

Confession

W. Gilmore Simms

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Confession;

or,

The Blind Heart.

A Domestic Story.

By W. Gilmore Simms,

Wagner. But of the world--the heart, the mind of man,
How happy could we know!

Faust. What can we know?
Who dares bestow the infant his true name?
The few who felt and knew, but blindly gave
Their knowledge to the multitude--they fell!
Incapable to keep their full hearts in,
They, from the first of immemorial time,
Were crucified or burnt.

Goethe's Faust, MS. Version.

CHAPTER I.

Confession, or The Blind Heart.

"Who dares bestow the infant his true name?
The few who felt and knew, but blindly gave
Their knowledge to the multitude--they fell
Incapable to keep their full hearts in,
They, from the first of immemorial time,
Were crucified or burnt."--Goethe's "Faust."

The pains and penalties of folly are not necessarily death. They were in old times, perhaps, according to the text, and he who kept not to himself the secrets of his silly heart was surely crucified or burnt. Though lacking in penalties extreme like these, the present is not without its own. All times, indeed, have their penalties for folly, much more certainly than for crime; and this fact furnishes one of the most human arguments in favor of the doctrine of rewards and punishments in the future state. But these penalties are not always mortifications and trials of the flesh. There are punishments of the soul; the spirit; the sensibilities; the intellect--which are most usually the consequences of one's own folly. There is a perversity of mood which is the worst of all such penalties. There are tortures which the foolish heart equally inflicts and endures. The passions riot on their own nature; and, feeding as they do upon that bosom from which they spring, and in which they flourish,

may, not inaptly, be likened to that unnatural brood which gnaws into the heart of the mother-bird, and sustains its existence at the expense of hers. Meetly governed from the beginning, they are dutiful agents that bless themselves in their own obedience; but, pampered to excess, they are tyrants that never do justice, until at last, when they fitly conclude the work of destruction by their own.

The narrative which follows is intended to illustrate these opinions. It is the story of a blind heart--nay, of blind hearts--blind through their own perversity--blind to their own interests--their own joys, hopes, and proper sources of delight. In narrating my own fortunes, I depict theirs; and the old leaven of wilfulness, which belongs to our nature, has, in greater or less degree, a place in every human bosom.

I was the only one surviving of several sons. My parents died while I was yet an infant. I never knew them. I was left to the doubtful charge of relatives, who might as well have been strangers; and, from their treatment, I learned to doubt and to distrust among the first fatal lessons of my youth. I felt myself unloved--nay, as I fancied, disliked and despised. I was not merely an orphan. I was poor, and was felt as burdensome by those connections whom a dread of public opinion, rather than a sense of duty and affection, persuaded to take me to their homes. Here, then, when little more than three years old, I found myself--a lonely brat, whom servants might flout at pleasure, and whom superiors only regarded with a frown. I was just old enough to remember that I had once experienced very different treatment. I had felt the caresses of a fond mother--I had heard the cheering accents of a generous and a gentle father. The one had soothed my griefs and encouraged my hopes--the other had stimulated my energies and prompted my desires. Let no one fancy that, because I was a child, these lessons were premature. All education, to be valuable, must begin with the child's first efforts at discrimination. Suddenly, both of these fond parents disappeared, and I was just young enough to wonder why.

The change in my fortunes first touched my sensibilities, which it finally excited until they became diseased. Neglected if not scorned, I habitually looked to encounter nothing but neglect or scorn. The sure result of this condition of mind was a look and feeling, on my part, of habitual defiance. I grew up with the mood of one who goes forth with a moral certainty that he must meet and provide against an enemy. But I am now premature.

The uncle and aunt with whom I found shelter were what is called in ordinary parlance, very good people. They attended the most popular church with most popular punctuality. They prayed with unction--subscribed to all the charities which had publicity and a fashionable list to recommend them--helped to send missionaries to Calcutta, Bombay, Owyhee, and other outlandish regions--paid their debts when they became due with commendable readiness--and were, in all out-of-door respects, the very sort of people who might congratulate themselves, and thank God that they were very far superior to their neighbors. My uncle had morning prayers at home, and my aunt thumbed Hannah More in the evening; though it must be admitted that the former could not always forbear, coming from church on the sabbath, to inquire into the last news of the Liverpool cotton market, and my aunt never failed, when they reached

home, on the same blessed day, to make the house ring with another sort of eloquence than that to which she had listened with such sanctimonious devotion from the lips of the preacher. There were some other little offsets against the perfectly evangelical character of their religion. One of these--the first that attracted my infant consideration--was naturally one which more directly concerned myself. I soon discovered that, while I was sent to an ordinary charity school of the country, in threadbare breeches, made of the meanest material--their own son--a gentle and good, but puny boy, whom their indulgence injured, and, perhaps, finally destroyed--was despatched to a fashionable institution which taught all sorts of ologies--dressed in such choice broadcloth and costly habiliments, as to make him an object of envy and even odium among all his less fortunate school-fellows.

Poor little Edgar! His own good heart and correct natural understanding showed him the equal folly of that treatment to which he was subjected, and the injustice and unkindness which distinguished mine. He strove to make amends, so far as I was concerned, for the error of his parents. He was my playmate whenever he was permitted, but even this permission was qualified by some remark, some direction or counsel, from one or other of his parents, which was intended to let him know, and make me feel, that there was a monstrous

difference between us.

The servants discovered this difference as quickly as did the objects of it; and though we were precisely of one age, and I was rather the largest of the two, yet, in addressing us, they paid him the deference which should only be shown to superior age, and treated me with the contumely only due to inferior merit. It was "Master Edgar," when he was spoken to--and "you," when I was the object of attention.

I do not speak of these things as of substantial evils affecting my condition. Perhaps, in one or more respects, they were benefits. They taught me humility in the first place, and made that humility independence, by showing me that the lesson was bestowed in wantonness, and not with the purpose of improvement. And, in proportion as my physical nature suffered their neglect, it acquired strength by the very roughening to which that neglect exposed it. In this I possessed a vast advantage over my little companion. His frame, naturally feeble, sunk under the oppressive tenderness to which the constant care of a vain father, a doting mother, and sycophantic friends and servants, subjected it. The attrition of boy with boy, in the half-manly sports of schoolboy life--its very strifes and scuffles--would have brought his blood into adequate circulation, and hardened his bones, and given elasticity to his sinews. But from all these influences, he was carefully preserved and protected. He was not allowed to run, for fear of being too much heated. He could not jump, lest he might break a blood-vessel. In the ball play he might get an eye knocked out; and even tops and marbles were forbidden, lest he should soil his hands and wear out the knees of his green breeches. If he indulged in these sports it was only by stealth, and at the fearful cost of a falsehood on every such occasion. When will parents learn that entirely to crush and keep down the proper nature of the young, is to produce inevitable perversity, and stimulate the boyish ingenuity to crime?

With me the case was very different. If cuffing and kicking could have killed, I should have died many sudden and severe deaths in the rough school to which I was sent. If eyes were likely to be lost in the campus, corded balls of India-rubber, or still harder ones of wood, impelled by shinny (goff) sticks, would have obliterated all of mine though they had been numerous as those of Argus. My limbs and eyes escaped all injury; my frame grew tall and vigorous in consequence of neglect, even as the forest-tree, left to the conflict of all the winds of heaven; while my poor little friend, Edgar, grew daily more and more diminutive, just as some plant, which nursing and tendance within doors deprive of the wholesome sunshine and generous breezes of the sky. The paleness of his cheek increased, the languor of his frame, the meagerness of his form, the inability of his nature! He was pining rapidly away, in spite of that excessive care, which, perhaps, had been in the first instance, the unhappy source of all his feebleness.

He died--and I became an object of greater dislike than ever to his parents. They could not but contrast my strength, with his feebleness--my improvement with his decline--and when they remembered how little had been their regard for me and how much for him--without ascribing the difference of result to the true cause--they repined at the ways of Providence, and threw upon me the reproach of it. They gave me less heed and fewer smiles than ever. If I improved at school, it was well, perhaps; but they never inquired, and I could not help fancying that it was with a positive expression of vexation, that my aunt heard, on one occasion, from my teacher, in the presence of some guests, that I was likely to be an honor to the family.

"An honor to the family, indeed!" This was the clear expression in that Christian lady's eyes, as I saw them sink immediately after in a scornful examination of my rugged frame and coarse garments.

The family had its own sources of honor, was the calm opinion of both my patrons, as they turned their eyes upon their only remaining child--a little girl about five years old, who was playing around them on the carpet. This opinion was also mine, even then: and my eyes followed theirs in the same direction. Julia Clifford was one of the sweetest little fairies in the world. Tender-hearted, and just, and generous, like the dear little brother, whom she had only known to lose, she was yet as playful as a kitten. I was twice her age--just ten--at this period; and a sort of instinct led me to adopt the little creature, in place of poor Edgar, in the friendship of my boyish heart. I drew her in her little wagon--carried her over the brooklet--constructed her tiny playthings--and in consideration of my usefulness, in most generally keeping her in the best of humors, her mother was not unwilling that I should be her frequent playmate. Nay, at such times she could spare a gentle word even to me, as one throws a bone to the dog, who has jumped a pole, or plunged into the water, or worried some other dog, for his amusement. At no other period did my worthy aunt vouchsafe me such unlooked-for consideration.

But Julia Clifford was not my only friend. I had made another shortly before the death of Edgar; though, passingly it may be said, friendship-making was no easy business with a nature such as mine had now become. The inevitable result of such treatment as that to which my early years had been subjected, was fully realized. I

was suspicious to the last degree of all new faces--jealous of the regards of the old; devoting myself where my affections were set and requiring devotion--rigid, exclusive devotion--from their object in return. There was a terrible earnestness in all my moods which made my very love a thing to be feared. I was no trifler--I could not suffer to be trifled with--and the ordinary friendships of man or boy can not long endure the exactions of such a disposition. The penalties are usually thought to be--and are--infinitely beyond the rewards and benefits.

My intimacies with William Edgerton were first formed under circumstances which, of all others, are most likely to establish them on a firm basis in our days of boyhood. He came to my rescue one evening, when, returning from school, I was beset by three other boys, who had resolved on drubbing me. My haughty deportment had vexed their self-esteem, and, as the same cause had left me with few sympathies, it was taken for granted that the unfairness of their assault would provoke no censure. They were mistaken. In the moment of my greatest difficulty, William Edgerton dashed in among them. My exigency rendered his assistance a very singular benefit. My nose was already broken--one of my eyes sealed up for a week's holiday; and I was suffering from small annoyances, of hip, heart, leg, and thigh, occasioned by the repeated cuffs, and the reckless kicks, which I was momentarily receiving from three points of the compass. It is true that my enemies had their hurts to complain of also; but the odds were too greatly against me for any conduct or strength of mine to neutralize or overcome; and it was only by Edgerton's interposition that I was saved from utter defeat and much worse usage. The beating I had already suffered. I was sore from head to foot for a week after; and my only consolation was that my enemies left the ground in a condition, if anything, something worse than my own.

But I had gained a friend, and that was a sweet recompense, sweeter to me, by far, than it is found or felt by schoolboys usually. None could know or comprehend the force of my attachment--my dependence upon the attachment of which I felt assured!--none but those who, with an earnest, impetuous nature like my own--doomed to denial from the first, and treated with injustice and unkindness--has felt the pang of a worse privation from the beginning;--the privation of that sustenance, which is the "very be all and end all" of its desire and its life--and the denial of which chills and repels its fervor--throws it back in despondency upon itself--fills it with suspicion, and racks it with a never-ceasing conflict between its apprehension and its hopes.

Edgerton supplied a vacuum which my bosom had long felt. He was, however, very unlike, in most respects, to myself. He was rather phlegmatic than ardent--slow in his fancies, and shy in his associations from very fastidiousness. He was too much governed by nice tastes, to be an active or performing youth; and too much restrained by them also, to be a popular one. This, perhaps, was the secret influence which brought us together. A mutual sense of isolation--no matter from what cause--awakened the sympathies between us. Our ties were formed, on my part, simply because I was assured that I should have no rival; and on his, possibly, because he perceived in my haughty reserve of character, a sufficient security that his fastidious sensibilities would not be likely to suffer outrage at my hands. In every other respect our moods and

tempers were utterly unlike. I thought him dull, very frequently, when he was only balancing between jealous and sensitive tastes;--and ignorant of the actual, when, in fact, his ignorance simply arose from the decided preference which he gave to the foreign and abstract. He was contemplative--an idealist; I was impetuous and devoted to the real and living world around me, in which I was disposed to mingle with an eagerness which might have been fatal; but for that restraint to which my own distrust of all things and persons habitually subjected me.

CHAPTER II.

BOY PASSIONS--A PROFESSION CHOSEN.

Between William Edgerton and Julia Clifford my young life and best affections were divided, entirely, if not equally. I lived for no other--I cared to seek, to know, no other--and yet I often shrunk from both. Even at that boyish period, while the heavier cares and the more painful vexations of life were wanting to our annoyance, I had those of that gnawing nature which seemed to be born of the tree whose evil growth "brought death into the world and all our wo." The pang of a nameless jealousy--a sleepless distrust--rose unbidden to my heart at seasons, when, in truth, there was no obvious cause. When Julia was most gentle--when William was most generous--even then, I had learned to repulse them with an indifference which I did not feel--a rudeness which brought to my heart a pain even greater than that which my wantonness inflicted upon theirs. I knew, even then, that I was perverse, unjust; and that there was a littleness in the vexatious mood in which I indulged, that was unjust to my own feelings, and unbecoming in a manly nature. But even though I felt all this, as thoroughly as I could ever feel it under any situation, I still could not succeed in overcoming that insane will which drove me to its indulgence.

Vainly have I striven to account for the blindness of heart--for such it is, in all such cases--which possessed me. Was there anything in my secret nature, born at my birth and growing with my growth--which impelled me to this willfulness. I can scarcely believe so; but, after serious reflection, am compelled to think that it was the strict result of moods growing out of the particular treatment to which I had been subjected. It does not seem unnatural that an ardent temper of mind, willing to confide, looking to love and affection for the only aliment which it most and chiefly desires, and repelled in this search, frowned on by its superiors as if it were something base, will, in time, grow to be habitually wilful, even as the treatment which has schooled it. Had I been governed and guided by justice, I am sure that I should never have been unjust.

My waywardness in childhood did not often amount to rudeness, and

never, I may safely say, where Julia was concerned. In her case, it was simply the exercise of a sullenness that repelled her approaches, even as its own approaches had been repelled by others. At such periods I went apart, communing, sternly with myself, refusing the sympathy that I most yearned after, and resolving not to be comforted. Let me do the dear child the justice to say that the only effect which this conduct had upon her, was to increase her anxieties to soothe the repulsive spirit which should have offended her. Perhaps, to provoke this anxiety in one it loves, is the chief desire of such a spirit. It loves to behold the persevering devotion, which it yet perversely toils to discourage. It smiles within, with a bitter triumph, as it contemplates its own power, to impart the same sorrow which a similar perversity has already made it feel.

