was filled with objects indicative of his tastes: it was alike the studio of a scholar and a hunter. Guns and fishing-rods, pouches and baskets, deer hides and antlers, skins of wild-cats and foxes, stuffed birds, books, papers, and some crayon sketches, all were fancifully arranged upon the walls, so that hardly a chink in the log siding could be discerned. And there, by the blaz

ing hickory fire, so lavishly piled, we spent the greater part of the night in talk of bygone days, of present troubles, and of future plans and hopes. Thus far he had been prospered beyond his most ardent anticipations.

Though he had spent many wearisome hours and days in striving to teach pupils who were heedless, and slow to learn—though the people amidst whom he was thrown were mostly ignorant and uncultivated still he felt that he would rather strive to “carve himself a name” there, than among those who had cast him out in his day of need, and had never appreciated him as he felt he should be.

Giving his scholars a play-day before my departure, we devoted it to hunting and rambling the woods and hills which surrounded his home. He was familiar with them all, and grew eloquent sometimes, as his heart swelled with memories of other days.

At noon, tired and satisfied with our sport, we seated ourselves upon the summit of a knoll, which commanded a beautiful prospect of the wild valley beneath us, and a wide expanse of forest on every side. Here and there a column of blue smoke rising above the high tree-tops, told of some woodman's lonely clearing, along the distant railroad track or within reach of some mountain stream, whose swollen waters might bear his lumber to the river.

No sound came upon our ears but the occasional bark of the squirrel, the murmur of the stream far down in the ravine, or the trumpet-like bay of our hound on the track of a fox or deer along the opposite hillside.

Such sights and sounds awoke, in my companion's spirit, recollections of the time when he and his father reared their cabin amidst the wilds of Illinois, and lived happily enough surrounded with the hard-earned comforts of a frontier life.

His warmest sympathies were with those early emigrants who, won by the tales of that wondrous beauty, grandeur, and fertility which would greet their eyes and bless their labors, went forth from eastern homes to rear a new and untried one amidst forests untrodden and unknown, save by the "untutored Indian." Their only guide thither had been the trail and war-path which the red man had made and tramped from time immemorial.

What volumes more stirring than those of romance might be written, recounting the trials and adventures of those earnest and faithful men! what tales of warfare and savage torture!

The whoop of the Indian, the howl of the wolf, and the scream of the panther, broke their slumbers, and caused the timid mother to draw her babes still closer to her bosom. With all these and more, it was their

lot to contend; yet with their labors and trials came reward. The wilderness was made to "blossom as the rose," according to the promise given them, and their children know but little what their fathers suffered.

"The noble, dauntless Pioneers,
Journeying afar new homes to raise,
In the lone woods with toils and tears,
Meeting with faith the coming years,
Theirs be the highest meed of praise."

Yet with all his admiration of those in whose trials he had borne a part, not the less was his pity awakened for the poor Indian, who, scared away from his old haunts by the noisy tread of the white man, broke his bow over the grave of his fathers, and with wounded or embittered spirit made a new trail towards the unknown realms between him and the setting sun.

Their hunting grounds were broken up by the axe and the plough—the ashes of their council-fires and the bones of their kindred, enriched the fields of their successors. By little and little, their names would fade from the memory of man, till lost among "the things that were."

"There *were* their homes, but now no more,
Their day of power and pride is o'er;
They urge the chase, where other skies
Are spread, and other hills arise."

With such reflections and in such converse we passed many a pleasant hour. It was a joy to me to see one whom, a few months before, I had feared would shrink disheartened from the strife in which he must engage, thus manfully and cheerfully bearing his part.

Well I knew there were some, whose taunts were still rankling in his spirit, whom, at some future day, he would compel to acknowledge that "mind, not manners, make the man."

And so I left him in his rude school-room, surrounded by his pupils, happy and contented, yet looking forward to a loftier and more extended sphere about to open before him

IV.

"MAY you die among your kindred," is an aspiration which none can fitly appreciate but those who have stood by the bedside of one dying in a strange land. There are not a few of us who have gathered those that were loved and loving unto the company of that "silent multitude" whose realm is the tomb. Some are sleeping quietly enough beneath the green turf of the village churchyard, afar from the noise of the city and the busy tread of men: others maybe have costlier sepulchres and rarer flowers above them, by the shady avenues of Auburn and Greenwood; but we, who survive them, have the consolation of knowing that they lie with their kindred, and that their last hours were not embittered with the thought that they were dying in a strange land.

There is scarcely anything that so saddens the heart of one journeying abroad, as to roam through the cemeteries contiguous to the larger cities of the continent. A few winters since, it was my melancholy pleasure to visit some of these, and in two of the most lovely of them, I assisted to inter several of my coun-

trymen, and in one instance, a fair young girl, who had left home and friends in quest of health, but to die amidst strangers.

The cemetery at Leghorn is beautifully laid out, and contains the graves of some ten or twelve Americans, and many more of English birth. The following inscription on an unassuming tomb therein, struck me as at once simple and touching :

M. R. C.

Æ. 19.

Mourn not for her ; she died as Christians die,
There was no earthward clinging of the heart,
No shuddering *terror*, no reluctant sigh.

The Campo Santo of Naples is as lovely a spot as the world can show. Its graves are ever green, and flowers are perpetually blooming and fading over them ; but on the hill of Posillipo, at the other extremity of the city, there was one solitary grave whose site was far more lovely. It lay hidden from view, till closely approached, in a shady dell upon the sloping southern hillside : above it are white villas, luxuriant vineyards, and odorous orange groves. Before it, stretches the blue expanse of the noble bay, girt well nigh round with shores which for beauty and variety cannot be surpassed, while far below, the surf breaks upon the shore with its deep and restless murmur, and still far

ther away lies the city, whose din and rattle come thither only on the breeze. It is the last resting-place of a young German girl, who died here years ago, and few strangers visit Naples, who do not time and again stand by her grave-stone, and marvel at the loveliness amidst which it is enshrined.

At the Baths of Lucca, which lie so warm and sheltered in the bosom of the Apennines, one may see in a morning's walk, during the winter months, invalids of almost every clime.

I remember a pale, fragile girl of my own country, who, with an elderly father, had been roaming Europe for a year or two, searching for that fountain, whose fabled waters so few may find.

To the stranger, it was evident enough that the Spoiler had long ago set his ineffaceable seal upon her brow ; but with that delusive hope, which to the last fills the heart of the consumptive, and often too, of their friends, she was confident that a few weeks more would find her at home again, with every prospect of a long and happy life.

One morning, gay and flushed, she would mingle with the crowd upon the shady promenade—the next, pale and languid, she would be carried in her palanquin where the sun was warmest, and the air most soft and tempered.

I saw her again in Naples, sometimes on the crowded

Toledo, or in the gay Villa-Reale, but oftener in the invalid's chair upon her chamber balcony. I saw her last, inhaling the balmy and odorous air of Sorrento on the opposite shore of the bay, but I knew when the rainy season came, she would fly elsewhere, yet for her all places were alike.

I was at Rome during the Carnival, but even amidst its follies and gaieties, in which every stranger must mingle more or less, I could not forget the pale face of the young, deluded invalid.

She too had come to Rome, but my first intimation of it was the mourning-enveloped note of our Consul, summoning me and my friends to her funeral. That was a gloomy day, on which some sixty of us followed to the grave the remains of one whom we felt was one of us, because of our country.

The weather had been cold and damp for days, colder than usual in Rome; and the occasion was one which is always saddening at any time, but more so to those who are far away from home and kindred. The service, conducted in the English chapel, by an English chaplain, was very solemn, and when it was all over, and a few of us stepped forward to press the hand of the heart-stricken father, who was to return home not "bringing his treasure with him," I thought how touching and how beautiful are the farewell words of the orient—

"May you die among your kindred!"

Two weeks afterward, I saw another of my countrymen buried near by. He was from our own sunny South, and had left at home a young wife and child to mourn him, in a stranger's grave.

Most of the tomb-stones in the English cemetery bear the names of English persons. One is that of a young and beautiful girl, whose horse became unmanageable as she was riding by the Tiber, when its waters were swollen by a freshet. The animal plunged into the river with her, and she was carried swiftly away before a helping hand could reach her.

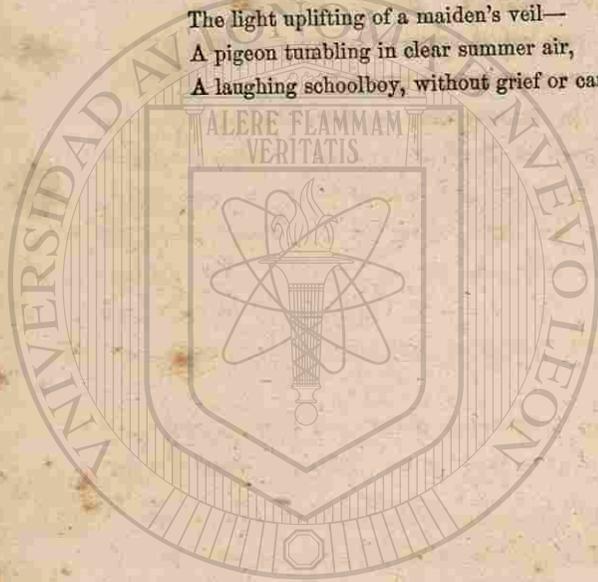
There also is the tomb of the poet Shelley, and near by, that of Keats, who, stung almost to madness by the malice of a few heartless critics, desired these words inscribed upon his tomb-stone.

"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

As I read the inscription, and looked around me upon the thickly-strewn graves of his countrymen, these beautiful lines of his, rose in my memory—

"Stop and consider! life is but a day:
A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep

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."



UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS

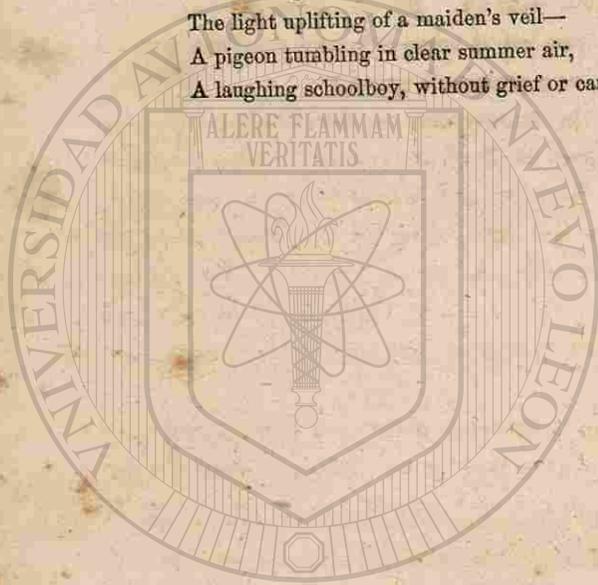
V.

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,

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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 gatherings in sunny Provence and still sunnier Tuscany

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of the orange groves of Sorrento and Messina, and the date-harvests on the far-off plains of Ismir.

Thus with the ripened grain and the rustling corn do slumbering memories of past years, and the scenes which gladdened them, waken with renewed freshness. Yet the memories of foreign climes and scenes, impregnated as they are with what Longfellow terms "the delicious perfume, the soft Ausonian air of travel," are not near so sweet as those that cluster around the old farm-house at Leeville. Yet it was not the dwelling-place of my ancestors, but the time-worn inheritance of a friend, companion of many wanderings.

One of us had roamed the classic shores of the old world; on ancient battle-fields, in dim cathedrals, and gorgeous palaces, strayed and marvelled. He had gazed on glorious views from high snow-peaks and cliff-perched castles by the Rhine and Rhone; and where ruined temples and lava-buried cities are, his tireless feet had wandered.

Once more at home, what wonder was it that he loved to sit with his companion in the old homestead hall, and recount his travels.

The hot and dusty summer brought memories of Windermere and Lomond lying cool and placid amidst their shadowy hills; and longing for a breath of the cool airs which come from Alpine glaciers, we envied for a while the monks of St. Bernard. But when the

cold winds of winter swept around the old hall, and the well-filled fire-place was all a-glow, we thought of once blistered feet in the crater of Vesuvius, and on the burning sands of Egypt.

It was a noble old place of which I write:

The ancestral oaks and elms which shade it have not yet fallen beneath the Vandal axe of the wood-cutter. Through their dense summer foliage the eye may catch the gleam of the distant river, flowing proudly on its course to the distant sea.

The hum of the city is far away; but a quiet village with linden-shaded and cottage-lined avenues lies near by. No louder sounds come thence than the clink of the blacksmith's hammer, or the glad voices of children as they break loose from school restraint and go sporting homewards. Now and then a travelling circus company stop for a day and pitch their huge tent on the village green, making a little more bustle and excitement than is common; but this is a rare occurrence.

A thrifty and intelligent class of farmers here and there dot the surrounding country with their houses and barns. It is a region where vast grain-fields, wide pastures, and fine cattle most abound.

A range of well wooded hills are visible from Leeville, till lost in the blue distance, they merge into the spurs of the Alleghanies, fifty miles away.

Not a half day's ride to the west lies Indian lake, a smooth sheet of water embosomed amidst hills whose sides are covered with forests of pine and hemlock. There, six years ago, we could drive any day, and find in the log cabin of "Uncle Josh" a warm welcome.

Then deer were plenty thereabout, and trout of the very finest could be had for nothing but the sport of taking them. Of old Uncle Josh we have spoken before; but the warm-hearted hunter and woodsman sleeps his last sleep. His cabin has given place to a flaunting tavern; now and then a stray deer, whose fellows are far away amidst the Adirondacks, is hunted to death and murdered in the water. City sportsmen brag of catching an occasional "two pounder" in the lake, but the Indian lake of to-day is not that of ten years ago. Even its name has been changed by the progress of the age; the hemlocks and pines are being cut from the hills; and could good Uncle Josh be permitted to wake up awhile and look around him, like old Rip Van Winkle, it is doubtful if he would know the site of his humble cabin.

I loved my winter visits at Leeville. My friend spent most of the season at home; and being but a day's journey from the city, I was often there. Many were the glorious sleighing frolics we enjoyed together; and I remember one in particular, as being the occasion of a difficulty between my friend Frank and a

dashing young farmer in the vicinity, not easily settled. Almost all villages and communities have their chosen belles. In this respect, Leeville was not peculiar. Mabel Lee, with a little more cultivation—a few artificial acquirements and accomplishments, would have been a belle at Saratoga, Newport, anywhere.

She was in fact the reigning beauty, not only of the village, but the surrounding country.

A year's study at a city school had added somewhat to her natural charms both of body and mind; so on her return to Leeville, there was quite a rivalry among the beaux of the vicinity, as to which would be the favorite.

Through my friend, I was invited to join a sleighing party which was appointed to gather on the night of the full moon.

It had thus far been a delightful winter for the country. The snow had fallen heavy early in the season; and occasionally deepened by slighter falls, had made the roads in fine order.

The night of the frolic came, bright and cold: and the village tavern, which was to be the rendezvous of the company, presented its gayest appearance. Sleigh loads of gay maidens with their brothers, suitors, and friends, came dashing to the door. Frank's splendid "blacks," loaded with bells, and attached to a richly furred cutter holding four persons, were near at hand

He had determined that Mabel Lee and a companion of hers from the city should occupy his sleigh, and we four form the load.

It was not long before it was so arranged; for the superiority of my friend's team above all others there, was temptation sufficient for the belle and her friend.

I had noticed, however, that a young man of the vicinity, who had been somewhat of a suitor in days gone by for the heart and hand of the beauty of Lee-ville, was watching us narrowly. He bore rather a dare-devil, though by no means bad character, in the staid village; and I soon discovered from some of his actions, that he was bent on mischief that night. I did not however fathom his intentions.

At last the vehicles were loaded, some fifteen in number, of all shapes, styles, and sizes, from the home-made hickory pole jumper to the great omnibus sled built for such occasions.

Just previous to starting, I had gone into the tavern to light my segar, leaving Frank busy in arranging the robes for the comfort of our ladies, when a jingling of many bells that I knew were ours, and a loud shout from my friend, brought me hastily to the door. At first I supposed his horses had become restive and started suddenly without a driver: but by the bright moonlight I could plainly see they were under control. It was only a second before I comprehended all.

There stood Frank surprised and angered, looking after his team as they swept over the frozen road under the guidance of his rival. The fellow had taken advantage of our inattention, and played us a trick. But there stood the sorrel mare and light cutter of the interloper.

"Jump in for heaven's sake, Hal;" said Harry, and away we sped in chase, with a dozen others after us to see the fun.

For a mile or two we saw nothing of the runaways, and the noise of the bells behind us prevented our hearing those ahead.

Up hill and down, we flew like the wind; but we knew the mettle and the speed of our blacks, and that a stern chase would prove a long one in this instance at least. It was five miles from our place of starting before we caught a glimpse of the pursued: they were rising a steep hillside, and we could see the moon-beams glisten on the silver bells of the horses.

We shouted, and drove as fast as we dared to, but away they went over the hill and down its descent with unflinching speed.

It was nearly ten miles to the river, where we were to stop and take supper before returning. There, too, the chase would be ended; unless they avoided us by taking another road.

I had seldom seen Frank more excited: for he was

naturally calm though decided, and not a man to be trifled with, even in sport: but to have his noble team over-driven by a stranger and a would-be rival too, was more than he could bear.

At last the river bank was reached. Our sleigh stood at the door, and the ladies were on the piazza awaiting us: but their dare-devil driver was nowhere to be seen. Thinking perhaps that he had carried the joke too far, he thought it prudent to keep out of sight for awhile: and it was well he did. Frank's first inquiry was after his horses: but they had been well-cared-for, and the negro hostler was as wet as his charge from the exertion of rubbing them down.

Mabel and her friend seemed rather mortified at being carried off so unceremoniously: though I fancied they inwardly thought it was a capital joke. By degrees, the parties who had not come over the road as fast as we did, arrived at the river; and ere long the adventure of the evening was forgotten, save by us, in the enjoyment of a famous supper, an enlivening dance, and another rapid drive homeward. Frank's wrath was a little appeased, by receiving an apology the next day from the "harum-scarum" youth: but he never forgot the affront.

We were thinking of the autumn though; yet, in thinking of Leeville, my thoughts have played

truant, and unconsciously led me into an unseasonable digression.

I remember one glorious autumn, most of which was spent at my friend's farm. The frosts had fallen early on the hillsides and in the low grounds, turning the maple leaves to a golden yellow, and the tenderer forest vines that beautiful scarlet and crimson which art can scarcely equal.

The season had been a most propitious one for the farmer. The great red barns were filled with golden wheat-sheaves, bundles of rye, and the finest of hay. The orchard fruit had been gathered to the mill or cellar, and the corn was ready for husking.

It was to be a gay season in and about Leeville, for Mabel Lee, the belle, was to be married; and the occasion was looked forward to as about to be one of more than ordinary brilliancy.

And who was now the accepted suitor? Not Frank, nor the hero of the sleighing frolic. A stranger had stepped in unawares, and quietly wooed and won gentle Mabel Lee.

The eve of the wedding arrived. It was to precede the corn-husking frolic of the season on her father's farm, and form a part of the occasion. It was a large company of young and old that gathered beneath the roof of Samuel Lee on that bright October eve.

Never before had there been such a festive gathering

in Leeville; never in all the country round had a lovelier bride been given away.

And when the ceremony was over, and the husking commenced on the great granary floor, how the hours sped amidst laugh and song, till supper was prepared in the wide hall of the farm-house, and duly appreciated! And when the feast was over, and the dance began, how many wondered who would be the bride at the next corn-husking!

“That night there was joy in the gabled manse,
When home were the harvest wains;
The young and the beautiful met in the dance
To the bounding music's strains.
And the trusting love of Mabel's eyes,
In their clear and holy light,
Was the love—oh! spirit of Paradise,
That could know no change or blight.”

VII.

THE places which we were accustomed to frequent in childhood and early youth, are seldom, if ever, forgotten. They are endeared to us by associations whose memories seem rather to freshen than fade as we advance in years.

The smoothly-shorn meadows upon which we played—the newly-mown hay, to us so sweet and healthful—the shady woods through which we roved during the summer noontides in search of wild flowers and berries—all come before our mental vision as though they had never faded or changed with the lapse of years.

“The young! oh! what should wandering fancy bring,
In life's first spring-time, but the thoughts of Spring?
World without winter, blooming amaranth bowers,
Garlands of brightness, wreath'd from changeless flowers.”

As well remembered as 'twere but yesterday are those joyous summers when, freed from the restraints of the heated city, we children, brothers and sisters, revelled in the liberty of that happy change.

It was to no gay watering-place with its round of

dissipation, its fashions, formalities and discomforts, our feet were guided; but to a large and quiet farmhouse that lay amidst the hills which skirt the gently flowing Passaic.

Childhood is observant, but not appreciative, and though I remember well the lovely panorama that lay around us, even to every knoll and tree which added to its beauty, I was too young then to realize its charms.

There was the shady school-house lane, with its noble old elms and chestnuts veiling out the sunshine with their dense foliage. There, too, was the lowly school-house, with its rude desks and whittled benches, its noisy troop, and their meek, unappreciated teacher. Poor Woodford! his was a hard and thankless task; yet there was one among his charge who gained his love and gladdened many a sad hour by her gentle sympathy.

She was the eldest of his female scholars, the most intelligent, and consequently his greatest favorite. Moreover, her father—Ralph Somers, had been the first to lend a helping hand to the indigent and invalid student, when he first came to Willow-dale, seeking employment.

The farmer's ample roof had been his shelter, till he almost learned to call it his home. The whole household honored him for his virtues, and therefore it is

not strange that a "feeling akin to love" for him should spring up in the heart of Esther Somers.

There was too much of sympathy in their tastes, too much congeniality in their natures, for anything like indifference.

The burden of her satchel to and from school was his lightest labor. He sheltered her from the rain—lifted her over fences, and in aught that he could be, was her willing helper.

A year or two before, she had been my playmate, during our summer stay at Willow-dale; but girls mature sooner than boys, and so, whilst I was in my early "teens," she became a budding woman. Still I was allowed to be a frequent companion, and therefore witness of that sympathy, which one day ripened into love.

"We strayed together in the wood,
We roved the meadows soft and green;
Or on the rustic footbridge stood,
Over its silvery flood to lean."

The "Gulley," as we used to call the shady ravine which bounded one side of the farm, was our favorite resort. There, when our daily studies were over, or on Saturday afternoons, we youngsters, under the guidance of the teacher and his fair companion, wandered in search of wild plums and berries, making the glen

resound with our laughing frolics. There was our rustic arbor, made of birch boughs, and almost impervious to sun and rain, with the wild vines creeping so densely over it. Many were the feasts of wild strawberries and whortleberries that we enjoyed there, served up so daintily on vine-leaf platters. So—

“ We feasted, with no grace but song,
In summer when the days were long.”

We loved the old-fashioned garden too, with its tall holly-hocks and flaunting sun-flowers, its great, odorous beds of thyme, and sage, and marjoram, which were the especial care of our thrifty housewife, and duly cut and put away in the dry garret for winter use.

But better did we love to visit the huge coop of soft-eyed wild pigeons that stood in a shady corner, and feed them morning and evening with their allowance of buckwheat, that they might afford us betimes a dainty pie.

The old cider-mill in the orchard, and the hay-barracks in the meadow, were scenes of many a merry game of “hide and seek” and “puss in the corner;” they were mute witnesses too of childish quarrels and childhood’s smiles and tears.

So were three happy summers passed, but the fourth was shadowed by the first heartfelt sorrow that I ever

knew; the bitterest, because the first. What an incomprehensible mystery is death to the glad spirit of youth! how dense, yet fleeting, is the shadow which the wings of the Dark Angel cast over life’s sunny landscape!

Sweet Esther Somers! She faded from our sight like a flower beneath the early frost. I was too much of a boy then to know or regard how she sickened or suffered. I can only remember how we missed her in our many walks and sports, how we wondered why “the schoolmaster” looked so sad and laughed so little, and how we wished the doctor would make her well again before the wild strawberries were ripe.

We little knew, when sometimes we were admitted to her bedside, and grew frightened at her pale, thin face, that she would never more go down into the “Gulley” again, nor into the distant woods, nor even into the garden beneath the window.

I remember how she grew worse, and then the bright afternoon on which she died, when we were one by one summoned to her chamber that we might receive the little tokens of affection, and the last kiss she should ever give us; but even then we could not feel that she was going to die. It was only when we stood by her coffin, and gazed upon her closed eyes, and silent lips, and forehead so white and cold, that we realized we should have her with us no more.