But, without seeking further to analyze and account for such a spirit, it is quite sufficient if I have described it. Perhaps, there are other hearts equally froward and wayward with my own. I know not if my story will amend--perhaps it may not even instruct or inform them--I feel that no story, however truthful, could have disarmed the humor of that particular mood of mind which shows itself in the blindness of the heart under which it was my lot to labor. I did not want knowledge of my own perversity. I knew--I felt it--as clearly as if I had seen it written in characters of light, on the walls of my chamber. But, until it had exhausted itself and passed away by its own processes, no effort of mine could have overcome or banished it. I stalked apart, under its influence, a gloomy savage--scornful and sad--stern, yet suffering--denying myself equally, in the perverse and wanton denial to which I condemned all others.

Perhaps something of this temper is derived from the yearnings of the mental nature. It may belong somewhat to the natural direction of a mind having a decided tendency to imaginative pursuits. There is a dim, vague, indefinite struggle, for ever going on in the nature of such a person, after an existence and relations very foreign to the world in which it lives; and equally far from, and hostile to that condition in which it thrives. The vague discontent of such a mind is one of the causes of its activity; and how far it may be stimulated into diseased intensity by injudicious treatment, is a question of large importance for the consideration of philosophers. The imaginative nature is one singularly sensitive in its conditions; quick, jealous, watchful, earnest, stirring, and perpetually breaking down the ordinary barriers of the actual, in its struggles to ascertain the extent of the possible. The tyranny which drives it from the ordinary resources and enjoyments of the young, by throwing it more completely on its own, impels into desperate activity that daring of the imaginative mood, which, at no time, is wanting in courage and audacity. My mind was one singularly imaginative in its structure; and my ardent temperament contributed largely to its activity. Solitude, into which I was forced by the repulsive and unkind treatment of my relatives, was also favorable to the exercise of this influence; and my heart may be said to have taken, in turn, every color and aspect which informed my eyes. It was a blind heart for this very reason, in respect to all those things for which it should have had a color of its own. Books and the woods--the voice of waters and of song--the dim mysteries of poetry, and the whispers of lonely forest-walks, which beguiled me into myself, and more remotely from my fellows, were all, so far

as my social relations were concerned, evil influences! Influences which were only in part overcome by the communion of such gentle beings as William Edgerton and Julia Clifford.

With these friends, and these only, I grew up. As my years advanced, my intimacy with the former increased, and with the latter diminished. But this diminution of intimacy did not lessen the kindness of her feelings, or the ordinary devotedness of mine. She was still--when the perversity of heart made me not blind--the sweet creature to whom the task of ministering was a pleasure infinitely beyond any other which I knew. But, as she grew up to girlhood, other prospects opened upon her eyes, and other purposes upon those of her parents. At twelve she was carried by maternal vanity into company--sent to the dancing school--provided with teachers in music and painting, and made to understand--so far as the actions, looks, and words of all around could teach--that she was the cynosure of all eyes, to whom the whole world was bound in deference.

Fortunately, in the case of Julia, the usual effects of maternal folly and indiscretion did not ensue. Nature interposed to protect her, and saved her in spite of them all. She was still the meek, modest child, solicitous of the happiness of all around her--unobtrusive, unassuming--kind to her inferiors, respectful to superiors, and courteous to, and considerate of all other persons. Her advancing years, which rendered these new acquisitions and accomplishments desirable, if not necessary, at the same time prompted her foolish mother to another step which betrayed the humiliating regard which she entertained for me. When I was seventeen, Julia was twelve, and when neither she nor myself had a solitary thought of love, the over considerate mother began to think, on this subject, for us both. The result of her cogitations determined her that it was no longer fitting that Julia should be my companion. Our rambles in the woods together were forbidden; and Julia was gravely informed that I was a poor youth, though her cousin--an orphan whom her father's charity supported, and whom the public charity schooled. The poor child artlessly told me all this, in a vain effort to procure from me an explanation of the mystery (which her mother had either failed or neglected to explain) by which such circumstances were made to account for the new commands which had been given her. Well might she, in her simplicity of heart, wonder why it was, that because I was poor, she should be familiar with me no longer.

The circumstance opened my eyes to the fact that Julia was a tall girl, growing fast, already in her teens, and likely, under the rapidly-maturing influence of our summer sun, to be soon a woman. But just then--just when she first tasked me to solve the mystery of her mother's strange requisitions, I did not think of this. I was too much filled with indignation--the mortified self-esteem was too actively working in my bosom to suffer me to think of anything but the indignity with which I was treated. A brief portion of the dialogue between the child and my self, will give some glimpses of the blind heart by which I was afflicted.

"Oh, you do not understand it, Julia. You do not know, then, that you are the daughter of a rich merchant--the only daughter--that you have servants to wait on you, and a carriage at command--that you can wear fine silks, and have all things that money can buy, and a rich man's daughter desire. You don't know these things, Julia, eh?"

"Yes, Edward, I hear you say so now, and I hear mamma often say the same things; but still I don't see--"

"You don't see why that should make a difference between yourself and your poor cousin, eh? Well, but it does; and though you don't see it now, yet it will not be very long before you will see, and understand it, and act upon it, too, as promptly as the wisest among them. Don't you know that I am the object of your father's charity--that his bounty feeds me--and that it would not be seemly that the world should behold me on a familiar footing of equality or intimacy with the daughter of my benefactor--my patron--without whom I should probably starve, or be a common beggar upon the highway?"

"But father would not suffer that, Edward."

"Oh, no! no!--he would not suffer it, Julia, simply because his own pride and name would feel the shame and disgrace of such a thing. But though he would keep me from beggary and the highway, Julia, neither he nor your mother would spend a sixpence or make an effort to save my feelings from pain and misery. They protect me from the scorn of others, but they use me for their own."

The girl hung her head in silence.

"And you, too," I added--"the time will come when you, too, Julia, will shrink as promptly as themselves from being seen with your poor relation. You--"

"No! no! Edward--how can you think of such a thing?" she replied with girlish chiding.

"Think it!--I know it! The time will soon be here. But--obey your mother, Julia. Go! leave me now. Begin, once the lesson which, before many days, you will find it very easy to learn."

This was all very manly, so I fancied at the time; and then blind with the perverse heart which boiled within me, I felt not the wantonness of my mood, and heeded not the bitter pain which I occasioned to her gentle bosom. Her little hand grasped mine, her warm tears fell upon it; but I flung away from her grasp, and left her to those childish meditations which I had made sufficiently mournful.

Subsequent reflection, while it showed me the brutality of my conduct to Julia, opened my eyes to the true meaning of her mother's interdiction; and increased the pang of those bitter feelings, which my conscious dependence had awakened in my breast, it was necessary that this dependence should be lessened; that, as I was now approaching manhood, I should cast about for the future, and adopt wisely and at once the means of my support hereafter. It was necessary that I should begin the business of life. On this head I had already reflected somewhat, and my thoughts had taken their direction from more than one conference which I had had with William Edgerton. His father was an eminent lawyer, and the law had been adopted for his profession also. I determined to make it mine; and to speak on this subject to my uncle. This I did. I chose an afternoon, the very week in which my conversation had taken place

with Julia, and, while the dinner things were undergoing removal, with some formality requested a private interview with him. He looked round at me with a raised brow of inquiry--nodded his head--and shortly after rose from the table. My aunt stared with an air of supercilious wonder; while poor Julia, timid and trembling, barely ventured to give me a single look, which said--and that was enough for me--"I wish I dared say more."

My conference with my uncle was not of long duration. I told him it was my purpose--my desire--to begin as soon as possible to do something for myself. His answer signified that such was his opinion also. So far we were agreed; but when I told him that it was my wish to study the law, he answered with sufficient, and as I thought, scornful abruptness:--

"The law, indeed! What puts the law into your head? What preparations have you made to study the law? You know nothing of languages which every lawyer should know--Latin--"

I interrupted him to say that I had some slight knowledge of Latin--sufficient, I fancied, for all legal purposes.

"Ah! indeed! where did you get it?"

"A friend lent me a grammar and dictionary, and I studied myself."

"Oh, you are ambitious; but you deceive yourself. You were never made for a lawyer. Besides, how are you to live while prosecuting your studies? No, no! I have been thinking of something for you, Edward--and, just now, it happens fortunately that old Squire Farmer, the bricklayer, wants some apprentices--"

I could scarcely listen thus far.

"I thank you, sir, but I have no disposition to be a bricklayer."

"You must do something for yourself. You can not expect to eat the bread of idleness. I have done, and will do for you what I can--whatever is necessary;--but I have my own family to provide for. I can not rob my own child---"

"Nor do I expect it, Mr. Clifford," I replied hastily, and with some indignation. "It is my wish, sir, to draw as little as possible from your income and resources. I would not rob Julia Clifford of a single dollar. Nay, sir, I trust before many years to be able to refund you every copper which has been spent upon me from the moment I entered your household."

He said hastily:--

"I wish nothing of that, Edward;--but the law is a study of years, and is expensive and unpromising in every respect. Your clothes already call for a considerable sum, and such a profession requires, more than almost any other, that a student should be well dressed."

"I promise you, sir, that my dress shall be such as shall not trespass upon your income. I shall be governed by as much economy--"

He interrupted me to say, that

"His duty required that his brother's son should be dressed as well as his associates."

I replied, with tolerable composure:--

"I do not think, sir, that bricklaying will admit of very genteel clothing, nor do I think that the vocation will suit me. I have flattered myself, sir, that my talents--"

"Oh, you have talents, then, have you? Well, it is fortunate that the discovery has been made in season."

I bore with this, though my cheek was burning, and said--with an effort to preserve my voice and temper, in which, though the difficulty was great, I was tolerably successful--

"You have misunderstood me in some things, Mr. Clifford; and I will try now to explain myself clearly in others. Having resolved, sir, that the law shall be my profession---"

"Ha! resolved, say you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, go on--go on!"

"Having resolved to pursue the study of law, and seeing that I am burdensome and expensive to you--believing, too, that I can relieve you of the burden--I have simply requested permission of you to make the attempt."

"Why, how do you propose to do so?--how can you support yourself--that is relieve me of the burden of your expenses--and study the law at the same time?"

"Such things have been done, sir; and can be done again. I flatter myself I can do it. Industry will enable me to do so. I propose to apply for a clerkship in a mercantile establishment which I know stands in need of assistance, and while there will pursue my studies in such intervals of leisure as the business will afford me."

"You seem to have the matter ready cut and dry. Why do you come to me, then? Remember, I can make no advances."

"I need none, sir. My simple object with you, sir, was to declare my intention, and to request that I may be permitted to refer to you the merchants to whom I mean to apply, for a knowledge of my character and attainments."

"Oh, certainly, you may--for the character;--but as to the attainments"--with a sneering smile--"of them I can say nothing, and, perhaps, the less said the better. I've no doubt you'll do well enough with the merchants. It does not need much genius or attainment for such situations. But, if you'll take my counsel, you'll go to the bricklayer. We want bricklayers sadly. To be a tolerable lawyer, parts are necessary; and God knows the country is over-stocked with hosts of lawyers already, whose only parts lie in their impudence. Better think a little while longer. Speak to

old Farmer yourself."

I smiled bitterly--thanked him for his counsel, which was only a studied form of insult, and turned away from him without further speech, and with a proud swelling of indignation at my heart. Thus our conference ended. A week after, I was ensconced behind the counter of a wholesale dealer, and my hands at night were already busy in turning over the heavy folios of Chitty and Blackstone.

CHAPTER III.

ADMITTED AMONG THE LAWYERS

Behold me, then, merchandising by day, and conning by night the intricate mysteries of law. Books for the latter purpose were furnished by my old friend, William Edgerton, from his father's library. He himself was a student, beginning about the same time with myself; though with the superior privilege of devoting himself exclusively to this study. But if he had more time, I was more indefatigable. My pride was roused, and emulation soon enabled me to supply the want of leisure. My nights were surrendered, almost wholly, to my new pursuit. I toiled with all the earnestness which distinguished my temperament, stimulated to a yet higher degree by those feelings of pride and pique, which were resolved to convince my skeptical uncle that I was not entirely without those talents, the assertion of which had so promptly provoked his sneer. Besides, I had already learned that no such scheme as mine could be successfully prosecuted, unless by a stern resolution; and this implied the constant presence of a close, undeviating method in my studies. I tasked myself accordingly to read--understandingly, if possible--so many pages every night, making my notes, queries, doubts, &c., EN PASSANT. In order to do this, I prescribed to myself a rule, to pass directly from the toils of the day and the store to my chamber, suffering no stoppage by the way, and studiously denying myself the dangerous fascinations of that society which was everywhere at command, in the persons of young men about my own age and condition. The intensity of my character, and the suspiciousness which it induced, helped me in this determination. Perhaps, there is no greater danger to a young man's habits of study and business, than a chat at the street corner, with a merry and thoughtless group. A single half hour consumed in this manner, is almost always fatal to the remaining hours of the day. It breaks into the circle, and impairs the method without which the passage of the sun becomes a very weary and always an unprofitable progress. If you would be a student or anything, you must plunge headlong into it at the beginning--bury yourself in your business, and work your way out of your toils, by sheer, dogged industry.

My labors were so far successful that I could prosecute my studies with independence. I had left the dwelling of my uncle the moment

I took employment in the mercantile house. My salary, though small, was ample; with my habits, it was particularly so. I had few of those vices in which young men are apt to indulge, and which, when they become habits, cease unhappily to be regarded as vices. I used tobacco in no shape, and no ardent spirits. I needed no stimulants, and, by the way, true industry never does. It is only indolence that needs drink; and indolence does need it; and the sooner drunkenness kills indolence by the use of drink, the better for society. The only objection to liquors as an agent for ridding the community of a nuisance, is, that it is rather too slow, and too offensive in its detailed operations; arsenic would be far less offensive, more summary, and is far more certain. You would seek vainly to cure drunkenness, unless you first cure the idleness which is its root and strength, and, while they last, its permanent support. But my object is not homily.