So in her youth and loveliness they buried her in the quiet village churchyard, beneath an old willow tree, whose drooping branches seemed weeping over her; and there we were wont to go, on still Sabbath eves, to tend the flowers which loving hands had planted, and talk of her whom we all so dearly loved. I did not feel so much then, but I know now what a void her death had made, which could never be re-filled.

Thenceforth, her father's hearth was gloomy and desolate; thenceforth did poor Woodford, her lover, wear a saddened brow. His hopes were soon overcast, and to a nature like his they were seemingly shadowed for ever.

It is many a long year since my feet have trodden the well-known haunts of my childhood in fair Willowdale. I have looked on many a glorious view from lake, river, and high mountain-top, but never have I forgotten those quiet spots, so dear with youthful and tender associations.

Doubtless the tripping feet of children are treading the winding paths in the shady "Gulley," and maybe gentle hands are keeping the birchen arbor from falling to decay: and the old cider-mill must be sadly dilapidated now, but if it is standing yet, I know that it echoes oftentimes with the merry voices of childhood.

Beneath the old willow tree in the churchyard, there

is the same green grave, but do loving children bend over it and weep, as we used to?

There are graves there, too, which we have never seen. Ralph Somers is in one, and a playmate of ours in another. Woodford may be there too, but we know not.

VIII.

SUMMER, with its luxuriance of flowers and verdure, had passed away, and Autumn, with its wealth of grain and fruits, its frosty mornings and clear skies, had come in its most gorgeous beauty. The corn-fields, stripped of their rustling crop, looked bare and sterile, and the meadows, faded from their rich green, had put on the more sombre garb of the season.

The woodlands alone had gained in beauty, and already were clothed in those matchless tints which constitute the crowning glory of our northern autumns.

But for Frank and me, the season had other charms, and ere November came with its sharper frosts, we were snugly domesticated in the rude but comfortable cabin at Otter-creek.

"Uncle Josh," as we boys familiarly called him, was the first settler in that untamed country. His own busy axe had made the small clearing that afforded ground sufficient for the cultivation of corn and potatoes and a few garden plants. His own hands had felled the logs and reared the walls of his lonely tenement, and with untiring zeal, though with hard

labor, he had supported his small family from day to day and year to year.

We, who though young enough to be his children, had seen more of the world, often wondered that the old man was so well contented with his lot, for his declining years were almost as devoid of the simplest luxuries, as were his earlier ones.

He was not lonely either, for there was one true helpmate ever at his side, not less loving and mindful of his comfort than on the day when, with little worldly wealth, they wedded and emigrated from the banks of the Penobscot, to build up a new home and find new friends amidst unknown wilds.

It was always an epoch in their work-day life when we visited the woods, to spend a week or two of the sporting season. Seldom did a newspaper find its way thither except in our portmanteaux, and when "Uncle Josh" had read and re-read them, they were neatly pasted on the rough walls and ceilings, in lieu of better hangings.

And then there was so much to tell in reply to his questions as to what was going on in the Old world as well as the New, to all of which information he was as completely a novice as though he was not a part and parcel of our Republic.

Those were cosy nights indeed, when we came in tired and hungry from our long tramps over hill and

dale, through swamps and underbrush; and after a hearty supper, stretched ourselves before the huge fire, which was so generously fed, to listen to the long yarns which no sailor could spin better than Uncle Josh. There we would sit for hours, cracking jokes and hickory-nuts till the good-natured dame would send us laughingly to bed.

An epicurean fare we lived on, too, such as a haunch of venison betimes, varied by quail and partridge, and now and then a rabbit-pie, to say nothing about corn-bread and buckwheat cakes, with the best of milk and butter—for Uncle Josh kept a cow which managed to get a good subsistence in her wide, forest range.

But there was another inmate of the cabin, of whom I should have spoken before, and that was "little Kate," for thus the old people used to call her, even when she had grown to womanhood.

Kate was the child of their old age and the chief blessing of their life. Though born in almost a wilderness, and the lightest comforts of her home hard-earned and few, no daughter of wealth and luxury was more tenderly loved and nurtured. But the old man had determined that Kate should not grow up "to be no good to nobody," so when she was twelve years old, and had acquired pretty much all she could learn at home, the trial of parting came.

It was during our second visit to Otter-creek that

this was decided upon. The nearest town of importance, in which there was a boarding school, was thirty or forty miles distant; there were no railroads through the forest then, as now, and the common by-way was rough and intricate too, so it was a two-days' journey, most of the way on horseback. It was thus Kate and her father started from home; the old man leading the way, and she on the old grey nag, following after; one, gay and delighted with the prospective change, the other, heavy-hearted enough.

We promised Uncle Josh to remain till his return, and after he had gone, we did all in our power to reconcile the tender-hearted woman to the absence of her daughter.

Four days elapsed before Uncle Josh was again at home. The sacrifice was made, and though he felt that he should have to work a little harder that year and perhaps the next, in order to meet the extra expense of Kate's schooling, he would often say cheerfully, "It makes no odds; larnin, never made nobody poorer."

Two years had now passed, and Kate was once more at home, there to remain and cheer with her gentle care the declining days of her aged parents. She had come back to her sylvan home a creature of grace and beauty, so that it was difficult for Frank and I to realize it was the same nut-brown girl, who used to

stand beside us and listen to our simple stories. She was more of a woman, yet the Indian-like grace of her step was the same, but her brow had grown fairer, and the brown hair laid over it in a smoother fold.

The old cabin was changed for the better too, both inside and without; wild-flowers and creepers were clambering up to the eaves, hiding from view many an unsightly notch. The smoke-browned newspapers which once covered the walls of the sitting-room, had given place to more tasty hangings, and a few books and engravings lay upon the table, betokening a more refined taste than is generally found in the woods. Yet all these little trifles, which to our friends were luxuries, had been attained by an elegant and simple labor of the maiden's own hands. It was an art she had acquired at school—the making of paper flowers, and with the most exquisite taste did she copy the forms and colors of Nature in their loveliest varieties.

How much may love sweeten even a home in the wilderness: what a sunshiny gladness can woman's smile create in the darkest hour, if her love is valued as it should be! With such a blessing was the monotonous life of Uncle Josh gladdened and prolonged.

Across the hills and through the woods, a few miles distant, there was another home which furnished a sad and strange contrast. We were its inmates on one stormy night when far away from our accustomed

shelter, cold and belated, and no other refuge to be had.

Were it not that our old host was with us, we should have hesitated to trust ourselves for the night among such rude and forbidding people; but Uncle Josh was well known there, although there was little communication or sympathy between the two families.

The snow had commenced falling early in the afternoon, whilst we were deep in the forest, and as evening came on, the storm increased; but under the pilotage of our old guide, we reached without difficulty the rude hut wherein we must pass the night.

A gruff voice bidding us enter, answered our impatient knock upon the door. It was far from an inviting shelter that opened before us. Stretched upon a rough bench before the dim fire, lay the man of the house apparently half intoxicated; two huge hounds which growled at our intrusion occupied the stone hearth; a rickety bed in one corner of the room contained two young children, whilst a third was in the arms of its mother, who was doing the double duty of nursing and clearing the table of a few broken pieces of crockery, from which the household had apparently just taken their supper.

The atmosphere of the apartment was redolent with the combined fumes of grease, tobacco-smoke and whiskey, and we were almost tempted to brave

the storm again and seek shelter in the woods, rather than inhale till morning such a nauseating and impure air.

The poor woman, who, by her worn and pale face had already enlisted our sympathies, though Uncle Josh had told us something of her history, seemed anxious to make us comfortable.

Her husband had risen from his hard couch and rudely told us to come to the fire; but when he bade the poor woman go out and bring in an armful of wood, we determined that whilst we were in the house, she should not be thus imposed upon. The wretch did not move even when we started to perform the office; and when the wood was brought and heaped upon the fire, all the thanks we had from him was a muttered curse at our interference, and a still deeper one grumbled at his wife.

We were not sorry, when our clothes had become somewhat dry and we had put our guns in order, to retire to the other apartment assigned us for the night, and, wrapping ourselves in some buffalo robes, strive to shut our eyes and ears to all that was unpleasant in sight and sound.

With the morning, came a recurrence of brutality on the part of the man, and a display of weakness and long-suffering on the part of his wife.

It was sickening to see one who had evidently been

born to a better lot thus enslaved and maltreated; yet so had she lived for years, nursing his children, tending his wants, bearing his abuse. Could it be other than for love? Such was a mystery to us.

The devotedness and fortitude of woman have been the themes of poet and philosopher from the day when her gentle foot first pressed the flowering sod of Eden.

There have been not a few whose names are immortalized upon the deathless page of history; yet in our own day of outrage and wrong, there are spirits whose devotion is no less deathless than was Gertrude Vanderwards', whose love is as changeless as was that of Arabella Stuart.

Thus in joy, and pain, and sorrow,
 Woman ever bears her part;
 Sad to-day and glad to-morrow,
 Weak of hand, but strong of heart.

It was a joy again to sit by the cheerful fireside at Otter-creek, where the voice and smile of a loving child made glad the heart of an aged father, and lightened the cares of a failing mother; and as we sadly spoke of the worn woman and her cheerless lot in the far-off forest, till the eyes of the maiden filled with tears, we thought of the poet's words—

"A fearful gift upon thy heart is laid,
 Woman—a power to suffer and to love;
 Therefore thou so canst pity."

IX.

THE lapse of three years makes sad changes, not only over all the world, but in the little sphere immediately around us.

The seasons, with their attributes of fruits and flowers, sunshine and snows, have gone their accustomed round: friends with whom we were familiar, the loving and the loved, have passed away: some like the fragile flowers of spring—others like old forest trees, sapless, and broken by the weight of years.

“A few short years!

Less time may well suffice for death and fate
To work all change on earth; to break the ties
Which early love had formed, and to bow down
Th' elastic spirit, and to blight each flower
Strewn in life's crowded path.”

Not less altered than the more crowded haunts of men—not more improved in the eyes of some, is the aspect of that once sequestered valley through which the Otter-creek winds its silvery flood.

What a change is there! The old log cabin which

was the handiwork of Uncle Josh, and for so many years the homely shelter of his little family, has fallen to decay. The old man and the thrifty housewife have been gathered to their graves; they sleep beneath the shade of ancient trees in a newly-made burial ground, not far from where they lived. The old pine forest which once surrounded them has been burnt over and cleared away, and the more quiet solitudes of distant woods echo to the neigh of the iron horse, as he rushes on his path to the farther west.

The deer have sought out more noiseless feeding-grounds, and the smaller game has been driven off by the pursuing and reckless sportsmen till it is almost extinct.

An embryo town is growing and flourishing where we once sported and roved, and the “little Kate” of those careless days, no more gathers wild flowers or imitates their hues in her gentle art.

She lives and loves beneath a more modern roof than then, and fair children “like olive plants round about her table,” claim her care. Her day of romance is over with ours, and amidst the calmer duties of life with all their varied accompaniments, she finds her pleasure.

Beside the remembrances which her still laughing eyes recall to our hearts and lips, the scenes of our first acquaintance have no other charm, for the glare

of paint and white-wash is far less pleasing than was the dense verdure of that old pine forest with its gleams and shadows. The busy hum of labor seems irrelevant with the holy quiet that should reign in the surrounding forest, for far to the north and west there stretches still an almost trackless wilderness, awaiting the axe and fire of the settler with all their succeeding attendants.

Earnest men, united in all the great purposes of life, are pushing forward, making nature subservient to their endeavors, and a strong assistant in their labors. The once free streams turn their busy mill-wheels feed their canals, and float their timber to the river. The mineralogist and assayer are piercing the mountains to find and prove their garnered wealth, whilst to the tourist and the invalid, an almost *terra incognita* is laid open, whose lakes, and streams, and mountains, rival those of far-off Europe in beauty.

Eight years have passed away since the night on which we first slept beneath the roof-tree of Uncle Josh's cabin; and already all this change is wrought.

The simplicity of forest-life was then untinged with any of the "isms" which flourish so rankly in the hot-bed soil of the present day.

The fancied power of the magnetizer was then scarcely heard of or believed in; men and women managed their affairs without the aid of the clairvoyant,

and were content to await their own entrance into the spirit-land, to see the forms and hear the voices of their departed friends.

I know that sound and healthful sleep was to our good old host, a "sweet restorer" after the labors of the day; he needed no other anodyne or incentive. His own good sense and forecast taught and told him all he wished to know, and in the presence of ghosts and wraiths in our matter-of-fact world, I am sure he was a mirthful and decided unbeliever.

But my random diary cannot embrace a dissertation on fallacies, or a stricture on the so-called "humbugs of the day;" only we had heard that the "rappings" were frequent in the very neighborhood where no like sounds used to break the Sabbath silence of the woods, save the tapping of the woodpecker or the measured stroke of Uncle Josh's busy axe.

With the changes which had passed over and marred, in our eyes, the fair scenes which had become so dear and familiar, we had changed also in a measure. New haunts, where we could still foster and indulge our fondness for occasional retirement from the busier scenes of life, must be sought out; but with them we well knew there could be no second Uncle Josh, with his good helpmate so thoughtful of our comfort; no second "little Kate" with her laughing eye and joyous step; these were to be with us only in memory.

The spot we next sought, when the mood was upon us, lay among the low, wooded hills whose sparkling rivulets swell the romantic Winnipeg.

The waters of this tiny lake wash the base of a range of hills which almost gird it round. So sheltered is it, the winds scarcely ruffle its glassy surface, on which the shores are faithfully mirrored in all their wild and varied beauty.

"So lonely in its slumber there,
It seems a spirit's haunt of prayer."

Joining the swamp-lands of alder and hazel which form a portion of the shore, lay a fertile farm nearly a mile square, embracing acres of woodland and meadow which yielded rich returns under the husbandry and tillage of their thrifty owner. Beyond, stretched an undulating farming country, not densely settled, yet dotted here and there with substantial farm-houses and their huge red barns, bespeaking great crops of hay and grain.

It was mainly a German settlement, and its inhabitants the children of those who came from the *federal* land with their primitive notions and rude tools of labor. The old house near the lake, and in which we tarried for a season, bore evidence of Dutch handicraft.

The thick stone walls and projecting gables, the low ceilings and huge fireplaces, with their tiled mantels

and hearths, almost led one to think that the whole building was brought bodily from Holland or Germany. Every part of it had the appearance of cleanliness and comfort—such solid comfort as we seldom see in these days of ours.

Farmer Fritz was an honest, plain-spoken man, and though Dutch in blood, a good and true republican, and born in the house he lived in. His acres were his birthright, and therefore he felt and was independent. When it suited him, he went fishing or gunning with us; when it did not suit him, he said so and staid at home.

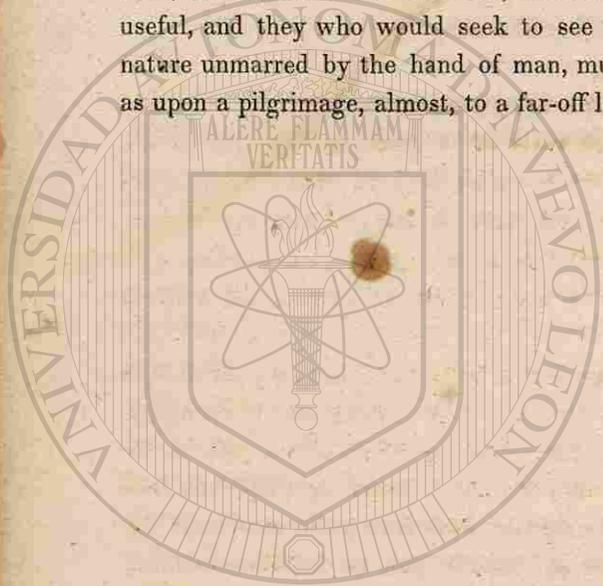
The swamps which bounded his farm abounded with woodcock in the season, furnishing us all the sport, and our good dogs, Pilot and Dash, all the practice we could wish. But we loved better, in those hot July days, to troll upon the lake within the shadow of the mountains, for our favorite fish, or trace some of the leaping rivulets to their cool sources amidst the hills.

There were few who were acquainted with those spots then, or aware of their pleasant resources, but the mode of access to them is easier now.

Farmer Fritz has enlarged his house, become an hotel-keeper, and is making his fortune.

The swamps are cleared up and drained, and the little lake, once so naturally beautiful, serves the purpose of a dam to a noisy paper-mill.

Change is one of the grand features, not only of our life, but of our age; the old must give place to the new; the natural to the artificial; the beautiful to the useful, and they who would seek to see the face of nature unmarred by the hand of man, must set forth as upon a pilgrimage, almost, to a far-off land.



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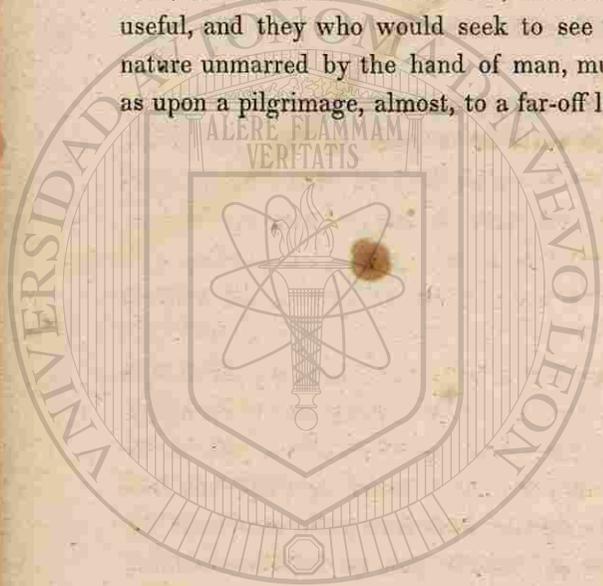
X.

To those, whose feet have not always trodden the crowded highways of life, but oftener its less-frequented by-ways, how varied seems the lot of man, how countless the phases of joy and sorrow which fill up the measure of his cup!

Such was the tenor of my thoughts, as on a day in July, I sat on the crumbling threshold of that picturesque ruin, known in the vicinity as "Ramsay's mill." It was a spot round which sad and happy associations alike clustered; once the scene of all those domestic joys which make life pleasant and desirable; but error, and at last guilt, had crept in, bringing blight and sorrow with their train of misery and desolation.

The dwelling-house, which for many years had been the shelter of the miller and his family, was also tenantless and going to ruin. The doors had fallen from their fastenings, and the windows were open to the sun and storm, affording free passage to the swallows, which twittered joyously around and down the chimneys, and through the deserted rooms, unimpeded in their flight.

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The little garden, once so thriving and productive, was overgrown with rank weeds, save here and there a sun-flower looking down from its tall stalk upon the miniature wilderness; yet, there was one remnant of domestic life left—a lonely cat, stealthily creeping along the overgrown paths and beds, in quest of a chance subsistence, loth to leave the home where she may have been fondled for years. But the petting mistress, on whose lap Tabby had slept so cosily the long winter evenings before the warm fireside, would fondle her no more, and the prattling child, whose cradle was so soft and warm, had gone too.

The mill-buildings were no less dilapidated: the huge wheel had grown mossy and decayed, and the flume that once carried the water upon it, was gaping with rents from the frost of many winters. The interior machinery had been mostly removed, to do its work elsewhere, leaving but cold and silent walls, upon which the cobwebs hung heavy and undisturbed.

Yet there, for many years, the trusty miller had plied his trade, till his white locks showed not the flour-dust that gathered on them.

Sons and daughters were born and reared in the dwelling near by, and grew up, some to be a blessing—others, the reverse. The boys were strong and hardy; and one, loving and dutiful, followed in his father's footsteps, and lightened many of his labors

The other, and the elder, loving better the noise of the great city than the clatter of the mill, which had become a familiar sound, left his father's roof with no parting word or blessing, and became a wanderer.

He had been his mother's favorite; but though her loving heart yearned after him and mourned him for years, even to the day when her sorrow went down into the grave with her, his shadow never again darkened his father's threshold.

Once only were faint tidings brought the old man of his long-lost son; but it were better that they should have been unheard, adding, as they did, another sorrow to those which burdened already the stricken household.

Mabel and Kate, the twin sisters, with the other brother, were left, and by their tender sympathy did much towards gladdening the declining days of their parents.

The girls were dissimilar in everything but age. Mabel was gentle and loving, fair-haired and azure-eyed: Kate haughty and impulsive, with hair and eyes dark as night.

She had more tact than her gentler sister, and knew so well how to school herself, that of the two, it was difficult to decide which had the greater charms.

Kate, however, was her father's favorite, yet it was her destiny to be "a thorn in his side," a reproach and sorrow to the neighborhood.

Mabel married, and with the trustfulness of her nature, bade farewell to all that was loved and familiar, and with many tears went to the far west, there to shed her gentle influence, and brighten a settler's home.

Kate went from home also, soon after her sister, but stealthily and by night. The flattery of an unprincipled man had won her heart, and in an hour of impulse she yielded to persuasion, and forsook her home. Words may not describe the sorrow that overwhelmed the old couple; suffice it to say, it broke their hearts.

On a stormy winter's night, a year or two after the last occurrence, the erring and long-lost brother once more stood in his childhood's home. He was a worn and broken man now, for the riotings and wanderings of years had done their work; but where was the once happy circle, of which he was the first broken link?

But one, his brother, was left to tell him of the past. The wanderer had hoped to have his father's blessing before he died, but the grey-haired man had been in his grave for months. The prodigal-repentant, but still bound by shackles he could not break, and bowed down by remorse, soon filled a drunkard's grave.

Of that broken family, one only now remained at

home, and he, at last, gathering up all that was available of the little property, rejoined his sister in her western home, there to recount the trials they had borne, and strive once more to be happy.

It is a sad history! yet on that old door-step I had often sat before, but never with such feelings of sadness as then. To me, the story was familiar, but never had the loneliness of the spot seemed so oppressive, or its desolation more complete.

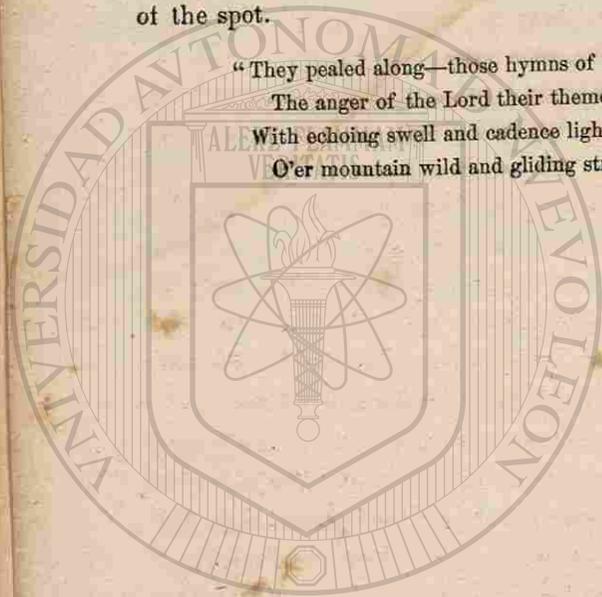
Gladly, if possible, would I have called back the vanished years, the miller to his labors, the fond mother and her children to the cheerful fireside, with all those joys so rudely blighted and gone forever.

It was the last week of October, in which I again trod the shady glens of Dark-Hollow; the trees were putting on a gayer livery, and the summer birds were flocking off to the more genial South, engendering in the spirit a feeling alike of gladness and melancholy.

The twilight was deepening in the woods, as I neared the old mill, which lay by my path homeward. In a locust grove, upon the sloping hillside not far distant, gleamed the white tents of a camp-meeting just convened, and as the wild melody of their spirit-stirring hymns echoed through the hollow, bringing dread thoughts of Death and the Judgment, I sat

again in that crumbling doorway, and listened to the sounds which so truly harmonized with the memories of the spot.

"They pealed along—those hymns of night,
The anger of the Lord their theme;
With echoing swell and cadence light,
O'er mountain wild and gliding stream."



XI.

ONE of our own writers has said, "the value of life deepens incalculably with the privilege of travel." The remark is a truthful one, but how few there are who fitly appreciate the privilege. There are thousands of our fellow-men who spend their lives in roaming the world; some, in search of change and pleasure; others, of wealth, whilst many more go shifting about like helmless barques, with

No guide—no quest,
Knowing no rest.