If I was free from vices such as these, however, I had vices of my own, which were only less odious as they were less obvious. That vexing, self-tormenting spirit of which I have spoken as the evil genius that dogged my footsteps--that moral perverseness which I have described as the "blind heart"--still afflicted me, though in a far less degree now than when I was the inmate of my uncle's dwelling, and exposed to all the caprices of himself, his wife and servants. I kept on good terms with my employers, for the very natural reason that they saw me attend to my business and theirs, with a hearty cheerfulness that went to work promptly in whatever was to be done, and executed its tasks with steady fortitude, neatness, and rapidity. But, even with them, I had my sulks--my humors--my stubborn fits of sullenness, that seemed anxious to provoke opposition, and awaken wrath. These, however, they considerately forgave in consideration of my real usefulness: and as they perceived that whatever might have been the unpleasantness occasioned by these specimens of spleen, they were never suffered to interfere with or retard the operations of business. "It's an ugly way he's got," was, probably, the utmost extent of what either of the partners said, and of what is commonly said on such occasions by most persons, who do not care to trouble themselves with a too close inquiry.

Well, at twenty-one, William Edgerton and myself were admitted to the practice of the law, and that too with considerable credit to ourselves. I had long since been carried by my friend into his family circle; and Mr. Edgerton, his father, had been pleased to distinguish me with sundry attentions, which were only grateful to me in consequence of the unusual deference with which his manner evinced his regard. His gentle inquiries and persuasive suggestions beguiled me into more freedom of speech than I had ever before been accustomed to; and his judicious management of my troubled spirit, for a time, stifled its contradictions, and suppressed its habitual tendencies. But it was with some jealousy, and an erectness of manner which was surely ungracious, though, perhaps, not offensive, that I endured and replied to his inquiries into my personal condition, my resources, and the nature of that dependence which I bore to the family of my uncle. When he learned--which he did not from me--in what manner I had pursued my studies--after what toils of the day, and at what late hours of the night--when he found from a close private examination, which he had given me, before my admission, that my knowledge of the law was quite as good as the greater number of those who apply for admission--he was pleased to express his astonishment at my perseverance, and delight at my success.

When, too, in addition to this, he discovered, upon a minute inquiry from my employers and others, that I was abstemious, and indulged in no excesses of any kind, his interest in me increased, as I thought, who had been accustomed to nothing of the sort, beyond all reasonable measure--and I soon had occasion to perceive that it was no idle curiosity that prompted his consideration and inquiry.

Without my knowledge, he paid a visit to my uncle. This gentleman, I may be permitted here to say, had been quite as much surprised as anybody else, at my determined prosecution of my studies in spite of the difficulties by which I was surrounded. That I was pursuing them, while in the mercantile establishment to which I had gone, he did not believe; and very frequently when I was at his house--for I visited the family, and sometimes, though unfrequently, dined with them on a sabbath--he jeered me on my progress--the "wonderful progress," as he was pleased to term it--which he felt sure I was making with my Coke and Blackstone, while baling blankets, or bundling up plains and kerseys. This I bore patiently, sustained as I was by the proud, indomitable spirit within me, which assured me of the ultimate triumph which I felt positive would ensue. I enjoyed his surprise--a surprise that looked something like consternation--when the very day of my admission to the bar, and after that event, I encountered him in the street, and in answer to his usual sarcastic inquiry:--

"Well, Edward, how does the law come on? How is Sir William Blackstone, Sir Edward Coke, and the rest of the white heads?"

I simply put the parchment into his hands which declared my formal introduction to those venerable gentry.

"Why, you don't mean? Is it possible? So you really are admitted--a lawyer, eh?"

"You see, sir--and that, too, without any Greek."

"Well, and what good is it to do you? To have a profession, Edward, is one thing; to get business, another!"

"Yes, sir--but I take it, the profession must be had first. One step is gained. That much is sure. The other, I trust, will follow in due season."

"True, but I still think that the bricklayer would make the more money."

"Were money-making, sir, the only object of life, perhaps, then, that would be the most desirable business; but--"

"Oh, I forgot--the talents, the talents are to be considered."

And after the utterance of this sneer, our dialogue as may be supposed, did not much longer continue.

I did not know of the contemplated visit of Mr. Edgerton to my worthy uncle, nor of its purpose, or I should, most assuredly, have put my veto upon the measure with all the tenacity of a resentful spirit; but this gentleman, who was a man of nice sensibility as well as strong good sense, readily comprehended a portion of my

secret history from what was known to him. He easily conceived that my uncle was somewhat of a niggard from the manner in which I had employed myself during my preparation for the bar. He thought, however, that my uncle, though unwilling to expend money in the prosecution of a scheme which he did not approve--now that the scheme was so far successful as to afford every promise of a reasonable harvest, could not do less than come forward to the assistance of one who had shown such a determined disposition to assist himself.

He was mistaken. He little knew the man. His interview with my uncle was a short one. The parties were already acquainted, though not intimately. They knew each other as persons of standing in the same community, and this made the opening of Mr. Edgerton's business easy. I state the tenor of the interview as it came to my knowledge afterward.

"Mr. Clifford," he said, "you have a nephew--a young gentleman, who has been recently admitted to the bar--Mr. Edward Clifford."

The reply, with a look of wonder was necessarily affirmative.

"I have had much pleasure," continued the other, "in knowing him for some time. He is an intimate of my eldest son, and from what has met my eyes, sir, I should say, you are fortunate in having a nephew of so much promise."

"Why, yes, sir, I believe he is a clever youth enough," was the costive answer.

"He is more than that, sir. I regard him, indeed, as a most astonishing young man. The very manner in which he has pursued his studies while engaged in the harassing labors of a large wholesale business house of this city--alone establishes this fact."

The cheeks of my uncle reddened. The last sentence of Mr. Edgerton was unfortunate for his object. It conveyed a tacit reproof, which the niggardly conscience of Mr. Clifford readily appropriated and, perhaps, anticipated. He dreaded lest Mr. Edgerton knew all.

"You are probably aware, Mr. Edgerton," he replied with equal hesitancy and haste--"you have heard that Edward Clifford is an orphan--that he has nothing, and it was therefore necessary that he should learn to employ himself; though it was against my wish, sir, that he went into a mercantile house."

There was something suppressed in this--a mean evasion--for he could not easily have told Mr. Edgerton, without a blush, that, instead of the mercantile establishment, he would have made me a bricklayer's hodman. But this, it seems, Edgerton had found out for himself. His reply, however, was calculated to soothe the jealous apprehensions of Mr. Clifford. He had an object in view, which he thought too important to risk for the small pleasure of a passing sarcasm.

"Perhaps, it has happened for the best, Mr. Clifford. You were right in requiring the young man to do for himself. Were I worth millions, sir, I should still prefer that my son should learn that lesson--that he should work out his own deliverance with the sweat of his own brow."

"I agree with you, sir, perfectly," replied the other, with increased complacency. "A boy learns to value his money as he should, only when he has earned it for himself."

"Ah! it is not for this object simply," replied Mr. Edgerton, "that I would have him acquire habits of industry; it is for the moral results which such habits produce--the firmness, character, consistency--the strength and independence--temperance, justice--all of which arise, and almost only, from obedience to this law. But it is clear that one can not do everything by himself, and this young man, though he has gone on in a manner that might shame the best of us, is still not so thoroughly independent as he fancies himself. It will be some time before he will be able to realize anything from his profession, and he will need some small assistance in the meantime."

"I can not help him," exclaimed Mr. Clifford, abruptly--"I have not the means to spare. My own family need everything that I can give. He has himself only to blame. He chose his profession for himself. I warned him against it. He needn't send to me."

"Do not mistake me, Mr. Clifford," said Mr. Edgerton, calmly. "Your nephew knows nothing of my present visit. I would be loath that he should know. It was the singular independence of his mind that led me to the conviction, that he would sooner die than ask assistance from anybody, that persuaded me to suggest to you in what manner you might afford him an almost necessary help, without offending his sensibility."

"Humph!" exclaimed the other, while a sneer mantled upon his lips. "You are very considerate, Mr. Edgerton; but the same sensibilities might prompt him to reject the assistance when tendered."

"No, sir," replied Edgerton, mildly--"I think I could manage that."

"I am sorry, sir, that I can not second your wishes in any material respect," was the answer of my uncle;--"but I will see Edward, and let him know that my house is open to him as it was from, the time he was four years old; and he shall have a seat at my table until he can establish himself more to his satisfaction; but money, sir, in truth, I have not a cent to spare. My own necessities--"

"Enough, sir," said Mr. Edgerton, mildly; "I take it for granted, Mr. Clifford, that if you could contribute to the success of your brother's son, you certainly would neither refuse nor refrain to do so."

"Oh, surely--certainly not," replied the other, hastily. "Anything that I could do--anything in reason, sir, I should be very happy to do, but--"

And then followed the usual rigmarole about "his own family," and "hard times," and "diminished resources," and all those stereotype commonplaces which are for ever on the lips of stereotype insincere people. Mr. Clifford did not perceive the dry and somewhat scornful inuendo, which lay at the bottom of Mr. Edgerton's seemingly innocent assumption; and the latter took his leave, vexed with himself at having made the unsuccessful application--but still more angry with the meanness of character which he had encountered in my uncle.

CHAPTER IV.

"She still soothed The mock of others."

It is not improbable that, after a few hours given to calm reflection, my uncle perceived how obnoxious he might be made to public censure for his narrow treatment of my claims; and the next day he sent for me in order to tender me the freedom of his house--a tender which he had made the day before to Mr. Edgerton in my behalf. But his offer had been already anticipated by that excellent friend that very day. Coming warm and fresh from his interview with my uncle, he called upon me, and in a very plain, direct, business-like, but yet kind and considerate manner, informed me that he stood very much in need of an assistant who would prepare his papers--did me the honor to say that he fancied I would suit him better than anybody else he knew, and offered me six hundred dollars for my labors in that capacity for the first year of my service. My engagement to him, he said at the same time, did not imply such entire employment as would incapacitate me for the execution of any business which might be intrusted to my hands individually. I was permitted the use of a desk in his office, and was also permitted to hang out my own banner from his window I readily persuaded myself that I could be of service to Mr. Edgerton--such service as would, perhaps, leave my obligation a light one--and promptly acceded to his offer. He had scarcely departed when a servant brought a note from Mr. Clifford. Even while meditating what he fancied was a favor, he could not forbear the usual sneer. The following was his communication:

"DEAR EDWARD: If you can spare a moment from your numerous clients, and are not in a great hurry to make your deposits, you will suffer me to see you at the office before two o'clock. Yours affectionately, J. B. CLIFFORD."

"Very affectionately!" exclaimed. It might be nothing more than a pleasantry which he intended by the offensive passages in his note; but the whole tenor of his character and conduct forbade this conviction.

"No! no!" I muttered to myself, as the doubt suggested itself to my mind; "no! no! it is the old insolence--the insolence of pride, of conscious wealth--of power, as he thinks, to crush! But he is mistaken. He shall find defiance. Let him but repeat those sarcasms and that sneer which are but too frequent on his lips when he speaks to me, and I will answer him, for the first time, by a narration which shall sting him to the very soul, if he has one!"

This resolution was scarcely made when the image of Julia Clifford--the sweet child--a child now no longer--the sweet woman--interposed, and my temper was subdued of its resolve, though its bitterness

remained unqualified.

And what of Julia Clifford? I have said but little of her for some time past, but she has not been forgotten. Far from it. She was still sufficiently the attraction that drew me to the dwelling of my selfish uncle. In the three years that I had been at the mercantile establishment, her progress, in mind and person, had been equally ravishing and rapid. She was no more the child, but the blooming girl--the delicate blossom swelling to the bud--the bud bursting into the flower--but the bloom, and the beauty, and the innocence--the rich tenderness, and the dewy sweet, still remained the same through all the stages of her progress from the infant to the woman. Wealth, and the arrogant example of those about her, had failed to change the naturally true and pure simplicity of her character. She was not to be beguiled by the one, nor misguided by the other, from the exquisite heart which was still worthy of Eden. When I was admitted to the bar at twenty-one, she was sixteen--the age in our southern country when a maiden looks her loveliest. But I had scarcely felt the changes in the last three years which had been going on in her. I beheld beauties added to beauties, charms to charms; and she seemed every day to be the possessor of fresh graces newly dropped from heaven; but there was no change. Increased perfection does not imply change, nor does it suffer it.

It was my custom, as the condescending wish of my uncle expressed, that I should take my Sunday dinner with his family. I complied with this request, and it was no hard matter to do so. But it was a sense of delight, not of duty, that made me comply; and, but for Julia, I feel certain that I should never have darkened the doors, which opened to admit me only through a sense of duty. But the attraction--scarcely known to myself--drew me with singular punctuality; and I associated the privilege which had been accorded me with another. I escorted the ladies to church; sometimes, too, when the business of my employers permitted, I spent an evening during the week with the family; and beholding Julia I was not over-anxious to perceive the indifference with which I was treated by all others.

But let me retrace my steps. I subdued my choler so far as to go, with a tolerable appearance of calmness if not humility, to the interview which my uncle had been pleased to solicit. I need not repeat in detail what passed between us. It amounted simply to a supercilious offer, on his part, of lodging and board, until I should be sufficiently independent to open the oyster for myself. I thanked him with respect and civility, but, to his surprise, declined to accept his offer.

"Why, what do you propose to do?" he demanded.

"Do what I have been doing for the three past years; work for myself, and pay my board from the proceeds of my own labor."

"What, you go back to the merchants, do you? You are wiser than I thought. The law would not give you your bread here for twenty years in this city."

"You are mistaken, uncle," I said, good humoredly--"it is from the law that I propose to get my bread."

"Indeed!--You are even more sanguine than I thought you. But, pray, upon what do you base your expectations?--the talents, I suppose."

I felt the rankling of this well-known and offensive sneer, but replied simply to the point:--

"No, sir, upon assurances which you will probably think far more worthy of respect. I have already been employed by Mr. Edgerton as an attorney, at a salary of six hundred dollars."

"Ah, indeed! Well, you are a fortunate fellow, I must say, to get such a helping hand at the outset. But you may want some small amount to begin with--you can not draw upon Mr. Edgerton before services are rendered, and if fifty or a hundred dollars, Edward--"

"I thank you, sir;--so far from wanting money, I should be almost able to lend some. I have saved some two hundred from my mercantile salary"

I enjoyed the ghastly grin which rose to his features. It was evident that he was not pleased that I should be independent. He had set out with the conviction, when my father died, that my support and education would devolve upon him, and though they did not, yet it was plain enough to me that he was not unwilling that such should be the impression of the community. I had disarmed him entirely by the simplest process, and, mortified at being disappointed, he was disposed to hate the youth who had baffled him. It was the strangest thing in the world that such should be the feeling of any man, and that, too, in reference to so near a relation; but the case is nevertheless true. I saw it in his looks that moment--I felt it in his accents. I KNEW that such was the real feeling in his soul. There are motives which grow from vanities, piques, rivalries, and the miserable ostentations of a small spirit, which act more terribly upon the passions of man, than even the desire of gain or the love of woman. The heart of Mr. Clifford, was, after its particular fashion, a blind heart, like my own.

"Well, I am glad you are so well off. You will dine with us on Sunday, I suppose?"

My affirmative was a matter of course; and, on Sunday, the evident gratification of Julia when she saw me, amply atoned for all her father's asperities and injustice. She had heard of my success--and though in a sneer from the lips of her father it was not the less productive of an evident delight to her. She met me with the expression of this delight upon all her features.

"I am so glad, so very glad, and so surprised, too, Cousin Edward, at your success. And yet you kept it all to yourself. You might have told ME, at least, that you were studying law. Why was it that I was never allowed to know of your intention?"

"Your father knew it, Julia."

"Yes, so he says now. He says you told him something about it when you first went into a store; but he did not think you in earnest."

"Not in earnest! He little knew me, Julia."

"But your telling him, Edward, was not telling me. Why did you not tell me?"

"You might not have kept my secret, Julia. You know what naughty things are said of your sex, touching your inability to keep a secret."

"Naughty things, indeed--naughty and untrue! I'm sure, I should have kept your secret, if you desired it. But why should it be a secret?"

"Why, indeed!" I muttered, as the shadow of my perverseness passed deeply over my heart. "Why, unless to protect myself from the sneers which would stifle my ambition, and the sarcasm which would have stung my heart,"

"But you have no fear of these from me, Cousin Edward," she said gently, and with dewy eyes, while her fingers slightly pressed upon my wrist.

"I know not that, Cousin Julia, I somehow suspect everything and everybody now. I feel very lonely in the world--as if there was a destiny at work to make my whole life one long conflict, which I must carry on without sympathy or succor."

"Oh, these are only notions, Edward."

"Notions!" I exclaimed, giving her a bitter smile as I spoke, while my thoughts reverted to the three years of unremitting and almost uncheered labor through which I had passed.

"Yes, notions only, Cousin Edward. You are full of such notions. You every now and then start up with a new one; and it makes you gloomy and discontented--"

"I make no complaints, Julia."

"No, that is the worst of it. You make no complaints, I think, because you do not wish to be cured of them. You prefer nursing your supposed cause of grief, with a sort of solitary pleasure--the gratification of a haughty spirit, that is too proud to seek for solace, and to find it."

Julia had in truth touched upon the true nature of my misanthropy --of that self vexing and self-torturing spirit which too effectually blinds the heart.

"But could I find it, Julia?" I asked, looking into her eyes with an expression which I began to feel was something very new to mine.

"Perhaps--I think--you could," was the half-tremulous answer, as she beheld the peculiar expression of my glance. The entrance of Mrs. Clifford, was, perhaps, for the first time, rather a relief to us both.

"And so you are a lawyer, Edward? Well, who would have thought of it? It must be a very easy thing to be made a lawyer."

Julia looked at me with eyes that reddened with vexation. I felt

my gorge rising; but when I reflected upon the ignorance, and the unworthy nature of the speaker, I overcame the disposition to retort, and smilingly replied:--

"It's not such hard work as bricklaying, certainly."

"Ah," she answered, "if it were only half so profitable. But Mr. Clifford says that a lawyer now is only another name for a beggar--a sort of genteel beggar. The town's overrun with them--half of them live upon their friends."

"I trust I shall not add to the number of this class, Mrs. Clifford."

"Oh, no! I know YOU never will, Cousin Edward," exclaimed Julia, with a flush upon her cheeks at her own temerity.

"Really, Julia," said her mother, "you are very confident. How do you know anything about it?"

The sharp glances of rebuke which accompanied this speech daunted the damsel for a moment, and her eyes were suddenly cast in confusion upon the ground; but she raised them with boldness a moment after, as she replied:--

"We have every assurance, mother, for what I say, in the fact that Cousin Edward has been supporting himself at another business, while actually pursuing the study of law for these three years; and that very pride about which father spoke today, is another assurance--"

"Bless my stars, child, you have grown very pert on a sudden, to talk about guaranties and assurances, just as if you was a lawyer yourself. The next thing we hear, I suppose, will be that instead of being busy over the 'Seven Champions' and the last fashions, you, too, will be turning over the leaves of big law-books, and carrying on such studies in secret to surprise a body, as if there was any merit or good in doing such things secretly."

Julia felt that she had only made bad worse, and she hung her head in silence. For my part, though I suppressed my choler, the pang was only the more keenly felt for the effort to hide it. In my secret soul, I asked, "Will the day never come when I, too, will be able to strike and sting?" I blushed an instant after, at the small and mean appetite for revenge that such an inquiry implied. But I came to the support of Julia.

"Let me say, Mrs. Clifford, that I think--nay, I know--that Julia is right in her conjecture. The guaranty which I have given to my friends, by the pride and industry which I have shown, should be sufficient to convince them what my conduct shall be hereafter. I know that I shall never trespass upon their feelings or their pockets. They shall neither blush for nor lose by their relationship with Edward Clifford."

"Well said! well spoken! with good emphasis and proper action. Forrest himself could scarce have done it better!"

Such was the exclamation of Mr. Clifford, who entered the room at this moment. His mock applause was accompanied by a clamorous clapping of his hands. I felt my cheeks burn, and my blood boil.

The truth is, I was not free from the consciousness that I had suffered some of the grandiloquent to appear in my manner while speaking the sentence which had provoked the ridicule of my uncle. The sarcasm acquired increase of sting in consequence of its being partially well-merited. I replied with some little show of temper, which the imploring glances of Julia did not altogether persuade me to suppress. The "blind heart" was growing stronger within me, from the increasing conviction of my own independence. In this sort of mimic warfare the day passed off as usual. I attended the family to church in the afternoon, took tea, and spent the evening with them--content to suffer the "stings and arrows"--however outrageous, of my exemplary and Christian aunt and uncle, if permitted to enjoy the presence and occasional smiles of the true angel, whose influence could still temper my feelings into a humane and patient toleration of influences which they yet burned to trample under foot.

CHAPTER V.

DEBUT.

A brief interval now passed over, after my connection begun with Mr. Edgerton, in which time the world went on with me more smoothly, perhaps, than ever. My patron--for so this gentleman deserves to be called--was as indulgent as I could wish. He soon discerned the weaknesses in my character, and with the judgment of an old practitioner, he knew how to subdue and soften, without seeming to perceive them. I need not say that I was as diligent and industrious, and not less studious, while in his employ, than I had been in that of my mercantile acquaintance. The entire toils of the desk soon fell upon my shoulders, and I acquired the reputation among my small circle of acquaintance, of being a very good attorney for a young beginner. It is true, I was greatly helped by the continued perusal of an admirable collection of old precedents, which a long period of extensive practice had accumulated in the collection of my friend. But to be an attorney, simply, was not the bound of my ambition. I fancied that the forum was, before all others, my true field of exertion. The ardency of my temper, the fluency of my speech, the promptness of my thought, and the warmth of my imagination, all conspired in impressing on me the belief that I was particularly fitted for the arena of public disputation. This, I may add, was the opinion of Mr. Edgerton also; and I soon sought an occasion for the display of my powers.

It was the custom at our bar--and a custom full of danger--for young beginners to take their cases from the criminal docket. Their "'prentice han'," was usually exercised on some wretch from the stews, just as the young surgeon is permitted to hack the carcass of a tenant of the "Paupers' Field," the better to prepare him for practice on living and more worthy victims. Was there a

rascal so notoriously given over to the gallows that no hope could possibly be entertained of his extrication from the toils of the evidence, and the deliberations of a jury, he was considered fair game for the young lawyers, who, on such cases, gathered about him with all the ghostly and keen propensities of vultures about the body of the horse cast out upon the commons.

The custom was evil, and is now, I believe, abandoned. It led to much irreverence among thoughtless young men--to an equal disregard of that solemnity which should naturally attach to the court of justice, and to the life of the prisoner arraigned before it. A thoughtless levity too frequently filled the mind of the young lawyer and his hearers, when it was known that the poor wretch on trial was simply regarded as an agent, through whose miserable necessity, the beginner was to try his strength and show his skill in the art of speech-making. It was my fortune, acting rather in compliance with the custom than my own preference, to select one of these victims and occasions for my debut. I could have done otherwise. Mr. Edgerton freely tendered to me any one of several cases of his own, on the civil docket, in which to make my appearance; but I was unwilling to try my hand upon a case in which the penalty of ill success might be a serious loss to my friend's client, and might operate to the injury of his business; and, another reason for my preference was to be found--though not expressed by me--in the secret belief which I entertained that I was peculiarly gifted with the art of appealing to the passions, and the sensibilities of my audience.

Having made my determination, I proceeded to prepare myself by a due consideration of the case at large; the history of the transaction, which involved the life of my client--(the allegation was for murder)--and of the testimony of the witnesses so far as it had been suggested in the *EX PARTE* examination before the grand jury. I reviewed the several leading principles on the subject of the crime; its character, the sort of evidence essential to conviction, and certainly, to do myself all justice, as effectually prepared myself for the duties of the trial as probably any young man of the time and community was likely to have done. The case, I need not add, was hopelessly against me; the testimony conclusive; and I had nothing to do but to weigh its character with keen examination, pick out and expose its defects and inconsistencies, and suggest as plausible a presumption in favor of the accused, as could be reasonably made out from the possibilities and doubts by which all human occurrences are necessarily attended. Something, too, might be done by judicious appeals to the principle of mercy, assuming for the jury a discretion on this subject which, by the way, they have no right to exercise.

I was joined in the case by my friend, young Edgerton. So far our boyish fortunes had run together, and he was not unwilling, though against his father's counsel, to take the same occasion with me for entering the world in company. The term began; the case was one of the last on the criminal docket, and the five days which preceded that assigned for the trial, were days, I am constrained to confess, of a thrilling and terrible agitation to my mind. I can scarcely now recall the feelings of that week without undergoing a partial return of the same painful sensations. My soul was striving as with itself, and seeking an outlet for escape. I panted, as if for breath--my tongue was parched--my lips clammy--my voice, in the

language of the poet, clove to the roof of my throat. Altogether, I have never felt such emotions either before or since.

I will not undertake to analyze them, or account for those conflicting sensations which make us shrink, with something like terror, from the very object which we desire. At length the day came, and the man; attended by his father, William Edgerton, and myself, took our places, and stood prepared for the issue. I looked round me with a dizzy feeling of uncertainty. Objects appeared to swim and tremble before my sight. My eyes were of as little service to me then as if they had been gazing to blindness upon the sun. Everything was confused and imperfect. I could see that the courthouse was filled to overflowing, and this increased my feebleness. The case was one that had occasioned considerable excitement in the community, it was one of no ordinary atrocity. This was a sufficient reason why the audience should be large. There was yet another. There were two new debutants. In a community where popular eloquence is, of all others, perhaps the most desirable talent, this circumstance was well calculated to bring many listeners. Besides, something was expected from both Edgerton and myself. We had not reached our present position without making for ourselves a little circle, in which we had friends to approve and exult, and enemies to depreciate, and condemn.

The proceedings were at length opened by the attorney-general, the witnesses examined, and turned over to us for cross-examination. This part of the duty was performed by my associate. The business fairly begun, my distraction was lessened. My mind, driven to a point, made a decisive stand; and the sound of Edgerton's voice, as he proposed his questions, served still more to dissipate my confusion. I furnished him with sundry questions, and our examination was admitted to be quite searching and acute. My friend went through his part of the labor with singular coolness. He was in little or no respect excited. He, perhaps, was deficient in enthusiasm. If there was no faltering in what he said, there was no fine phrensy. His remarks and utterance were subdued to the plainest demands of the subject. They were shrewd and sensible, not particularly ingenious, nor yet deficient in the proper analysis of the evidence. He acquitted himself creditably.

It was my part to reply to the prosecuting attorney; but when I rose, I was completely confounded. Never shall I forget the pang of that impotence which seemed to overspread my frame, and to paralyze every faculty of thought and speech. I was the victim to my own ardor. A terrible reaction of mind had taken place, and I was prostrated. The desire to achieve greatness--the belief that it was expected from me--the consciousness that hundreds of eyes were then looking into mine with hungry expectation, overwhelmed me! I felt that I could freely have yielded myself for burial beneath the floor on which I stood. My cheeks were burning, yet my hands were cold as ice, and my knees tottered as with an ague. I strove to speak, however; the eyes of the judge met mine, and they looked the language of encouragement--of pity. But this expression only increased my confusion. I stammered out nothing but broken syllables and incoherent sentences. What I was saying, I know not--how long I presented this melancholy spectacle of imbecility to the eyes of my audience, I know not. It may have been a few minutes only. To me it seemed an age; and I was just endued with a sufficient power of reflection to ask myself whether I had not better sit down at

once in irreversible despair, when my wandering and hitherto vacant eyes caught a glance—a single glance—of a face opposite.

It was that of my uncle! He was perched on one of the loftiest benches, conspicuous among the crowd—his eyes keenly fixed upon mine, and his features actually brightened by a smile of triumphant malice and exultation.

That glance restored me. That single smile brought me strength. I was timid, and weak, and impotent no longer. Under the presence of habitual scorn, my habitual pride and independence returned to me. The tremors left my limbs. The clammy huskiness which had loaded my tongue, and made it cleave to the roof of my mouth, instantly departed; and my whole mind returned to my control as if beneath the command of some almighty voice. I now saw the judge distinctly—I could see the distinct features of every juryman; and with the pride of my restored consciousness, I retorted the smile upon my uncle's face with one of contempt, which was not without its bitterness.

Then I spoke, and spoke with an intenseness, a directness of purpose and aim—a stern deliberateness—a fire and a feeling—which certainly electrified my hearers with surprise, if with no more elevated emotions. That one look of hostility had done more for my mind than could have been effected in my behalf by all the kind looks and encouraging voices of all the friends in creation.

After a brief exordium, containing some general proposition on the subject of human testimony, which meant no more than to suggest the propriety of giving to the prisoner the benefit of what was doubtful and obscure in the testimony which had been taken against him—I proceeded to compare and contrast its several parts. There were some inconsistencies in the evidence which enable me to make something of a case. The character of the witnesses was something more than doubtful and that, too, helped, in a slight degree, my argument. This was rapid, direct, closely wound together, and proved—such was the opinion freely expressed by others, afterward—that I had the capacity for consecutive arrangement of facts and inferences in a very remarkable degree. I closed with an appeal in favor of that erring nature, which, even in our own cases, led us hourly to the commission of sins and errors; and which, where the individual was poor, wretched, and a stranger, under the evil influences of destitution, vicious associations, and a lot in life, which, of necessity, must be low, might well persuade

us to look with an eye of qualified rebuke upon his offences.