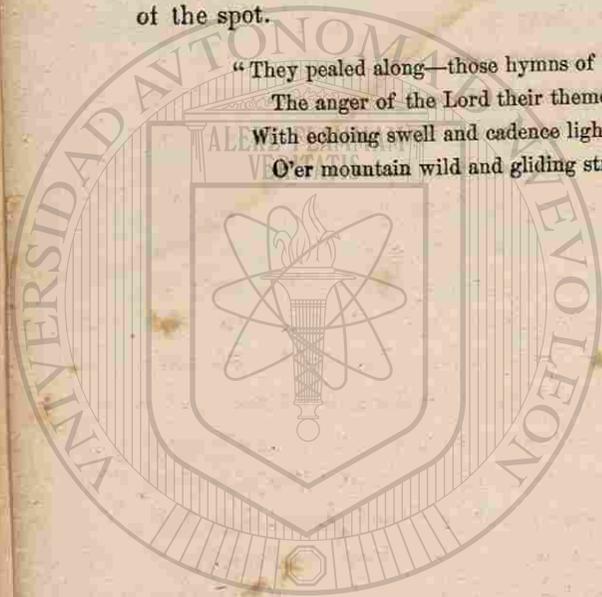
Some pluck flowers at every step; others, fruit, like the apples of the Dead Sea, fair to the sight, but filled with dust and ashes.

Some find their highest joy in alleviating the woes of others, whilst too many, like the Pharisee of old, pass by on the other side.

Such was my train of thought as I occupied a seat in a crowded stage-coach traversing a dusty highway of a neighboring State. As we pitched and rattled along, I amused myself by surveying the countenances of my fellow-travellers, as is my habit on such occa-

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sions, and thereby learning sometimes more of human nature, than we would with more casual notice. The back seat was occupied by a mother and her daughter, who, I fancied, was on her return to boarding school, vacation having expired. The centre seat was well filled by the stout forms of three well-to-do farmers, dressed in home-spun, who had been attending an agricultural show in one of the county towns. They were full of converse on fine cattle, labor-saving machines, and other objects interesting to their class and calling.

Next to me, on the other seat, sat a quiet and thoughtful man, apparently heeding little of what was going on around him, and wrapped up in his own reflections. The little observation I was able to take of him without being rude, impressed me with the idea that he was laboring under some deep dejection or, perhaps, sorrow. Yet his dress and general expression bespoke him to be a man of the world. How often do we meet such men! seeming as if some great and untold sorrow lay crushingly upon their hearts; a sorrow hoarded as it were, and jealously veiled from prying eyes. To such, a kind word or a sympathizing glance sometimes, are blessings not craved, but when freely offered, accepted gratefully. Like a forest tree, touched, yet not riven by the lightning, but wanting more than its fellows, the sun and rain to renew its

verdure; such an one stands amidst his fellow-men more mindful, because more needful of, smiles and tears. Sincere and well-timed sympathy is to the worn and fainting spirit as the cool dew of eve to the fading flower.

One by one, most of my fellow-travellers had, almost unconsciously to me, been dropped at their places of destination along the route, giving me an opportunity to change my seat for one more airy, and from which I could look out on the country through which we were passing. It was new to me, and beautiful and varied. Now, on the summit of a lofty hill, the eye could command a wide expanse, dotted here and there with white-farm houses, and diversified with woods and fields clad with the rich verdure of early summer; then, descending into a valley carpeted with green meadows, we would seem almost caged in from the world by the wooded hills rising on either side.

As we neared the little village of H—, which lies nestling in the lap of a fertile valley, I noticed the quiet stranger was affected by some strong emotion, evidently of sorrow, and that uncontrollable. I never before had seen a strong man so shaken and overcome by grief.

It was embarrassing to me, and would have been more so, had he not, in a few moments, said: "Pardon my weakness, sir, but this is my native place—ten

years have gone since I was here last, and my recollections are very sad."

In a few minutes we reached the small tavern of the village, and weary from my long ride, I soon domesticated myself amidst the snug and cleanly comforts of the attentive host.

I saw no more of my companion till we met at our evening meal, yet drawn towards each other by an undefinable sympathy, we sat long together engaged in most social conversation.

Afterwards, strolling out together, we found a secluded spot, where he told me much of his history, and of the great sorrow, that years before, had blighted his youthful hopes and saddened his after life.

He may be dead now, or living; but with a few alterations, yet with no fancies, and little adornment, I have woven in this chequered woof his sombre thread.

"My own early home; though many years have passed, and sad changes been wrought since I sported in its halls and roamed its green woods, it stands before me now, as on the day I left it for ever—all bright and gay, save my own heart. I never knew a father's love; he died ere I was old enough to recognize his care, and in the old homestead I grew up under the fostering love of my dear, widowed mother—a wayward, petted child.

"I had my own quiet room, my little cabinet of minerals and shells, my library of treasured books; when tired of these, there were my dog and gun, and my saddle pony.

"What was the world to me, or I to the world; I was happy and contented with my selfish pleasures in my little hermitage.

"I had no playmate—knew no game,
Yet often left my book to run
And blow bright bubbles in the sun;
In after life we do the same."

"So time passed with little variation till I was eighteen years of age, and excepting the few studies that were imposed upon me, which occupied an hour or two a day, I sought but my own enjoyment, and the happiness of my devoted mother. But in the course of another year, she was taken from me, and I was thrown upon my own resources, with no guardian, and scarcely a friend in the wide world.

"With regard to pecuniary matters, I was well provided for, and I resolved to retain the property I now owned, as hallowed by associations which others could never realize; so with an old and faithful house-keeper, the nurse of my infancy, another and another year flew almost unheeded by, for I was happy and asked or sought no change.

"But an unwritten leaf in my book of life was soon

to turn; a change I dreamed not of was soon to be my heart was to expand, and instead of beating for itself alone, was to throb more wildly for another.

"There was a rustic cottage not far from my dwelling, and which you see through the trees now, that had been a long time unoccupied. Its last tenant was a poor and lonely widow, who had then been dead a year or more, at the time of which I speak, and during that season, no living being had entered the door, except an old dependent of the former occupant, who now and then, took possession for an hour, to sweep away the cobwebs, and see that no unlawful intruder had disturbed the scanty furniture which still remained, for the house belonged to the heirs of an estate that was then in litigation. It was a sweet spot then, the house half-hidden from view amidst weeping willows and old shady elms; and the low, rustic porch almost crushed beneath the vines and creepers, which for two summers, had known no pruning or care. A little streamlet, with grassy banks, murmured through a shady dell near by, fed the year round by a tiny cascade that came leaping down yonder hillside. Such was Willowdale.

"A very home for love—an Eden spot,
That seemed secluded from the rest of earth;
Where care and sorrow might be e'er forgot,
And thoughts of joy and love have cloudless birth.

"But rumor whispered that the cottage was soon to be inhabited again; that a family from the city had leased it, and the report was ere long confirmed by the presence of workmen in and about the house, who were soon busy in renovating the paint and plaster, remodelling and refurnishing.

"A skilful gardener soon put the long-neglected grounds in perfect order, and before many weeks had passed, the cottage was ready for its new occupants. As it is natural for youth to be curious and imaginative, you may suppose I was full of impatience to know who were to be my new neighbors; and for several days I watched the stage-coach, as it passed by on its way from the city, with more than usual interest. It came at last, one lovely April morning, loaded with trunks and boxes, and more than its accustomed number of passengers. I saw within it a grey-haired man, a middle-aged, matronly looking woman, and more than all, a sweet young face looking earnestly from the window, as it passed swiftly by. They stopped at the cottage; the strangers had arrived.

"I remember that I lay awake most of the following night, wondering what relation those three persons bore to each other. At last, it was settled in my mind, that the old gentleman and the pale-faced girl were father and daughter, and the matronly looking

person must be their housekeeper, for she looked like one; the sequel proved my suppositions to be correct.

"Then, with youth's hopefulness, and love for anything that savored of a change in my theretofore quiet life, I fancied how delightful it would be, when I had made their acquaintance, to act as *cicerone*, and show them the romantic walks and drives of our wild neighborhood.

"A new source of happiness had sprung up before me; the void in my heart seemed about to be filled, and I felt as though I was to enter upon a new state of being. But I will not weary you with trifling relations or details.

"Ere many weeks had passed, I was a constant visitor at the cottage. Alice G—— was my divinity—her father almost a second one to me. Words cannot describe the happiness I knew in that delightful intercourse.

"I shall not attempt to describe her beauty to you; enough that she seemed to me more of heaven than earth—born only to love and be loved.

"She was my world; filled up the whole of being—
Smiled in the sunshine—walked the glorious earth,
Sat in my heart—was the sweet life of life."

"She was young, gay, and happy; but there were some who said there was often too much color in her

cheek, and that her eyes wore a strange brightness—that she was not going to live long.

"I laughed at their strange forebodings; for to me these seemed but attributes of her matchless loveliness. Boy that I was, love had stolen into my heart, and I felt that she was necessary to my existence.

"And so we lived on for a year or more; we drove, we rode, we walked together. The grove that separated our homes was threaded with paths which our straying feet had made. There we had our rustic seat, where we read our books, and held sweet conversation; and there too, was our trysting-tree,

"Where erst we learned love's lesson."

"As weeks and months flew swiftly by, and I reached, almost unconsciously, the years of manhood, love grew with my growth, and from early blossoming, ripened into full maturity. My books, with which I once found perfect joy, were thrown aside, save when I read them to another. My horse and dog were alike neglected, save when they afforded sport or recreation for the loved one.

"I was happy only in her presence, and with her love; but with this joy, there swept across my spirit, oftentimes, a feeling of distrust,—a prestige that my new-born hopes might soon be blighted.

"Is it not always so, when we fancy that we are
11*

happy? Who among us knows what the morrow may bring forth? The flower, whose bloom and fragrance gladdens us to-day, may fade and fall to-night beneath an untimely frost. The sky, that is bright and blue above us now, may, in one short hour, be swept by lowering clouds. Nothing is sure but death and sorrow.

"But to go on:—It was early in summer, when the roses and honey-suckles that twined so lovingly around the cottage porch were in their richest blossoming, that I was unexpectedly summoned to the city upon urgent business. With my manhood, new cares and responsibilities had also come, and it was necessary that I should go.

"I was at the cottage very early on the morning of my departure, to say a few farewell words.

"The parting seemed to me prophetic of some unforeseen woe; I know not why such doubts and fears harassed me—they were strange presentiments, but oh! how sad.

"Ten days passed wearily away before my business was ended, and I felt comparatively happy when once more on my way homeward. It was nearly evening when I saw again the spire of the village church rising in the distance far above the old trees of the graveyard; and when drawing nearer, the pointed roof of the cottage rose into view, my heart beat more quickly,

and my check grew pale with the thought that all might not be well.

"As the coach passed by, I instinctively looked up at the little window where I had often seen the face of my beloved, radiant with smiles and beauty. The blinds were closed, and her eyes gleamed not through them. I knew if all was well, she would have been there; but now—sickness or death was within, and my heart asked—who is the victim?

"Once more in my quiet chamber, I strove to nerve myself for whatever I might be called to undergo; then summoning the old nurse, who was almost a mother to me, I learned all that my heart had dreaded. Alice was sick and had been in her room for two days.

"Calmly, yet with a sad spirit, I once more trod the shady avenue of Willow-dale. Again I sat in the darkened parlor, once so sunny and cheerful, and awaited the summons to the sick-chamber. An half hour passed, and I was once more by the side of her I loved. But what a change a few short days had wrought; what a sad reunion was ours! She was pillowed on her father's breast, and his careworn brow told of the anxiety that filled his heart. Her complaint was told me in a few words—she had been spitting blood. Though thin and worn, she appeared to me lovelier than ever, with a bloom upon her cheek, that to my unpractised eye, spoke of returning health;

but when I took her hand, and felt the fever that was burning in her veins, hope died within me, and I feared the worst.

"Another week went by, and except at short intervals, I kept a sleepless vigil by her side.

"Those were hours of sweet communion, the memory of which is as fresh and holy as though they were of yesterday; but as she daily grew weaker and thinner, the conviction forced itself upon her that there was no hope of life. Yet, there was no repining at the thought of her blighted youth, no shudder on the verge of the dark valley; all was joy and peace.