This was, of course, no argument, and was only to be considered the natural close of my labors. Before I was half through I saw my uncle rise from his seat, and hastily leave the court-room; and then I knew that I was successful—that I had triumphed, through that stimulating influence of his hate, over my own fears and feebleness. I felt sure that the speech must be grateful to the rest of my hearers, which HE could not stay to hear; and in this conviction, the tone of my spirits became elevated—the thoughts gushed from me like rain, in a natural and unrestrainable torrent of language—my voice was clear and full, far more so than I had ever thought it could be made—and my action far more animated, perhaps, than either good taste or the occasion justified. The criminal was not acquitted; but both William Edgerton and myself

were judged to have been eminently successful.

The result of my debut, in other respects, was flattering far beyond my expectations. Business poured in upon me. My old employers, the merchants, were particularly encouraging and friendly. They congratulated me warmly on my success, assured me that they had always thought I was better calculated for the law than trade; and ended by putting into my hands all their accounts that needed a legal agency for collection. Mr. Edgerton was loud in his approbation, and that very week saw his son and myself united in co-partnership, with the prospect of an early withdrawal of the father from business in my favor. Indeed, the latter gave us to understand that his only purpose now was to see us fairly under way, with a sufficient knowledge of the practice, and assured of the confidence of his own friends, in order to give his years and enfeebled health a respite from the toils of the profession.

My worthy uncle, true to himself, played a very different part from these gentlemen. He hung back, forbore all words on the subject of my debut, and of the promising auspices under which my career was begun, and actually placed certain matters of legal business into the hands of another lawyer. Of this, he himself gave me the first information in very nearly this language:--

"I have just had to sue Yardle & Fellows, and a few others, Edward, and I thought of employing you, but you are young, and there may be some legal difficulties in the way:--but when you get older, and arrive at some experience, we will see what can be done for you."

"You are perfectly right, sir," was my only answer, but the smile upon my lips said everything. I saw, then, that HE COULD NOT SMILE. He was now exchanging the feeling of scorn which he formerly entertained for one of a darker quality. Hate was the necessary feeling which followed the conviction of his having done me wilful injustice--not to speak of the duties left undone, which were equally his shame.

There were several things to mortify him in my progress. His sagacity as a man of the world stood rebuked--his conduct as a gentleman--his blood as a relation, who had not striven for the welfare and good report of his kin, and who had suffered unworthy prejudices, the result of equal avarice and arrogance, to operate against him.

There is nothing which a base spirit remembers with so much malignant tenacity as your success in his despite. Even in the small matter just referred to, the appropriation of his law business, the observant fates gave me my revenge. By a singular coincidence of events, the very firm against which he had brought action the day before were clients of Mr. Edgerton. That gentleman was taken with a serious illness at the approach of the next court, and the business of their defence devolved upon his son and myself; and finally, when it was disposed of, which did not happen till near the close of that year, it so happened that I argued the case; and was successful.

Mr Clifford was baffled, and you may judge the feeling with which he now regarded me. He had long since ceased to jest with me and at my expense. He was now very respectful, and I could see that his dislike grew daily in strict degree with his deference. But the

deportment of Mr. Clifford--springing as it did from that devil, which each man is supposed to carry at times in his bosom, and of whose presence in mine at seasons I was far from unaware--gave me less annoyance than that of another of his household. Julia, too, had put on an aspect which, if not that of coldness, was at least, that of a very marked reserve. I ascribed this to the influence of her parents--perhaps, to her own sense of what was due to their obvious desires--to her own feeling of indifference--to any and every cause but the right one.

There were other circumstances to alarm me, in connection with this maiden. She was, as I have said, singularly beautiful; and, as I thought, until now, singularly meek and considerate. Her charms, about which there could be no two opinions, readily secured her numerous admirers, and when these were strengthened by the supposed fortune of which she was to be the heiress, the suitors were, some of them, almost as pressing, after the fashion of the world in which we lived, as those of Penelope. I now no longer secured her exclusive regard at the evening fireside or in our way to church. There were gallants on either hand--gay, dashing lads, with big whiskers, long locks, and smart ratans, upon whom madame, our lady-mother, looked with far more complacency than upon me. The course of Julia, herself, was, however, unexceptionable. She was singularly cautious in her deportment, and, if reserved to me, the most jealous scrutiny--after due reflection--never enabled me to discover that she was more lavish of her regards to any other. But the discovery of her position led me to another discovery which the reader will wonder, as I did myself, that I had not made before. This was the momentous discovery that my heart was irretrievably lost to her--that I loved her with all the intensity of a first passion, which, like every other passion in my heart, was absorbing during its prevalence. I could name my feelings to myself only when I perceived that such feelings were entertained by others;--only when I found that the prize, which I desired beyond all others, was likely to be borne away by strangers, did I know how much it was desirable to myself.

The discovery of this affection instantly produced its natural effects as well upon my deportment as upon my feelings; and that sleepless spirit of suspicion and doubt--that true creature and consequence of the habitual distrust which my treatment from boyhood had instilled into my mind--at once rose to strength and authority within me, and swayed me even as the blasts of November sway the bald tops of the slender trees which the gusts have already denuded of all foliage. The change in Julia's deportment, of which I have already spoken, increased the febrile fears and suspicions which filled my soul and overcame my judgment. She too--so I fancied--had learned to despise and dislike me, under the goading influences of her father's malice and her mother's silly prejudices. I jumped to the conclusion instantly, that I was bound to my self to assert my superiority, my pride and independence, in such a manner, as most effectually to satisfy all parties that their hate or love was equally a matter of indifference.

You may judge what my behavior was after this. For a time, at least, it was sufficiently unbecoming. The deportment of Julia grew more reserved than ever, and her looks more grave. There was a sadness evidently mingled with this gravity which, amid all the blindness of my heart, I could not help but see. She became sadder and

thinner every day; and there was a wo-begone listlessness about her looks and movements which began to give me pain and apprehension. I discovered, too after a while, that some apprehensions had also crept into the minds of her parents in respect to her health. Their looks were frequently addressed to her in evident anxiety. They restrained her exercises, watched the weather when she proposed to go abroad, strode in every way to keep her from fatigue and exposure; and, altogether, exhibited a degree of solicitude which at length had the effect of arousing mine.

Involuntarily, I approached her with more tenderness than my vexing spirit had recently permitted me to show; but I recoiled from the effects of my own attentions. I was vexed to perceive that my approaches occasioned a start, a flutter--a shrinking inward--as if my advance had been obtrusive, and my attempts at familiarity offensive.

I was then little schooled in the intricacies of the female heart. I little conjectured the origin of that seemingly paradoxical movement of the mind, which, in the case of one, sensitive and exquisitely delicate, prompts to flight from the very pursuit which it would yet invite; which dreads to be suspected of the secret which it yet most loves to cherish, and seeks to protect, by concealment, the feelings which it may not defend; even as the bird hides the little fledglings of its care from the hunter, whom it dare not attack.

Stupid, and worse than stupid, my blind heart saw nothing of this, and perverted what it saw. I construed the conduct of Julia into matter of offence, to be taken in high dudgeon and resolutely resented; and I drew myself up stiffly when she appeared, and by excess of ceremonious politeness only, avoided the reproach of brutality. Yet, even at such moments, I could see that there was a dewy reproach in her eyes, which should have humbled me, and made me penitent. But the effects of fifteen years of injudicious management were not to be dissipated in a few days even by the Ithuriel spells of love. My sense of independence and self-resource had been stimulated to a diseased excess, until, constantly on the QUI VIVE, it became dogged and inflexible. It was a work of time to soften me and make me relent; and the labor then was one of my own secret thoughts, and unbiased private decision. The attempt to persuade or reason me into a conviction was sure to be a failure.

Months passed in this manner without effecting any serious change in Julia, or in bringing us a step nearer to one another. Meanwhile, the sphere of my observation and importance increased, as the circle of my acquaintance became extended. I was regarded as a rising young man, and one likely to be successful ultimately in my profession. The social privileges of my friends, the Edgertons, necessarily became mine; and it soon occurred that I encountered my uncle and his family in circles in which it was somewhat a matter of pride with him to be permitted to move. This, as it increased my importance in his sight, did not diminish his pains. But he treated me now with constant deference, though with the same unvarying coldness. When in the presence of others, he warmed a little. I was then "his nephew;" and he would affect to speak with great familiarity on the subject of my business, my interests, the last case in which I was engaged, and so forth--the object of which was to persuade third persons that our relations were precisely as they

should be, and as people would naturally suppose them.

At all these places and periods, when it was my lot to meet with Julia, she was most usually the belle of the night. A dozen attendants followed in her train, solicitous of all her smiles, and only studious how to afford her pleasure. I, only, stood aloof--I, who loved her with a more intense fervor than all, simply because I had none, or few besides to love. The heart which has been evermore denied, will always burn with this intensity. Its passion, once enkindled, will be the all-absorbing flame. Devoted itself, it exacts the most religious devotion; and, unless it receives it, recoils upon its own resources, and shrouds itself in gloom, simply to hide its sufferings from detection.

I affected that indifference to the charms of this maiden, which no one of human sensibilities could have felt. Opinions might have differed in respect to her beauty; but there could be none on the score of her virtues and her amiability, and almost as few on the possessions of her mind. Julia Clifford, though singularly unobtrusive in society, very soon convinced all around her that she had an excellent understanding, which study had improved, and grace had adorned by all the most appropriate modes of cultivation. Her steps were always followed by a crowd--her seat invariably encircled by a group to itself. I looked on at a distance, wrapped up in the impenetrable folds of a pride, whose sleeves were momentarily plucked, as I watched, by the nervous fingers of jealousy and suspicion. Sometimes I caught a timid glance of her eye, addressed to the spot where I stood, full of inquiry, and, as I could not but believe, of apprehension;--and yet, at such moments; I turned perversely from the spot, nor suffered myself to steal another look at one, all of whose triumphs seemed made at my expense.

On one of these occasions we met--our eyes and hands, accidentally; and, though I, myself, could not help starting back with a cold chill at my heart, I yet fancied there was something monstrous insulting in the evident recoil of her person from the contact with mine, at the same moment. I was about to turn hurriedly away with a slight bow of acknowledgment, when the touching tenderness of her glance, so full of sweetness and sadness, made me shrink with shame from such a rudeness. Besides, she was so pale, so thin, and really looked so unwell, that my conscience, in spite of that blind heart whose perversity would still have kept me to my first intention, rebuked me, and drove me to my duty. I approached--I spoke to her--and my words, though few, under the better impulses of the moment, were gentle and solicitous, as they should have been. My tones, too, were softened:--wifely as I still felt, I could not forbear the exercise of that better ministry of the affections which was disposed to make amends for previous misconduct. I do not know exactly what I said--I probably did nothing more than utter the ordinary phrases of social compliment;--but everything was obliterated from my mind in an instant, by the startling directness of what was said by her. Looking at me with a degree of intentness by which, alone, she was, perhaps, able to preserve her seeming calmness, she replied by an inquiry as remote from what my observation called for as possible, yet how applicable to me and my conduct!

"Why do you treat me thus, Edward? Why do you neglect me as you do--as if I were a stranger, or, at least, not a friend? What have I done to merit this usage from one who--"

She did not finish the sentence, but her reproachful eyes, full of a dewy suffusion that seemed very much like tears, appeared to conclude it thus--

"One who--used to love me!"

So different was this speech from any that I looked for--so different from what the usage of our conventional world would have seemed to justify--so strange for one so timid, so silent usually on the subject of her own griefs, as Julia Clifford--that I was absolutely confounded. Where had she got this courage? By what strong feeling had it been stimulated? Had I been at that time as well acquainted with the sex as I have grown since, I must have seen that nothing but a deep interest in my conduct and regard, could possibly have prompted the spirit of one so gentle and shrinking, to the utterance of so searching an appeal. And in what way could I answer it? How could I excuse myself? What say, to justify that cold, rude indifference to a relative, and one who had ever been gentle and kind and true to me. I had really nothing to complain of. The vexing jealousies of my own suspicious heart had alone informed it to its perversion; and there I stood--dumb, confused, stupid-speaking, when I did speak, some incoherent, meaningless sentences, which could no more have been understood by her than they can now be remembered by me. I recovered myself, however, sufficiently soon to say, before we were separated by the movements of the crowd:-

"I will come to you to-morrow, Julia. Will you suffer me to see you in the morning, say at twelve?"

"Yes, come!" was all her answer; and the next moment the harsh accents of her ever-watchful mother warned us to risk no more.

CHAPTER VI.

DENIAL AND DEFEAT.

My sleep that night was anything but satisfactory. I had feverish dreams, unquiet slumbers, and woke at morning with an excruciating headache. I was in no mood for an explanation such as my promise necessarily implied, but I prepared my toilet with particular care--spent two hours at my office in a vain endeavor to divert myself, by a resort to business, from the conflicting and annoying sensations which afflicted me, and then proceeded to the dwelling of my uncle.

I was fortunate in seeing Julia without the presence of her mother. That good lady had become too fashionable to suffer herself to be seen at so early an hour. Her vanity, in this respect, baffled her vigilance, for she had her own apprehensions on the score of

my influence upon her daughter. Julia was scarcely so composed in the morning as she had appeared on the preceding night. I was now fully conscious of a flutter in her manner, a flush upon her face, an ill-suppressed apprehension in her eyes, which betokened strong emotions actively at work. But my own agitation did not suffer me to know the full extent of hers. For the first time, on her appearance, did I ask myself the question--"For what did I seek this interview?" What had I to say--what near? How explain my conduct--my coldness? On what imaginary and unsubstantial premises base the neglect in my deportment, amounting to rudeness, of which she had sufficient reason and a just right to complain? When I came to review my causes of vexation, how trivial did they seem. The reserve which had irritated me, on her part, now that I analyzed its sources, seemed a very natural reserve, such as was only maidenly and becoming. I now recollected that she was no longer a child--no longer the lively little fairy whom I could dandle on my knee and fling upon my shoulder, without a scruple or complaint. I stood like a trembling culprit in her presence. I was eloquent only through the force of a stricken conscience.

"Julia!" I exclaimed when we met, "I have come to make atonement. I feel how rude I have been, but that was only because I was very wretched."

"Wretched, Edward!" she exclaimed with some surprise. "What should make you wretched?"

"You--you have made me wretched."

"Me!" Her surprise naturally increased

"Yes, you, dear Julia, and you only."

I took her hand in mine. Mine was burning--hers was colder than the icicles. Need I say more to those who comprehend the mysteries of the youthful heart. Need I say that the tongue once loosed, and the declaration of the soul must follow in a rush from the lips. I told her how much I loved her;--how unhappy it made me to think that others might bear away the prize; that, in this way, my rudeness arose from my wretchedness, and my wretchedness only from my love. I did not speak in vain. She confessed an equal feeling, and we were suffered a brief hour of unmitigated happiness together.