"So she faded, day by day through the long winter. March came with its blustering winds and passed away, but the April showers fell like tears upon her new-made grave. She died at the close of a bright, warm day, when Nature was putting on her garments of joy, and smiling as if in mockery of our desolated hearts. She lies in yonder churchyard, and there I have spent my afternoon. Years have passed since she was laid there, and I have been a wanderer in many lands: but from the halls of mirth and splendor—from the smiles of beauty and the fascinations of the world, I have turned away, to think of that green grave, and of that gentle being, whose spirit may now be hovering around me on viewless wings.

"To-morrow I go away again upon my wanderings;

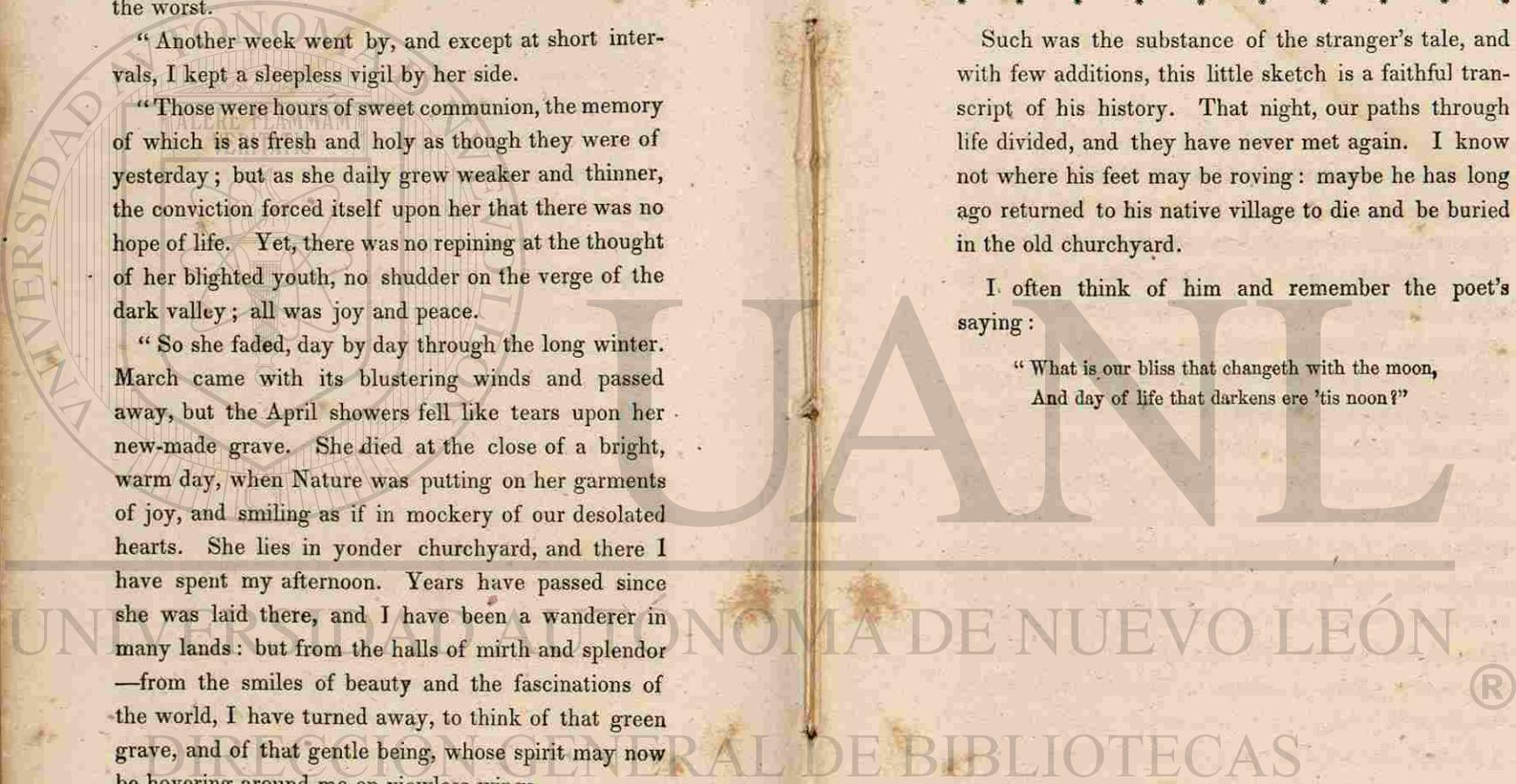
you may never see me more, but I shall remember your kindness whilst I live."

* * * * *

Such was the substance of the stranger's tale, and with few additions, this little sketch is a faithful transcript of his history. That night, our paths through life divided, and they have never met again. I know not where his feet may be roving: maybe he has long ago returned to his native village to die and be buried in the old churchyard.

I often think of him and remember the poet's saying:

"What is our bliss that changeth with the moon,
And day of life that darkens ere 'tis noon?"



XII.

ONCE more in the forest, after a lapse of two years, yet it is a different section from that with which I have been familiar. The haunts of the deer we are disturbing now are far removed from the Beaverkill, and the once hospitable cabin of "Uncle Josh." As somewhat of his history, and our acquaintance with the old hunter, has been chronicled on former pages, we will not recur to them now. Suffice it to say, that where his lonely clearing broke the gloom of the forest, a village with more pretending, but less verdure-shaded dwellings than his, is now growing and thriving.

The waters of the Beaverkill, once so swift and silvery, have been dammed up for utilitarian purposes, and are discolored by the various uses they are made to serve. Uncle Josh, that honest old man and true-hearted hunter, has passed away, with most of that race which followed so closely the footsteps of the receding red man.

One of the friends who so humorously chronicled the sayings and doings of those our pristine hunting days is gone too, and Pilot, his faithful hound, so

swift of foot, so keen of scent, has long ago followed his last chase.

The features of the country which surrounds us now, are not unlike those which the waters of the Shohokin and the Beaverkill mirror on their way to the infant Delaware; yet here, the mountains are grander, and the wilderness is more unbroken. Countless lakes, of varied size and form, lie like gems amidst the densely wooded hills and surrounding forests.

Our rude cabin is on the shore of one of them, overshadowed by swaying spruces and sighing pines, The "Silver Mountain" and "Owl's Head" cast their long shadows athwart its calm bosom, whilst behind them, old "Bluebeard," his top white with early snows, towers grandly above its surrounding hills.

Not many miles to the north is the noble St. Lawrence and the Canadian boundary. To the south are the Adirondack mountains with their lofty peaks of Tahawus and Seward, looking down upon the Saranac lakes, which stretch like a silvery chain through miles and miles of wilderness.

To those who never traversed this part of the State, it is difficult to imagine what wild wastes cover the greater parts of the Counties of Hamilton, Clinton, Essex, Franklin and St. Lawrence.

And so they will remain for years to come, whilst the rich and unencumbered prairie lands of the west

tempt the settler with their more fertile soil and salubrious climate.

From the rude cabin, in which I am striving to indite these records, to the nearest post-town, it is twelve miles, half of which we came afoot through the forest.

Two active, muscular guides carried our provisions in sacks slung over their shoulders, whilst we trudged after them with no heavier burden than our rifles. Our clothes are stout and warm, and our feet well shod, for the path, scarcely discernible, lies over swamps, and streams, and fallen timber, to say nothing of the snow, which covers the ground, in places, to the depth of several inches.

It was nearly night of our second day from home, when we reached the shore of Indian lake, our destination. Hemmed in by densely wooded hills, and veiled from sight by the spruces and hemlocks which fringe its margin, we were upon the beach before we were aware of its proximity.

Nothing impressed me so much as the utter loneliness and seclusion of the place. The shadows of the mountains lying on the water, the old forest with its immense trunks, some dead and bearded with swaying moss, and above all, the mournful cry of the loon, echoing from the opposite shore, increased the awe which those who love such scenes must always feel, and especially at such an hour.

As I looked upon the forest surrounding us, dark and dim, these stanzas from *Evangeline* came into my memory—

“This is the forest primeval; the murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of old, with voices sad and prophetic,
Stand like harpers hoar with beards that rest on their bosoms.”

A ruinous shanty of boughs open to the south, with the smouldering ashes of a fire before it, offered us a shelter; but a storm seemed brewing, and our guides advised our taking the skiff which was moored here and going a mile down the lake to a settler's more comfortable cabin. This we agreed to, and having packed in our luggage we put out from shore, one of the men having concluded to build a fire and remain in the shanty till we rejoined him in the morning.

Our oarsman had not rowed us far before he perceived in the distant water, what appeared, by the dim light of evening, to be the wake of a swimming deer. Our rifles were loaded, and we started in pursuit; but after rowing half-way across the lake, much to our disappointment we found it was made by a flock of ducks, which dived away from us on a nearer approach.

Our course was then laid for the clearing, which

was a mile and a half distant, but we soon found our boat to be leaking so badly, it was necessary to put to shore and turn out the water.

We found an old pan at the shanty, where Tom had made himself so comfortable, and were almost persuaded to remain and keep him company; but we again started, though it required constant bailing to keep our craft afloat. We took turns at the service till we reached the clearing, cold, wet, and hungry, after a day's hard travel.

It was now dark, and the approach to the cabin lay over burnt and fallen timber, heaped up in every imaginable form, the *débris* of what is called in forest parlance, a "slash."

With climbing, scrambling, and tumbling for nearly half an hour, we at last reached the house and found not only a warm welcome but a warm supper awaiting us; for our arrival at the lake that night was not unlooked for, and with the foresight natural to his calling, the hunter had predicted we would not pass the night at the shanty.

Our supper of venison and sundry accompaniments was discussed with hearty relish, and afterward, with feet toasting before the roaring fire, we passed an hour or two in "deer and dog" talk, and of our plans for the morrow.

Ellis, our host, was a whole-souled, cheerful fellow

and withal, intelligent. Our shelter was built of logs, rude, yet comfortable enough in moderate weather, for two small rooms were all that it contained, and they were kitchen, bed-room, living room and all. Here the old settler had lived for years with a wife and a growing family of children: the nearest neighbor four miles distant through the forest and the nearest town eight miles farther. To us, used as we are to the social intercourse of communities, it is a marvel how men can live so isolated, unless they are misanthropic, or are compelled to through necessity, which was not the case in this instance.

Yet I have seen in the wilderness, a woman who had not looked upon one of her sex for eight years, nearly one-third of her lifetime. With her, it was necessity at first, but after awhile this begot indifference, and she was happy in her seclusion. What a blank seems such an existence!

Among the hunters and loggers who here and there inhabit this northern wilderness, one often finds men of mind and manners which seem at utter variance with their situation and calling.

Some of them have seen better days; but either soured by disappointments or adventurous in their tastes, have adopted that mode of life. Regardless of our conventionalities they meet you as a *man*, with a

hearty grasp of the hand and a welcome, if you will take it "rough and tumble" with them.

A man who cannot follow them through the woods, or ford a stream if it crosses the path, or eat out of the same dish and drink out of the same bottle, gets very little sympathy from them.

Their motto is, "take it as you get it," and my own experience has taught me it is the only comfortable plan. So in their camps they all find the same social level: fraternization and "solidarity," as Kossuth has it, are the chief elements of their happiness and success.

"And the strongest of hand is highest in rank,
The boldest is first of the band."

We were up before day-break in the morning, and sat down to a breakfast of pork and venison, stewed cranberries, bread and green tea; you rarely taste coffee in the woods. Our meal finished, we again essayed the "slash" on our way to the boats. This time the passage over it was not so difficult, for Ellis had his private path, which was nothing more than adroit jumping from one log to another where they lay a little more smoothly and scattered.

After frequent journeys over the obstacle during the time we were thereabout, the hurdle jumpings at the

Hippodrome rather fell in my estimation. They were nothing to our display of agility.

As we expected to drive the deer into the lake, which, by the way, is a mode of sport I do not like, inasmuch as the game are out of their element, one of the hunters, Tom, who had been at the shanty all night, took the dogs some two miles back from the lake to start a deer, whilst we, each in a boat, rowed for our appointed stations on the opposite shore.

My stand was nearly at the extreme end, so I had a pull of some two miles to reach it.

It was a lovely day, hazy and warm, the first of the Indian summer. The water lay smooth and glassy, save when a passing breeze rippled its surface.

The glorious mountains environing it, the sombre pines, and tall swaying spruces, the lofty tamaracks, and graceful hemlocks—all mirrored to a line in the clear, deep water; there was but one thing wanting—the bloom and verdure of summer.

A row of some twenty minutes brought me to my station, where I moored my skiff to the trunk of a hemlock and stepped ashore.

It was an out-jutting point, covered with a dense spruce thicket, except where it had been cut away to give room for a fire, which here we are always at liberty to kindle. From it I could see the whole

expanse of the lake, and also my companions on their stands, half a mile and a mile from me.

I selected a spot where I could sit unseen from the opposite shore, and listened for the yell of the hounds when a deer should be started.

No sound broke the perfect stillness, save now and then the quack of a duck or the cry of the northern diver far out in the lake. An hour passed, before I caught the first faint bay of "Dash," the hound that generally took the lead. He was a mile away, coursing along the side of a mountain, between which and the steep shore of the lake, there lay a deep valley. By the undulations of his voice, I could tell the nature of the ground over which he was chasing; now seeming farther off as they took the low ground; now louder and nearer as they gained some ridge-top, till his yell opened like a trumpet on the summit of the ridge nearest me. I almost held my breath waiting for the deer to strike the shore, for the dog appeared to be making for a point nearly opposite me.

A moment more, and over a fallen pine tree that lay along the steep bank, a noble buck leaping into the lake, throwing the water up into spray as he bounded forward. Though a quarter of a mile from me, I could hear his rapid strokes and labored breathing as he made for the shore on which I stood. A few minutes more, and it would be time for me to take my

boat and strive to cut him off from the shore, or drive him down the lake. But I was disappointed; for not hearing the dogs after him, and the water being cold, he turned back again. It was too long a shot for any probability of hitting him, so I watched him regain the woods and dash off unharmed. At noon we all met, according to signal, at the brush shanty, where, reclining on odorous hemlock boughs around a well piled fire, we enjoyed our simple luncheon preparatory to another row and afternoon stand. But one more deer, which I did not see, but my nearer companion did, came to the lake that day; and sundown found us once more displaying our agility upon the sinuous "slash" path that led to Ellis's cabin.

That evening we listened to the story which gave the "Silver mountain" its euphonious title.

Even here in the wilderness, men have become the dupes of cunning speculators, and the victims of a wild belief in clairvoyance and the mysteries of the "dark stone."

The story is in this wise, and its incidents date but a few months back. A French hunter, in his tramps through the forest, found a stone flecked with shining particles resembling silver. His apparent good fortune was soon confided to a few of his trusty brethren, and having sent some fifty miles for a man who pretended to see far down in the earth by the aid of magic rods,

magician's stone, and other like creations, their search for the mine commenced. With the aid of a conniving female medium, the imposter pointed out the exact spot where the vein could be struck with very little boring. Expensive tools were made and carried with much labor six miles through the wilderness. Cabins were built, and provisions stored regardless of expense, for the miners were sanguine of soon amassing great wealth. By and by, great blasts were made, awakening the solitudes far and near, and days and weeks of constant and expensive toil were rewarded with not even the promise of success. The bubble at last burst; the magnetizer and his accomplice decamped with their ill-gotten gains, and ere long the miners, one by one, dropped away from the camp, laden not with ore, but with dearly-bought experience.

Thenceforth the mountain at whose base the mine was supposed to be, and which was nameless before, has borne its present title, and will bear it for ever. Those who were beguiled in that futile research after hidden treasures, never or seldom speak of their operations—it is a forbidden subject—but it would take a very shrewd "professor" to beguile them again.

Two days more were spent on and about the lake, but either from the coldness of the water or the frequency with which they had been hunted that season, the deer avoided the lake when started by the

dogs, and took another direction toward the Salmon river or the Horse Shoe pond, some miles distant.

Our hunters advised hunting on "run-ways," and we, hoping for better luck, assented. Once more our luggage was bagged and shouldered, and we started on a five-mile tramp. Forging half-frozen streams on foot, or crossing them on slippery logs—wading oozy swamps—threading pathless woods, and climbing steep ridges, noon found us on the ground, four miles from the nearest habitation.

Our first stands were on the crest of a lofty ridge which was attained from the river's level with arduous climbing. Before reaching its base, we could see nothing before or around us but dense thickets, spruce and alder; yet, following our guide closely, and struggling through intertwined branches and over fallen logs, we commenced ascending.

Patiently, and breathlessly almost, we climbed on, stopping now and then to recruit our lungs, and wondering how far we were from the summit.

At length we came into the more open timber of beech and maple which crowned the ridge.

Deer tracks were abundant on every side, and the sight of them alone inspired us.

One of the hunters assigned us our stands, near which the deer would run, if started, towards the river, whose waters washed the base of the hill on the oppo-

site side to that from which we had come. Great quiet and watchfulness are requisite in this mode of hunting, though to many it is by far the pleasantest plan, but most fatiguing on account of so much walking from one section to another.

My stand was by a fallen pine tree that lay upon the brow of the ridge, from which the descent to the river was over a thousand feet, yet not very steep. The view of the country beneath me and far away to the south and west, was worth a day's travel.

The rapid stream, winding with short and graceful curves through the low land and forest till lost to view—the vast stretch of wilderness, with no clearing or habitation in sight—the distant ridges with their sides of evergreen timber, and beyond them the higher peaks of the Adirondacks, capped with snow; combined to form a landscape I thought could rarely be surpassed.

But soon the rifle of the hunter who had charge of the dogs told us that a deer was started. In a few minutes the faint bay of the hounds came up over the ridge, now louder, now almost unheard, till it died away in the distance. That deer was lost to us, for he went round the ridge, instead of across it.

The day was waning, and we had four miles to walk, besides the river to cross, on our nearest route to a shelter; but before joining my companions, I thought I would shoot a partridge that sat drumming

on a log a few rods from me. As I carefully walked forward, a deer, which had probably been lying in her bed not far off, and roused by my footsteps, sprang with tremendous bounds down the hillside for the river below. Through the dense timber I caught for a moment a fair view of her going from me, and I fired, but with little hope of reaching her.

She staggered, however, and fell, but rose again with a broken leg dangling uselessly in her flight.

Following quickly on her track to where the view was more open, I stood and watched her tripod race to the bottom of the slope. She plunged into the stream and swam across, regaining the opposite shore, and clumsily leaping some fallen timber that lay upon the bank, disappeared in the forest. My shot had brought my companions to me, and with one of the dogs, which had come in, the hunters started in pursuit. It was not long before Dash caught the wounded animal, as its pitiful and quavering bleat announced. The men, following the sounds, came up in time to give it the finishing stroke, and soon returned to us waiting by the river bank, bearing the deer. As it was getting late and dark, the question arose how we were to get it out of the woods; but these hunters are never in a dilemma. One of them proposed to make a raft of logs and float down the river with it to the fording place, two miles below, where we were to

cross. The raft, bound together with withes, was soon made, and Tom on it, floating quickly down the stream. Our return path was nearly the one by which we had come, but doubly intricate on account of the darkness; but an half hour's walk brought us to the ford, where Tom was awaiting us with his raft, ready to ferry us over. His small and slippery craft would support but two at a time, so one by one, we were ferried over and landed without any mishap, except an unlucky slip of one of us into the river, where the water was waist deep and icy cold. Shouldering the deer, our guides led the way, and an hour's walk brought us to a comfortable cabin beneath the shadow of a mountain by the river bank. That night we sat long by the great, crackling fire, listening to tales of sport and danger from our hardy companions, who little thought there was a "chiel among them taking notes."

XIII.

THE last night we had spent at the lake was one of storm and tumult: such a night as made the cabin of Ellis a shelter not to be despised.

All the day, the near mountain tops had been wreathed by heavy mists, which at intervals came down before the sleet-laden gusts, enveloping the forest and the lake in vapory shrouds.

We had found it difficult to keep our fires ablaze upon our stands that stormy noon, and as the chance of driving a deer to water seemed rather doubtful, our spirits and the weather were well nigh congenial. It was to be our last *rendezvous* at the shanty, and as we pulled our skiffs ashore under the drooping hemlocks, which the clear, cold waters, over which they hung, mirrored so perfectly, I stood for a moment to indulge the reflections which the scene engendered.

Here and there upon the opposite shore, the blue smoke of our untended fires was curling gracefully upward and mingling with the white mist that lay along the tree-tops and the hillsides. A log canoe, with shattered side, which a wandering Indian had

cross. The raft, bound together with withes, was soon made, and Tom on it, floating quickly down the stream. Our return path was nearly the one by which we had come, but doubly intricate on account of the darkness; but an half hour's walk brought us to the ford, where Tom was awaiting us with his raft, ready to ferry us over. His small and slippery craft would support but two at a time, so one by one, we were ferried over and landed without any mishap, except an unlucky slip of one of us into the river, where the water was waist deep and icy cold. Shouldering the deer, our guides led the way, and an hour's walk brought us to a comfortable cabin beneath the shadow of a mountain by the river bank. That night we sat long by the great, crackling fire, listening to tales of sport and danger from our hardy companions, who little thought there was a "chiel among them taking notes."

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Here and there upon the opposite shore, the blue smoke of our untended fires was curling gracefully upward and mingling with the white mist that lay along the tree-tops and the hillsides. A log canoe, with shattered side, which a wandering Indian had

used in hunting a year ago, lay half sunken near the shore, and not far distant were the remnants of the cabin he had built, and when departing, burned, that the white man might not have it for a shelter. I thought of the red men and their fate, and how in days gone by, their council-fires had blazed upon these very shores, and the forest around me echoed with their war-songs.

But they are gone now, and the few wandering outcasts that remain, are but the mockeries of former greatness. Alas, for the red man! Well has the poet said—

“Nor lofty pile, nor glowing page,
Shall link him to a future age,
Or give him with the past a rank:
His heraldry is but a broken bow,
His history but a tale of wrong and woe,
His very name must be a blank.”

But my reveries were broken by the stentorian voice of Ellis, calling me to “come and get dinner,” or I would lose my share, as he was “orful hungary.”

Thinking this would suit Kossuth about as well as myself, though I was rather more interested in and anxious for the “material aid and comfort” the good hunter promised, I was soon seated by the great fire before the shanty, with the smoking wing of a par-

tridge in one hand, and a chunk of bread in the other, expatiating between the mouthsfull, upon the extreme liberality of the party in my behalf, in regard to my appetite.

“So much for standin thar, a strainin yer eyes arter nothin,” says Ellis.

“We’re all starved *here*—fust come, fust sarved,” chimed in Tom. And so I felt very much like a martyr to my silent sympathy for the red man.

My delicate dinner was soon finished, and so, packing our small stock of cooking utensils in carrying condition upon the broad shoulders of Tom, who was to go to Salmon river that evening, where we were to meet him on the morrow, we once more returned by the lake to Ellis’s cabin.

Ere we reached it, the storm had increased almost to a gale, and the snow now falling rapidly, was drifting before it in blinding clouds.

Right glad were we to reach our shelter, and exchange our damp clothes for others kept in reserve for just such an occasion.

When supper was served and we were enjoying it, I fancied, and Ellis asserted that my appetite had improved wonderfully since morning; he was even commencing to philosophize as to the cause, when I reminded him of my partridge wing and bread, *minus* butter, at the shanty.

I even went farther, and committed the imprudence of informing him what I was thinking of, when he supposed I was looking for a deer, and cut short my reverie by his call to dinner.

Ellis had some sympathy akin to mine, for the unfortunate Indian, but O——, our other companion, had none.

“You needn’t preach to me about the tarnal redskins,” said he, “for didn’t that skulking rascal that hunted here a year ago, steal a buck saddle of mine what hung in the gap yonder; and didn’t he steal Bill Parris’s powder-horn too? Don’t talk to me on em, they’re a bad brood.”

So much for my sentiment in that quarter, and on that subject: there was no need of preaching any more, and I did not.

Supper over, we each employed ourselves as pleased us. Ellis and W—— were soon playing “pull and haul” from one side of the cabin to the other, by the medium of a rifle and its refractory cleaning rod, which no gentler persuasion could move one way or the other.

It came at last, however, by a dexterous jerk of Ellis’s, and with a corresponding movement in the opposite direction, W—— went, and some crockery went too, to say nothing of the rather severe concussion another individual received, whilst poring over

the pages of “Bleak House” by the dim light of a deer-tallow dip.

O——, who was inclined to be taciturn at times, sat in one corner of the room, quietly enjoying his pipe and W——’s overthrow.

We sat up late that night, for it was to be our last there, unless the storm should continue and detain us.

The wind made a great strife amidst the old trees that long wintry night, for they flung their huge arms about, and intertwined their long, giant fingers, till some were broken and disjointed, and came crashing to the ground.