Surely there is no joy like that which the heart feels in the first moment when it gives utterance to its own, and hears the avowed passion of the desired object:--a pure flame, the child of sentiment, just blushing with the hues of passion, just budding with the breath and bloom of life. No sin has touched the sentiment;--no gross smokes have risen to involve and obscure the flame; the altar is tended by pure hands; white spirits; and there is no reptile beneath the fresh blossoming flowers which are laid thereon. The grosser passions sleep, like the fumes at the shrine of Apollo, beneath the spell of that master passion in whose presence they can only maintain a subordinate existence. I loved; I had told my love;--and I was loved in return. I trembled with the deep intoxication of that bewildering moment; and how I found my way back to my office--whom I saw on the way, or to whom I spoke, I know not. I loved;--I was beloved. He only can conceive the delirium of this sweet knowledge who has passed a life like mine--who has felt

the frowns and the scorn, and the contempt of those who should have nurtured him with smiles--whose soul, ardent and sensitive, has been made to recoil cheerlessly back on itself--denied the sunshine of the affections, and almost forbade to hope. Suddenly, when I believed myself most destitute, I had awakened to fortune--to the realization of desires which were beyond my fondest dreams. I, whom no affection hitherto had blessed, had, in a moment, acquired that which seemed to me to comprise all others, and for which all others might have been profitably thrown away.

I fancied now that henceforth my sky was to be without a cloud. I did not--nor did Julia imagine for a moment that any opposition to our love could arise from her parents. What reason now could they have to oppose it? There was no inequality in our social positions. My blood had taken its rise from the same fountains with her own. In the world's estimation my rank was quite as respectable as that of any in my uncle's circle, and, for my condition, my resources, though small, were improving daily, and I had already attained such a place among my professional brethren, as to leave it no longer doubtful that it must continue to improve. My income, with economy--such economy as two simple, single-minded creatures, like Julia and myself, were willing to employ--would already yield us a decent support. In short, the idea of my uncle's opposition to the match never once entered my head. Yet he did oppose it. I was confounded with his blunt, and almost rugged refusal.

"Why, sir, what are your objections?"

He answered with sufficient coolness.

"I am sorry to refuse you, Edward, but I have already formed other arrangements for my daughter. I have designed her for another."

"Indeed, sir--may I ask with whom?"

"Young Roberts--his father and myself have had the matter for some time in deliberation. But do not speak of it, Edward--my confidence in you, alone, induces me to state this fact."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir;--but you do not surely mean to force young Roberts upon Julia, if she is unwilling?"

"Ah, she will not be unwilling. She's a dutiful child, who will readily recognise the desires of her parents as the truest wisdom."

"But, Mr. Clifford--you forget that Julia has already admitted to me a preference--"

"So you tell me, Edward, and it is with regret that I feel myself compelled to say that I wholly disapprove of your seeking my daughter's consent, before you first thought proper to obtain mine.

This seems to me very much like an abuse of confidence."

"Really, sir, you surprise me more than ever. Now that you force me to speak, let me say that, regarding myself as of blood scarcely inferior to that of my cousin, I can not see how the privilege of which I availed myself in proposing for her hand, can be construed into a breach of confidence. I trust, sir, that you have not

contemplated your brother's son in any degrading or unbecoming attitude."

"No, no, surely not, Edward; but mere equality of birth does not constitute a just claim, by itself, to the affections of a lady."

"I trust the equality of birth, sir, is not impaired on my part by misconduct--by a want of industry, capacity--by inequalities in other respects--"

"And talents!"

He finished the sentence with the ancient sneer. But I was now a man--a strong one, and, at this moment particularly a stern one.

"Stop, sir," I retorted; "there must be an end to this. Whether you accede to my application or not, sir, there is nothing to justify you in an attempt to goad and mortify my feelings. I have proffered to you a respectful application for the hand of your daughter, and though I were poorer, and humbler, and less worthy in all respects than I am, I should still be entitled to respectful treatment. At another time, with my sensibilities less deeply interested than they are, I should probably submit, as I have already frequently submitted, to the unkind and ungenerous sarcasms in which you have permitted yourself to indulge at my expense. But my regard for your daughter alone would prompt me to resent and repel them now. The object of my interview with you is quite too sacred--too solemnly invested--to suffer me to stand silently under the scornful usage even of her father."

All this may have been deserved by Mr. Clifford, but it was scarcely discreet in me. It gave him the opportunity which, I do not doubt, he desired--the occasion which he had in view. It afforded him an excuse for anger, for a regular outbreak between us, which, in some sort, yielded him that justification for his refusal, without which he would have found it a very difficult matter to account for or excuse. We parted in mutual anger, the effect of which was to close his doors against me, and exclude me from all opportunities of interview with Julia, unless by stealth. Even then, these opportunities were secured by my artifice, without her privity. As dutiful as fond, she urged me against them; and, resolute to "honor her father and mother" in obedience to those holy laws without a compliance with which there is little hope and no happiness, she informed me with many tears that she was now forbidden to see me, and would therefore avoid every premeditated arrangement for our meeting. I did not do justice to her character, but reproached her with coldness--with a want of affection, sensibility, and feeling.

"Do not say so, Edward--do not--do not! I cold--I insensible--I wanting in affection for you! How, how can you think so?" And she threw herself on my bosom and sobbed until I began to fancy that convulsions would follow.

We separated, finally, with assurances of mutual fidelity--assurances which, I knew, from the exclusiveness of all my feelings, my concentrative singleness of character, and entire dependence upon the beloved object of those affections which were now the sole solace of my heart, would not be difficult for me to keep. But I doubted HER strength--HER resolution--against the pressing solicitations

of parents whom she had never been accustomed to withstand. But she quieted me with that singular earnestness of look and manner which had once before impressed me previous to our mutual explanation. Like vulgar thinkers generally, I was apt to confound weakness of frame and delicacy of organization with a want of courage and moral resources of strength and consolation.

"Fear nothing for my truth, Edward. Though, in obedience to my parents, I shall not marry against their will, be sure I shall never marry against my own."

"Ah, Julia, you think so, but--"

"I know so, Edward. Believe nothing that you hear against me or of me, which is unfavorable to my fidelity, until you hear it from my own lips."

"But you will meet me again--soon?"

"No, no, do not ask it, Edward. We must not meet in this manner. It is not right. It is criminal."

I had soon another proof of the decisive manner in which my uncle seemed disposed to carry on the war between us. Erring, like the greater number of our young men, in their ambitious desire to enter public life prematurely, I was easily persuaded to become a candidate for the general assembly. I was now just twenty-five--at a time when young men are not yet released from the bias of early associations, and the unavoidable influence of guides, who are generally blind guides. Until thirty, there are few men who think independently; and, until this habit is acquired--which, in too many cases, never is acquired--the individual is sadly out of place in the halls of legislation. It is this premature disposition to enter into public life, which is the sole origin of the numberless mistakes and miserable inconsistencies into which our statesmen fall; which cling to their progress for ever after, preventing their performances, and baffling them in all their hopes to secure the confidence of the people. They are broken-down political hacks in the prime of life, and just at the time when they should be first entering upon the duties of the public man. Seduced, like the rest, as well by my own vanity as the suggestions of favoring friends, I permitted my name to be announced, and engaged actively in the canvass. Perhaps the feverish state of my mind, in consequence of my relations with Julia Clifford and her parents, made me more willing to adopt a measure, about which, at any other time, I should have been singularly slow and cautious. As a man of proud, reserved, and suspicious temper, I had little or no confidence in my own strength with the people; and defeat would be more mortifying than success grateful to a person of my pride. I fancied, however, that popular life would somewhat subdue the consuming passions which were rioting within my bosom; and I threw myself into the thick of the struggle with all the ardor of a sanguine temperament.

To my surprise and increased vexation, I found my worthy uncle striving in every possible way, without actually declaring his purpose, in opposing my efforts and prospects. It is true he did not utter my name; but he had formed a complete ticket, in which my name was not; and he was toiling with all the industry of a thoroughgoing partisan in promoting its success. The cup which he

had commended to my lips was overrunning with the gall of bitterness. Hostility to me seemed really to have been a sort of monomania with him from the first. How else was this canton procedure to be accounted for? how, even with this belief, could it be excused? His conduct was certainly one of those mysteries of idiosyncrasy upon which the moral philosopher may speculate to doomsday without being a jot the wiser.

If his desire was to baffle me, he was successful. I was defeated, after a close struggle, by a meagre majority of seven votes in some seventeen hundred; and the night after the election was declared, he gave a ball in honor of the successful candidates, in which his house was filled to overflowing. I passed the dwelling about midnight. Music rang from the illuminated parlor. The merry dance proceeded. All was life, gayety, and rich profusion. And Julia! even then she might have been whirling in the capricious movements of the dance with my happy rival--she as happy--unconscious of him who glided like some angry spectre beneath her windows, and almost within hearing of her thoughtless voice.

Such were my gloomy thoughts--such the dark and dismal subjects of my lonely meditations. I did the poor girl wrong. That night she neither sung nor danced; and when I saw her again, I was shocked at the visible alteration for the worse which her appearance exhibited. She was now grown thin, almost to meagreness; her cheeks were very wan, her lips whitened, and her beauty greatly faded in consequence of her suffering health.

Yet, will it be believed that, in that interview, though such was her obvious condition, my perverse spirit found the language of complaint and suspicion more easy than that of devotion and tenderness. I know that it would be easy, and feel that it would be natural, to account for and to excuse this brutality, by a reference to those provocations which I had received from her father. A warm temper, ardent and glowing, it is very safe to imagine, must reasonably become soured and perverse by bad treatment and continual injury. But this for me was no excuse. Julia was a victim also of the same treatment, and in far greater degree than myself, as she was far less able to endure it. Mine, however, was the perverseness of impetuous blood--unrestrained, unchecked--having a fearful will, an impetuous energy, and, gradually, with success and power, swelling to the assertion of its own unqualified dominion--the despotism of the blind heart.

Julia bore my reproaches until I was ashamed of them. Her submission stung me, and I loved then too ardently not to arrive in time at justice, and to make atonement. Would I had made it sooner! When I had finished all my reproaches and complainings, she answered all by telling me that the affair with young Roberts had been just closed, and she hoped finally, by her unqualified rejection of his suit, even though backed by all her father's solicitations, complaints, nay, threats and anger. How ungenerous and unmanly, after this statement had been made, appeared all the bitter eludings in which I had indulged! I need not say what efforts I made to atone for my precipitation and injustice; and how easily I found forgiveness from one who knew not how to harbor unkindness--and if she even had the feeling in her bosom, entertained it as one entertains his deadliest foe, and expelled it as soon as its real character was discovered.

CHAPTER VII.

TEMPTATION.

Thus stood the affair between my fair cousin and myself--a condition of things seriously and equally affecting her health and my temper--when an explosion took place, of a nature calculated to humble my uncle and myself, if not in equal degree, or to the same attitude, at least to a most mortifying extent in both cases. I have not stated before--indeed, it was not until the affair which I am now about to relate had actually exploded, that I was made acquainted with any of the facts which produced it--that, prior to my father's death, there had been some large business connections between himself and my uncle. In those days secret connections in business, however dangerous they might be in social, and more than equivocal in moral respects, were considered among the legitimate practices of tradesmen. What was the particular sort of relations existing between my father and uncle, I am not now prepared to state, nor is it absolutely necessary to my narrative. It is enough for me to say that an exposure of them took place, in part, in consequence of some discovery made by my father's unsatisfied creditors, by which the obscure transactions of thirty years were brought to light, or required to be brought to light; and in the development of which, the fair business fame of my uncle was likely to be involved in a very serious degree--not to speak of the inevitable effects upon his resources of a discovery and proof of fraudulent concealment. The reputation of my father must have suffered seriously, had it not been generally known that he left nothing--a fact beyond dispute from the history of my own career, in which neither goods nor chattels, lands nor money, were suffered to enure to my advantage.

The business was brought to me. The merchant who brought it, and who had been busy for some years in tracing out the testimony, so far as it could be procured, gave me to understand that he had determined to place it in my hands for two reasons: firstly, to enable me to release the memory of my father from the imputation--under any circumstances discreditable--of bankruptcy, by compelling my uncle to disgorge the sums which he had appropriated, and which, as was alleged, would satisfy all my father's creditors; and, secondly, to give me an opportunity of revenging my own wrongs upon one, of whose course of conduct toward me the populace had already seen enough, during the last election, to have a tolerably correct idea.

I examined the papers, thanked my client for his friendly intentions, but declined taking charge of the case for two other reasons. My relations to the dead and to the living were either of them sufficient reasons for this determination. I communicated the grounds of action, in a respectful letter, to my uncle, and soon discovered,

by the alarm which he displayed in consequence, that the cause of the complaint was in all probability good. The case belonged to the equity jurisdiction, and the relator soon filed his bill.

My uncle's tribulation may be conjectured from the fact that he called upon me, and seemed anxious enough to bury the hatchet. He wished me to take part in the proceedings--insisted, somewhat earnestly, and strove very hard to impress me with the conviction that my father's memory demanded that I should devote myself to the task of meeting and confounding the creditor who thus, as it were, had set to work to rake up the ashes of the dead; but I answered all this very briefly and very dryly:--

"If my father has participated in this fraud, he has reaped none of its pleasant fruits. He lived poor, and died poor. The public know that; and it will be difficult to persuade them, with a due knowledge of these facts, that he deliberately perpetrated such unprofitable villany. Besides, sir, you do not seem to remember that, if the claim of Banks, Tressell, & Sons, is good, it relieves my father's memory of the only imputation that now lies against it--that of being a bankrupt."

"Ay !" he cried hoarsely, "but it makes me one--me, your uncle."

"And what reason, sir, have I to remember or to heed this relationship?" I demanded sternly, with a glance beneath which he quailed.

"True, true, Edward, your reproach is a just one. I have not been the friend I should have been; but--let us be friends, now, and hereafter--we must be friends. Mrs. Clifford is very anxious that it should be so--and--and--Edward," solemnly, "you must help me out of this business. You must, by Heaven, you must--if you would not have me blow my brains out!"

The man was giving true utterance to his misery--the fruit of those pregnant fears which filled his mind.

"I would do for you, sir, whatever is proper for me to do, but can not meddle in this unless you are prepared to make restitution, which I should judge to be your best course."

"How can you advise me to beggar my child? This claim, if recognised, will sweep everything. The interest alone is a fortune. I can not think of allowing it. I would rather die!"

"This is mere madness, Mr. Clifford; your death would not lessen the difficulty. Hear me, sir, and face the matter manfully. You must do justice. If what I understand be true, you have most unfortunately suffered yourself to be blinded to the dishonor of the act which you have committed; you have appropriated wealth which did not belong to you, and, in thus doing, you have subjected the memory of my father to the reproach of injustice which he did not deserve. I will not add the reproach which I might with justice add, that, in thus wronging the father's memory, and making it cover your own improper gains, you have suffered his son to want those necessaries of education and sustenance, which--"

"Say no more, Edward, and it shall all be amended. Listen to me now; but stay--close that door for a moment--there!--Now, look

you."

And, having taken these precautionary steps, the infatuated man proceeded to admit the dishonest practices of which he had been guilty. His object in making the confession, however, was not that he might make reparation. Far from it. It was rather to save from the clutch of his creditors, from the grasp of justice, his ill-gotten possessions. I have no patience in revealing the schemes by which this was to be effected; but, as a preliminary, I was to be made the proprietor of one half of the sum in question, and the possessor of his daughter's hand; in return for which I was simply to share with him in the performance of certain secret acts, which, without rendering his virtue any more conspicuous, would have most effectually eradicated all of mine.

"I have listened to you, Mr. Clifford, and with great difficulty. I now distinctly decline your proposals. Not even the bribe, so precious in my sight, as that which you have tendered in the person of your daughter, has power to tempt me into hesitation. I will have nothing to do with you in this matter. Restore the property to your creditors."

"But, Edward, you have not heard;--your share alone will be twenty odd thousand dollars, without naming the interest!"

"Mr. Clifford, I am sorry for you. Doubly sorry that you persist in seeing this thing in an improper light. Even were I disposed to second your designs, it is scarcely possible, sir, that you could be extricated. The discovery of those papers, and the extreme probability that Hansford, the partner of the English firm of Davis, Pierce, & Hansford, is surviving, and can be found, makes the probabilities strongly against you. My advice to you, is, that you make a merit of necessity;--that you endeavor to effect a compromise before the affair has gone too far. The creditors will make some concessions sooner than trust the uncertainties of a legal investigation, and whether you lose or gain, a legal investigation is what you should particularly desire to avoid. If you will adopt this counsel, I will act for you with Banks & Tressel: and if you will give me carte blanche, I think I can persuade them to a private arrangement by which they will receive the principal in liquidation of all demands. This may be considered a very fair basis for an arrangement, since the results of the speculation could only accrue from the business capacities of the speculator, and did not belong to a fund which the proprietor had resolved not to appropriate, and which must therefore, have been entirely unproductive. I do not promise you that they will accept, but it is not improbable. They are men of business--they need, at this moment, particularly, an active capital; and have had too much knowledge of the doubts and delays attending a prolonged suit in equity, not to listen to a proposition which yields them the entire principal of their claim."

I need not repeat the arguments and entreaties by which I succeeded in persuading my uncle to accede to the only arrangement which could possibly have rescued him from the public exposure which was impending; but he did consent, and, armed with his credentials, I proceeded to the office of Banks & Tressell, without loss of time.

Though resolved, if I could effect the matter, that my uncle should liquidate their claim to the uttermost farthing which they

required, it was my duty to make the best bargain which I could, in reference to his unfortunate family. Accordingly, without suffering them to know that I had carte blanche, I simply communicated to them my wish to have the matter arranged without public investigation--that I was persuaded from a hasty review which I had given to the case, that there were good grounds for action;--but, at the same time, I dwelt upon the casualties of such a course--the possibility that the chief living witness--if he were living--might not be found, or might not survive long enough--as he was reputed to be very old--for the purposes of examination before the commission;--the long delays which belonged to a litigated suit, in which the details of a mixed foreign and domestic business of so many years was to be raked up, reviewed and explained; and the further chances, in the event of final success, of the property of the debtor being so covered, concealed, or made away with, as to baffle at last all the industry and labors of the creditor.

The merchants were men of good sense, and estimated the proverb--"a bird in hand is worth two in the bush"--at its true value. It did not require much argument to persuade them to receive a sum of over forty thousand dollars, and give a full discharge to the defendant; and I flattered myself that the matter was all satisfactorily arranged, and had just taken a seat at my table to write to Mr. Clifford to this effect, when, to my horror, I receive a note from that gentleman, informing me of his resolve to join issue with the claimants, and "maintain his RIGHTS(?) to the last moment." He thanked me, in very cold consequential style, for my "FRIENDLY efforts"--the words italicised, as I have now written it;--but conduced with informing me that he had taken the opinion of older counsel, which, though it might be less correct than mine, was, perhaps, more full of promise for his interests.

This note justified me in calling upon the unfortunate gentleman. It is true I had not committed him to Banks & Tressell--the suggestions which I had made for the arrangement were all proposed as a something which I might be able to bring about in a future conference with him--but I was too anxious to save him from his lamentable folly--from that miserable love of money, which, overreaching itself in its blindness, as does every passion--was not only about to deliver him to shame but to destitution also.

I found him in Mrs. Clifford's presence. That simple and silly woman had evidently been made privy to the whole transaction, so far as my arguments had been connected with it;--for ALL the truth is not often to be got out of the man who means or has perpetrated a dishonesty. She had been alarmed at the immense loss of money, and consequently of importance, with which the family was threatened; and without looking into, or being able to comprehend the facts as they stood, she had taken around against any measure which should involve such a sacrifice. Her influence over the weak man beside her, was never so clear to me as now; and in learning to despise his character more than ever, I discovered, at the same time, the true source of many of his errors and much of his misconduct. She did not often suffer him to reply for himself--yielded me the ultimatum from her own lips; and condescended to assure me that she could only ascribe the advice which I had given to her husband, to the hostile disposition which I had always entertained for herself and family. That I was "a wolf in sheep's clothing, SHE had long since been able to see, though all others unhappily seemed blind."

Here she scowled at her husband, who contented himself with walking to and fro, playing with his coatskirts, and feeling, no doubt, a portion of the shame which his miserable bondage to this silly woman necessarily incurred.

"Mr. Clifford has got a lawyer who can do for him what it seems you can not," was her additional observation. "He promises to get him to dry land, and save him without so much as wetting his shoes, though his own blood relations, who are thought so smart, can not, it appears, do anything."

Of course I could have nothing to say to the worthy lady, but my expostulations were freely urged to Mr. Clifford.

"You, at least," said I, "should know the risks which you incur by this obstinacy. Mrs. Clifford can not be expected to know; and I now warn you, sir, that the case of Banks & Tressell is a very strong one, very well arranged, and so admirably hung together, in its several links of testimony, that even the absence of old Hansford (the chief witness), should his answers never be obtained, would scarcely impair the integrity of the evidence. In a purely moral point of view, nothing can be more complete than it is now."

"Well, and who would it convict, Mr. Edward Clifford?" exclaimed the inveterate lady, anticipating her husband's answer with accustomed interference; "who would it convict, if not your own father? It was as much his business as my husband's; and if there's any shame, I'm sure his memory and his son will have to bear their share of it; and this makes it so much more wonderful to me that you should take sides against Mr. Clifford, instead of standing up in his defence."

"I would save him, madam, if you and he would let me," I exclaimed with some indignation. "Your reference to my father's share in this transaction does not affect me, as it is very evident that you are not altogether acquainted with the true part which he had in it. He had all the risk, all the loss, all the blame--and your husband all the profit, all the importance. He lived poor, and died so; without a knowledge of those profitable results to his brother of which the latter has made his own avails by leaving my father's memory to aspersion which he did not deserve, and his son to destitution and reproach which he merited as little. My father's memory is liable to no reproach when every creditor knows that he died in a state of poverty, in which his only son has ever lived. Neither he nor I ever shared any of the pleasant fruits, for which we are yet to be made accountable."

"And whose fault was it that you didn't get your share I'm sure Mr. Clifford made you as handsome an offer yesterday as any man could desire. Didn't he offer you half? But I suppose nothing short of the whole would satisfy so ambitious a person."

"Neither the half nor the whole will serve me, madam, in such a business. My respect for your husband and his family would, of itself, have been sufficient to prevent my acceptance of his offer."

"But there was Julia, too, Edward!" said Mr. Clifford, approaching me with a most insinuating smile.

"It is not yet too late," said Mrs. Clifford, unbending a little.
"Take the offer of Mr. Clifford, Edward, and be one of us; and then this ugly business--"

"Yes, my dear Edward, even now, though I have spoken with young Perkins about the affair, and he tells me there's nothing so much to be afraid of, yet, for the look of the thing, I'd rather that you should be seen acting in the business. As it's so well known that your father had nothing, and you nothing, it'll then be easy for the people to believe that nothing was the gain of any of us; and--and--"

"Young Perkins may think and say what he pleases, and you are yourself capable of judging how much respect you may pay to his opinion. Mine, however, remains unchanged. You will have to pay this money--nay, this necessity will not come alone. The development of all the particulars connected with the transaction will disgrace you for ever, and drive you from the community. Even were I to take part with you, I do not see that it would change the aspect of affairs. So far from your sharing with me the reputation of being profitless in the affair, the public would more naturally suspect that I had shared with you--now, if not before--and the whole amount involved would not seduce me to incur this imputation."

"But my daughter--Julia--"

"Do not speak of her in this connection, I implore you, Mr. Clifford. Let her name remain pure, uncontaminated by any considerations, whether of mere gain or of the fraud which the gain is supposed to involve. Freely would I give the sum in question, were it mine, and all the wealth besides that I ever expect to acquire, to make Julia Clifford my wife;--but I can not suffer myself, in such a case as this, to accept her as a bribe, and to sanction crime. Nay, I am sure that she too would be the first to object."

"And so you really refuse? Well, the world's coming to a pretty pass. But I told Mr. Clifford, months ago, that you had quite forgot yourself, ever since you had grown so great with the Edgertons, and the Blakes, and Fortescues, and all them high-headed people. But I'm sure, Mr. Edward Clifford, my daughter needn't go a-begging to any man; and as for this business, whatever you may say against young Perkins, I'll take his opinion of the law against that of any other young lawyer in the country. He's as good as the best, I'm thinking."

"Your opinion is your own, Mrs. Clifford, but I beg to set you right on the subject of mine. I did not say anything against Mr. Perkins."

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I'm sure you did. You said he was nothing of a lawyer, and something more."

Was there ever a more perverse and evil and silly woman! I contented myself with assuring her that she was mistaken and had very much misunderstood me--took pains to repeat what I had really said, and then cut short an interview that had been painful and humbling to me on many grounds. I left the happy pair tete-a-tete, in their princely parlor together, little fancying that there was another argument which had been prepared to overthrow my feeble virtue.

But all this had been arranged by the small cunning of this really witless couple. I was left to find my way down stairs as I might; and just when I was about to leave the dwelling--vexed to the heart at the desperate stolidity of the miserable man, whom avarice and weakness were about to expose to a loss which might be averted in part, and an exposure to infamy which might wholly be avoided--I was encountered by the attenuated form and wan countenance of his suffering but still lovely daughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE FINDS NO SMOOTH WATER IN THE SEA OF LAW

"Julia!" I exclaimed, with a start which betrayed, I am sure, quite as much surprise as pleasure. My mood was singularly inflexible. My character was not easily shaken, and, once wrought upon by any leading influence, my mind preserved the tone which it acquired beneath it, long after the cause of provocation had been withdrawn. This earnestness of character--amounting to intensity--gave me an habitual sternness of look and expression, and I found it hard to acquire, of a sudden, that command of muscle which would permit me to mould the stubborn lineaments, at pleasure, to suit the moment. Not even where my heart was most deeply interested--thus aroused--could I look the feelings of the lover, which, nevertheless, were most truly the predominant ones within my bosom.

"Julia," I exclaimed, "I did not think to see you."

"Ah, Edward, did you wish it?" she replied in very mournful accents, gently reproachful, as she suffered me to take her hand in mine, and lead her back to the parlor in the basement story. I seated her upon the sofa, and took a place at her side.

"Why should I not wish to see you, Julia? What should lead you to fancy now that I could wish otherwise?"

"Alas!" she replied, "I know not what to think--I scarcely know what I say. I am very miserable. What is this they tell me? Can it be true, Edward, that you are acting against my father--that you are trying to bring him to shame and poverty?"

I released her hand. I fixed my eyes keenly upon hers.

"Julia, you have your instructions what to say. You are sent here for this. They have set you in waiting to meet me here, and speak things which you do not understand, and assert things which I know you can not believe."

"Edward, I believe YOU!" she exclaimed with emphasis, but with downcast eyes; "but it does not matter whether I was sent here, or

sought you of my own free will. They tell me other things--there is more--but I have not the heart to say it, and it needs not much."

"If you believe me, Julia, it certainly does not need that you should repeat to me what is said of me by enemies, equally unjust to me, and hostile to themselves. Yet I can readily conjecture some things which they have told you. Did they not tell you that your hand had been proffered me, and that I had refused it?"

She hung her head in silence.

"You do not answer."

"Spare me; ask me not."

"Nay, tell me, Julia, that I may see how far you hold me worthy of your love, your confidence. Speak to me--have they not told you some such story?"

"Something of this; but I did not heed it, Edward."

"Julia--nay!--did you not?"

"And if I did, Edward--"

"It surely was not to believe it?"

"No! no! no! I had no fears of you--have none, dear Edward! I knew that it was not, could not be true."

"Julia, it was true!"

"Ah!"

"True, indeed! There was more truth in THAT than in any other part of the story. Nay, more--had they told you all the truth, dearest Julia, that part, strange as it may appear, would have given you less pain than pleasure."

"How! Can it be so?"

"Your hand was proffered me by your father, and I refused it. Nay, look not from me, dearest--fear not for my affection--fear nothing. I should have no fear that you could suppose me false to you, though the whole world should come and tell you so. True love is always secured by a just confidence in the beloved object; and, without this confidence, the whole life is a series of long doubts, struggles, griefs, and apprehensions, which break down the strength, and lay the spirit in the dust. I will now tell you, in few words, what is the relation in which I stand to your father and his family. He, many years ago, committed an error in business, which the laws distinguish by a harsher name. By this error he became rich. Until recently, the proofs of this error were unknown. They have lately been discovered by certain claimants, who are demanding reparation. In the difficulty of your father, he came to me. I examined the business, and have given it as my opinion that he should stifle the legal process by endeavoring to make a private arrangement with the creditors."

"Could he do this?"

"He could. The creditors were willing, and at first he consented that I should arrange it with them. He now rejects the arrangement."

"But why?"

"Because it involves the surrender of the entire amount of property which they claim--a sum of forty thousand dollars."

"But, dear Edward, is it due?--does my father owe this money? If he does, surely he can not refuse. Perhaps he thinks that he owes nothing."

"Nay, Julia, unhappily he knows it, and the offer of your hand, and half of the sum mentioned, was made to me, on the express condition that I should exert my influence as a man, and my ingenuity as a lawyer, in baffling the creditors and stifling the claim."

The poor girl was silent and hung her head, her eyes fixed upon the carpet, and the big tears slowly gathering, dropping from them, one, by one. Meanwhile, I explained, as tenderly as I could, the evil consequences which threatened Mr. Clifford in consequence of his contumacy.