How mournfully wailed the wind through the dense pines; how it whistled and soughed amidst the close and swaying spruces! Its voice brought to me memories of a long gone night at sea, when a noble ship, in which strong men trembled and frail women wept, bravely struggled and outlived the storm.

There were tones on the gale that night which the forest seemed to echo back in all their wildness of grief and terror.

“It was such a night as this,” said Ellis, “the wind made just such a mournful noise like, when Bill Parris went off. He was my nighest neighbor then—about four miles away west, towards Ragged lake. He took a bad cough, sugar makin time, and, though I guess he was a deal heavier than me, before September he

didn't weigh more than a spike-buck. Along towards winter, the doctor gin him up, and Bill kinder felt he wouldn't last long, and gan to get uneasy about his family; for he had a woman and two young gals. But somehow, he got all that fixed, and sold his clearin besides, and gin her the money, so arter he should be dead, she should go back to her folks down on the Black river. Bill sent over arter me one cold November mornin, for, as I said before, I was his nighest neighbor, and he wanted me to see him buried, for he said he wouldn't last the night. It was gloomy enough there, I tell you, and the way it came on to storm that night was a caution. There was a growth of heavy pine timber just behind the cabin; and when the wind came in gusts like through the trees, it sounded like uneasy spirits a groaning and sighing. Bill was very restive all the arternoon, and when it got dark, so he couldn't see plain, he had a dip lighted, and got his woman to read him a psalm out of the Bible.

"Once in a while he would groan, and kinder jump up and look wild, and say somethin to himself. I thought he was wanderin, but I don't think so now: for I heerd some one tell since, that know'd him, how he was rich once and his father lived down in Warren county, and he used to go to York sometimes. Bill must have seen better times some day, for he was smart and had considerable larnin. But let the dead

be: he was a good feller as ever lived, and I allers liked him. Well, as it got towards night, he grew worse, and he called the children to him, and gin them some advice, and then he told his woman what she must do; and after that, he made me promise to bury him under an old hemlock back of the house. It wasn't till nigh mornin that he died, and jest before, he asked his wife to turn him on his back. That brought on a coughin spell and a gush of blood: so that was the last of poor Bill.

"I came over home and got my boy to go and help dig the grave, and that arternoon we buried him under the old hemlock. We all brought over what we could of the truck and notions in the cabin, and left the rest for the new settler. The woman and her gals staid with us awhile, and then went off to the settlements down on the Black river. Poor Bill! we missed him a good deal, loggin that season, for he swung a powerful axe and was a right jovial feller when he was wel, and strong. But jest hear how the wind blows: it ain't often so here, the woods to the nor'-west is so thick."

It was a fitting time for such a tale, and we, almost strangers to the gloom and loneliness of the forest, could only fancy the awful solemnity of such a death scene.

The morning hours had come before we laid down

to take a short nap previous to our tramp; but the narrative of Ellis had put us in a wakeful mood, and we listened with interest to farther tales of excitement and wild adventure. Many were the stories they told us of daring encounters with bears and catamounts, and hair-breadth escapes of life and limb too, from the noble moose, which, wilder and fiercer than either of the others in close combat, was their choicest game. These, more shy in their habits than deer, have gone farther into the wilderness, amidst the recesses of the Adirondacks and the Raquette river, where we may at some future day strive to follow them.

With all our fondness for forest scenes and associations, and enjoying as we did the rough though exciting life of the hunter, we were sorry not to be able to spend a week longer in the woods.

We had tramped many miles, day after day, over swamps and hills, and through pathless forests, and when night came, we had slept none the less soundly because our couch was of hemlock twigs rather than feathers, and our shelter none the closest. Yet—

“Fresh we woke upon the morrow,
All our thoughts and words had scope;
We had health and we had hope,
Toil and travel, but no sorrow.”

XIV.

It is a dreary winter night, and the snow is falling fast, and drifting deep about the mansion at Briar-cliff. Yet within, all is glowing and cheerful, for every one is happy. Minnie and I are storm-bound for the night, so we make ourselves at home.

“Come Harry,” says Frank, “take the easy-chair and draw up to the fire; I want you to read a page or two from my journal that I kept during my last year’s travel. To-night is the anniversary of one I shall never forget. You have heard me speak of my college chum Larry G—, haven’t you?”

“Yes—he is living at the South, is he not; was he not a Virginian?”

“Why no, Harry! I thought I wrote you that I met him abroad: you are thinking of Travers, quite another person.”

“You are mistaken, Frank, you only wrote me one long letter whilst you were away; the rest were very unsatisfactory, I assure you. But I remember now that you were obliged to go somewhere South after your return; to convey bad news, I remember you

to take a short nap previous to our tramp; but the narrative of Ellis had put us in a wakeful mood, and we listened with interest to farther tales of excitement and wild adventure. Many were the stories they told us of daring encounters with bears and catamounts, and hair-breadth escapes of life and limb too, from the noble moose, which, wilder and fiercer than either of the others in close combat, was their choicest game. These, more shy in their habits than deer, have gone farther into the wilderness, amidst the recesses of the Adirondacks and the Raquette river, where we may at some future day strive to follow them.

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said : and you promised to tell us the particulars when you returned ; but it was forgotten amidst other matters."

"Well ! here is a little sketch I scribbled off the other day for our village paper. Read it whilst I write a letter or two : it is truthful at any rate."

I draw my chair under the reading lamp, and read in Frank's familiar characters, his feeling sketch of a friend's melancholy fate.

"When the flush and buoyancy of Youth are over, and the days are reached in which we look back upon the Past with somewhat of regret, and to the future with less of enthusiasm ; how often do memories of school and college life crowd upon the spirit ! some fraught with joy—others tinctured with enduring sadness.

"Of those with whom we were then so intimately associated, how few can we discern through the mists which veil the Past, or gather round us in our Present hours of need and pleasure ! Some are far off by sea and land—others, in untimely graves : some, nearing with steady yet toilsome step Fame's dizzy height and gilded temple—others, fast travelling the smooth road to ruin.

"Of one in whom I felt an unchanging interest, I may be privileged to speak, feeling that beneath the

slight disguise which robes the memoir, none may recognize its subject ; for the annals of every-day life are full of like histories.

"He was my chum at college ; and of the close intimacy which such an association always begets, how many pleasant recollections are treasured up, never to be forgotten—shadows of past hours indelibly daguer-reotyped upon the tablets of the heart. Situated as we were, of course we were much together. We held everything in common—studied the same books—roved the same paths—cultivated the same tastes—in all save one thing : and that was my friend's grievous failing—a love for strong drink.

"Full of generous feeling—keenly alive to all that was due alike to others as himself, and in everything else the *beau ideal* of all that man may deem noble in a fellow man : it was a source of deep grief to me thus to see him becoming a slave to one of the most debasing tastes that can disgrace humanity.

"It was to be attributed in a great measure to the absence of those domestic ties, which, woven round us in youth, are rarely to be broken in maturer years. Bereft early in life of a fond mother, and soon after, of his father also, he was thrown much into the world, with an ample fortune and a character unformed.

"The precincts of a college are not always the most favorable for the morals of a student, and there

were no opportunities lacking by which my friend might indulge his taste: and still it seemed to me as if it was a desire inborn, coeval with his very being, so necessary did it seem to his existence, and so firmly did he repel all my attempts to reason with him concerning it. It was only occasionally that he so far indulged as to compromise his self-respect or that of others.

"He was a hard student, and by far the best linguist of his class. From the first, I knew he was striving for one of the high honors; and I have often awakened at night, to find him 'keeping the small hours' in unwearied study.

"Four years had nearly passed away, and our collegiate course was drawing to its close. My chum's ambition was not disappointed; for he was awarded an high honor, and this was ample recompense to him for his hours of toil. He had manfully striven for the prize, and it was won.

"Commencement day came, and with it those regretful feelings which fill the heart of the student as he begins to realize how many pleasant associations—how many ardent friendships, must soon be 'numbered among the things that were.'

"Some were gay, some thoughtful, some sad, on that eventful morning. To many, life had been, and seemingly was to be, an easy path strewn with flow-

ers: to others—a wild battle, in which they were to struggle for a fortune or renown.

"The exercises and excitements of the day over, we sat together for the last time in our little study, the scene of so many pleasant interviews and such close companionship.

"On the morrow we were to separate. He, to the home of Southern friends, and I, for mine own at the North.

"My heart was filled with many fearful misgivings as to the future course of my friend. I had done all that I could to wean him from his fearful mania: but now that the little influence I possessed over him was to cease, how could I but fear that the serpent which has 'cast down many strong men wounded,' might destroy him also.

"We parted with the mutual promise of frequent correspondence, and the hope that we might often meet to renew old associations. And thus our paths in life diverged, and we knew not whether they should meet again.

"With the strong buckler of our young manhood girl firmly on—a good education—we were leaving the fostering care of our *alma mater*, to enter the wide arena of the world, wherein to strive for, and it might be, win—a name.

"A year passed away, and during that time I heard

frequently from my friend. Favored with great advantages of wealth and station, yet too ambitious to waste his acquirements by a life of indolence, he was rising rapidly in his profession, and gaining an enviable notoriety.

"As of old, our hopes and fears were blended: the confidence of past days was not lessened by absence, and we continued to feel that interest in each other, which early and long-trying friendship alone begets.

"Our first meeting since we parted at college, was on the eve of his departure for Europe. He said that his health was suffering from too close application to his professional duties; but I feared that a more insidious foe than hard study was preying on his strength, and gradually undermining his naturally strong constitution.

"He sailed, yet first committing to my friendly attentions, one whom he hoped to call his wife at some future day. It were better for him and her, had she sooner become his 'guardian angel!'

"Ere long, an opportunity offered by which I was enabled to gratify a long-cherished desire to visit some of the countries of the old world; and the pleasure was enhanced by the hope that I might again be thrown into the company of my friend.

"I tracked him from Paris, and we clasped hands again on the banks of the Arno, in lovely Florence;

but the gladness of meeting was sadly shadowed as I looked upon the wreck of all that was once so noble.

"It was late in the summer, and we proposed travelling further north till the approach of winter, when we would go through France and take the Mediterranean to Southern Italy.

"We crossed the St. Bernard into Switzerland, and after wandering awhile over the rich plains of the Vallais, took up our residence at a rustic inn on the shore of lake Luzerne; whence we made excursions of days at a time to objects and places of interests more or less remote. I fancied that the pure, invigorating air of the mountains, the cool waters of the lake, and more than all, the absence of undue excitement, might have their influence upon my friend's temperament.

"I believe that if I could have kept him a few weeks isolated from the exciting scenes and habits of the gay watering-places, whither his desires tended, I could have prevailed on him to cast aside for ever the habit that was destroying him. But it was not so to be. the demon was within him: and he one day threatened that if I did not yield to his wish and go with him to Paris, he would start off alone. I had never seen him more excited. Persuasion and reasoning on my part were alike useless; and all that I could do, was to alter the route, and take the road to

Italy. I sought to keep him constantly moving. From Florence to Rome—from Rome to Tivoli, Genoa, Pisa, Naples and its environs—we travelled till winter.

“January found us again in Naples, enjoying its balmy air, and the countless beauties of earth and water which surround the city of the Siren.

“But to me, its *dolce far niente* was a mockery, for it required the utmost watchfulness on my part, lest in some hour of mania, occasioned by indulgence, my companion should destroy himself or me.

“He became at last unmanageable. His physician could do no more for him, and I had done all that a brother could do in his behalf.

“In the beautiful city of Messina, there is an asylum for the insane, and by the advice of physicians and others, my friend was taken there—a raving maniac. All hope of his recovery was over, and he went there to die. He did not last long; but there came a lucid interval, when he spoke of loved ones far away, and of one dearer than all others. He knew it would break her heart, if she should know his fate.

“Though in a strange land, one friend went with him to ‘the dark valley,’ and marked out his place of burial. The stranger in Naples, wandering over that loveliest of cemeteries overlooking the bay and its charming shores, will not fail to note the few white

tablets which record the names of those who have won a stranger's grave. Amidst them sleeps my friend. His history is but a page or two in a faithfully kept journal, which all may read: but his memory is cherished by a few fond friends in those niches of the heart which no other image may ever fill. To the one whose young hopes were so rudely blighted, it was a joy to know that—

‘E'en as the weary spirit passed,
Her name was on his marble lips.’”

THE END.