"Alas" she exclaimed, "it is not his fault. He would be willing--I heard him say as much last night--but mother--she will not consent. She refused positively the moment father said it would be necessary to sell out, and move to a cheaper house. Oh, Edward, is there no way that you can save us? Save my father from shame, though he gives up all the money."

"Would I not do this, Julia? Nay, were I owner of the necessary amount myself, believe me, it should not be withheld."

"I do believe you, Edward; but"--and here her voice sunk to a whisper--"you must try again, try again and again--for I think that father knows the danger, though mother does not; and I think--I hope--he will be firm enough, when you press him, and warn him of the danger, to do as you wish him."

"I am afraid not, Julia. Your mother--"

"Do not fear; hope--hope all, dear Edward; for, to confess to you, I KNOW that they are anxious to have your support--they said as much. Nay, why should I hide anything from you? They sent me here to see--to speak with you, and--"

"To see what your charms could do to persuade me to be a villain. Julia! Julia! did you think to do this--to have me be the thing which they would make me?"

"No! no!--Heaven forbid, dear Edward, that you should fancy that any such desire had a place, even for a moment, in my mind. No! I knew not that the case involved any but mere money considerations. I knew not that--"

"Enough! Say no more, Julia! I do not think that you would counsel

me to my own shame."

"No! no! You do me only justice. But, Edward, you will save my father! You will try--you will see him again--"

"What! to suffer again the open scorn, the declared doubts of my friendship and integrity, which is the constant language of your mother? Can it be that you would desire that I should do this--nay, seek it?"

"For my poor father's sake!" she cried, gaspingly.

But I shook my head sternly.

"For mine, then--for mine! for mine!"

She threw herself into my arms, and clung to me until I promised all that she required. And as I promised her, so I strove with her father. I used every argument, resorted to every mode of persuasion, but all was of no avail. Mr. Clifford was under the rigid, the iron government of his fate! His wife was one of those miserably silly women--born, according to Iago--

"To suckle fools and chronicle small beer"--

who, raised to the sudden control of unexpected wealth, becomes insane upon it, and is blind, deaf, and dumb, to all counsel or reason which suggests the possibility of its loss. From the very moment when Mr. Clifford spoke of selling out house, horses, and carriage, as the inevitable result which must follow his adoption of my recommendation, she declared herself against it at all hazards, particularly when her husband assured her that "the glorious uncertainties of the law" afforded a possibility of his escape with less loss. The loss of money was, with her, the item of most consideration; her mind was totally insensible to that of reputation. She was willing to make this compromise with me, as a sort of alternative, for, in that case, there would be no diminution of attendance and expense--no loss of rank and equipage. We should all live together--how harmoniously, one may imagine--but the grandeur and the state would still be intact and unimpaired. Even for this, however, she was not prepared, when she discovered that there was no certainty that my alliance would bring immunity to her husband. How this notion got even partially into his head, I know not; unless in consequence of a growing imbecility of intellect, which in a short time after betrayed itself more strikingly. But of this in its own place.

My attempts to convince my unfortunate uncle were all rendered unavailing, and shown to be so to Julia herself in a very short time afterward. The insolence of Mrs. Clifford, when I did seek an interview with her husband, was so offensive and unqualified, that Julia herself, with a degree of indignation which she could not entirely suppress, begged me to quit the house, and relieve myself from such undeserved insult and abuse. I did so, but with no unfriendly wishes for the wretched woman who presided over its destinies, and the no less wretched husband whom she helped to make so; and my place as consulting friend and counsellor was soon supplied by Mr. Perkins--one of those young barristers, to be found in every community, who regard the "penny fee" as the sine

qua non, and obey implicitly the injunction of the scoundrel in the play "Make money--honestly if you can, but--make money!" He was one of those creatures who set people at loggerheads, goad foolish and petulant clients into lawsuits, stir up commotions in little sets, and invariably comfort the suit-bringer with the most satisfactory assurances of success. It was the confident assurances of this person which had determined Mr. Clifford--his wife rather--to resist to the last the suit in question. Through the sheer force of impudence, this man had obtained a tolerable share of practice. His clients, as may be supposed, lay chiefly among such persons as, having no power or standard for judging, necessarily look upon him who is most bold and pushing as the most able and trustworthy. The bullies of the law--and, unhappily, the profession has quite too many--are very commanding persons among the multitude. Mr. Clifford knew this fellow's mental reputation very well, and was not deceived by the confidence of his assurances; nay, to the last, he showed a hankering desire to give me the entire control of the subject; but the hostility of Mrs. Clifford overruled his more prudent if not more honorable purposes; and, as he was compelled to seek a lawyer, the questionable moral standing of Perkins decided his choice. He wished one, in short, to do a certain piece of dirty work: and, as if in anticipation of the future, he dreaded to unfold the case to any of the veterans, the old-time gentlemen and worthies of the bar. I proposed this to him. I offered to make a supposititious relation of the facts for the opinion of Mr. Edgerton and others--nay, pledged myself to procure a confidential consultation--anything, sooner than that he should resort to a mode of extrication which, I assured him, would only the more deeply involve him in the meshes of disgrace and loss. But there was a fatality about this gentleman--a doom that would not be baffled, and could not be stayed. The wilful mind always precipitates itself down the abyss; and, whether acting by his own, or under the influence of another's judgment, such was, most certainly, the case with him. He was not to be saved. Mr. Perkins was regularly installed as his defender--his counsellor, private and public--and I was compelled, though with humiliating reluctance, to admit to the plaintiffs, Banks & Tressell, that there was no longer any hope of compromise. The issue on which hung equally his fortune and his reputation was insanely challenged by my uncle.

CHAPTER IX.

DUELLO.

But my share in the troubles of this affair was not to end, though I was no longer my uncle's counsellor. An event now took place which gave the proceedings a new and not less unpleasing aspect than they had worn before. Mrs. Clifford, it appears, in her communications to her husband's lawyer, did not confine herself to the mere business of the lawsuit. Her voluminous discourse involved

her opinions of her neighbors, friends, and relatives; and, one day, a few weeks after, I was suddenly surprised by a visit from a gentleman--one of the members of the bar--who placed a letter in my hands from Mr. Perkins. I read this billet with no small astonishment. It briefly stated that certain reports had reached his ears, that I had expressed myself contemptuously of his abilities and character, and concluded with an explicit demand, not for an explanation, but an apology. My answer was immediate.

"You will do me the favor to say, Mr. Carter, that Mr. Perkins has been misinformed. I never uttered anything in my life which could disparage either his moral or legal reputation."

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Clifford," was the reply, "that denial is unnecessary, and can not be received. Mr. Perkins has his information from the lips of a lady; and, as a lady is not responsible, she can not be allowed to err. I am required, sir to insist on an apology. I have already framed it, and it only needs your signature."

He drew a short, folded letter, from his pocket, and placed it before me. There was so much cool impertinence in this proceeding, and in the fellow's manner, that I could with difficulty refrain from flinging the paper in his face. He was one of the little and vulgar clique of which Perkins was a sort of centre. The whole set were conscious enough of the low estimate which was put upon them by the gentlemen of the bar. Denied caste, they were disposed to force their way to recognition by the bully's process, and stung by some recent discouragements, Mr. Perkins was, perhaps, rather glad than otherwise, of the silly, and no less malicious than silly, tattle of Mrs. Clifford for I did not doubt that the gross perversion of the truth which formed the basis of his note, had originated with her, which enabled him to single out a victim, who, as the times went, had suddenly risen to a comparative elevation which is not often accorded to a young beginner. I readily conjectured his object from his character and that of the man he sent. My own nature was passionate; and the rude school through which my boyhood had gone, had made me as tenacious of my position as the grave. That I should be chafed by reptiles such as these, stung me to vexation; and though I kept from any violence of action, my words did not lack of it.

"Mr. Perkins is, permit me to say, a very impertinent fellow; and, if you please, our conference will cease from this moment."

He was a little astounded--rose, and then recovering himself, proceeded to reply with the air of a veteran martinet.

"I am glad, sir, that you give me an opportunity of proceeding with this business without delay. My friend, Mr. Perkins, prepared me for some such answer. Oblige me, sir, by reading this paper." He handed me the challenge for which his preliminaries had prepared me.

"Accepted, sir; I will send my friend to you in the course of the morning."

As I uttered this reply, I bowed and waved him to the door. He did not answer, other than by a bow, and took his departure. The promptness which I had shown impressed him with respect. Baffled,

in his first spring, the bully, like the tiger, is very apt to slink back to his jungle. His departure gave me a brief opportunity for reflection, in which I slightly turned over in my mind the arguments for and against duelling. But these were now too late--even were they to decide me against the practice--to affect the present transaction; and I sallied out to seek a friend--a friend!

Here was the first difficulty. I had precious little choice among friends. My temper was not one calculated to make or keep friends. My earnestness of character, and intensity of mood, made me dictatorial; and where self-esteem is a large and active development, as it must be in an old aristocratic community, such qualities are continually provoking popular hostility. My friends, too, were not of the kind to whom such scrapes as the present were congenial. I was unwilling to go to young Edgerton, as I did not wish to annoy his parents by my novel anxieties. But where else could I turn? To him I went. When he heard my story, he began by endeavoring to dissuade me from the meeting.

"I am pledged to it, William," was my only answer.

"But, Edward, I am opposed to duelling myself, and should not promote or encourage, in another, a practice which I would not be willing myself to adopt."

"A good and sufficient reason, William. You certainly should not. I will go to Frank Kingsley."

"He will serve you, I know; but, Edward, this duelling is a bad business. It does no sort of good. Kill Perkins, and it does not prove to him, even if he were then able to hear, that Mrs. Clifford spoke a falsehood; and if he kills you, you are even still farther from convincing him.

"I have no such desire, William; and your argument, by the way, is one of those beggings of the question which the opponents of duelling continually fall into when discussing the subject. The object of the man, who, in a case like mine, fights a duel, is not to prove his truth, but to protect himself from persecution. Perkins seeks to bully and drive me out of the community. Public opinion here approves of this mode of protecting one's self;--may, if I do not avail myself of its agency, the same public opinion would assist my assailant in my expulsion. I fight on the same ground that a nation fights when it goes to war. It is the most obvious and easy mode to protect myself from injury and insult. So long as I submit, Perkins will insult and bully, and the city will encourage him, If I resist, I silence this fellow, and perhaps protect other young beginners. I have not the most distant idea of convincing him of my truth by fighting him--may, the idea of giving him satisfaction is an idea that never entered my brain. I simply take a popular mode of securing myself from outrage and persecution."

"But, do you secure yourself? Has duelling this result?"

"Not invariably, perhaps; simply because the condition of humanity does not recognise invariable results. If it is shown to be the probable, the frequent result, it is all that can be expected of any human agency or law."

"But, is it probable--frequent?"

"Yes, almost certain, almost invariable. Look at the general manners, the deportment, the forbearance, of all communities where duelling is recognised as an agent of society. See the superior deference paid to females, the unfrequency of bullying, the absence of blackguarding, the higher tone of this public press, and of society in general, from which the public press takes its tone, and which it represents in our country, but does not often inform. Even seduction is a rare offence, and a matter of general exclamation, where this extra-judicial agent is recognised."

And so forth. It is not necessary to repeat our discussion on this vexed question, of its uses and abuses. I did not succeed in convincing him, and, under existing circumstances, it is not reasonable to imagine that his arguments had any influent over me. To Frank Kingsley I went, and found him in better mood to take up the cudgels, and even make my cause his own. He was one of those ardent bloods, who liked nothing better than the excitement of such an affair; whether as principal or assistant, it mattered little. To him I expressed my wish that his arrangements should bring the matter to an issue, if possible, within the next twenty-four hours.

"Prime!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "That's what I like. If you shoot as quickly now, and as much to the point, you may count any button on Perkins's coat."

He proceeded to confer with the friend of my opponent, while, with a meditative mind, I went to my office, necessarily oppressed with the strange feelings belonging to my situation. In less than two hours after Kingsley brought me the carte, by which I found that the meeting was to take place two miles out of town, by sunrise the day after the one ensuing--the weapons, pistols--distance, as customary, ten paces!

"You are a shot, of course?" said Kingsley.

My answer, in the negative, astonished him.

"Why, you will have little or no time for practice."

"I do not intend it. My object is not to kill this man; but to make him and all others see that the dread of what may be done, either by him or them, will never reconcile me to submit to injury or insult. I shall as effectually secure this object by going out, as I do, without preparation, as if I were the best shot in America. He does not know that I am not; and a pistol is always a source of danger when in the grasp of a determined man."

"You are a queer fellow in your notions, Clifford, and I can not say that I altogether understand you; but you must certainly ride out with me this afternoon, and bark a tree. It will do no hurt to a determined man to be a skilful one also."

"I see no use in it."

"Why--what if you should wish to wing him?"

"I think I can do it without practice. But I have no such desire."

"Really you are unnecessarily magnanimous. You may be put to it, however. Should the first shot be ineffectual and he should demand a second, would you throw away that also?"

"No! I should then try to shoot him. As my simple aim is to secure myself from persecution, which is usually the most effectual mode of destroying a young man in this country, I should resort only to such a course as would be likely to yield me this security. That failing, I should employ stronger measures; precisely as a nation would do in a similar conflict with another nation. One must not suffer himself to be destroyed or driven into exile. This is the first law of nature--this of self-preservation. In maintaining this law, a man must do any or all things which in his deliberate judgment, will be effectual for the end proposed. Were I fighting with savages, for example, and knew that they regarded their scalps with more reverence than their lives, I should certainly scalp as well as slay."

"They would call that barbarous?"

"Ay, no doubt; particularly in those countries where they paid from five to fifty, and even one hundred pounds to one Indian for the scalp of his brother, until they rid themselves of both. But see you not that the scalping process, as it produces the most terror and annoyance, is decidedly the most merciful, as being most likely to discourage and deter from war. If the scalp could be taken from the head of every Seminole shot down, be sure the survivors never after would have come within range of rifle-shot."

But these discussions gave way to the business before me. Kingsley left me to myself, and though sad and serious with oppressive thoughts, I still had enough of the old habits, dominant with me, to go to my daily concerns, and arrange my papers with considerable industry and customary method. My professional business was set in order, and Edgerton duly initiated in the knowledge of all such portions as needed explanation. This done, I sat down and wrote a long farewell letter to Julia, and one, more brief, but renewing the counsel I had previously given to her father, in respect to the suit against him. These letters were so disposed as to be sent in the event of my falling in the fight. The interval which followed was not so easy to be borne. Conscience and reflection were equally busy, and unpleasantly so. I longed for the time of action which should silence these unpleasant monitors.

The brief space of twenty-four hours was soon overpassed, and my anxieties ceased as the moment for the meeting with my enemy, drew nigh. My friend called at my lodgings a good hour before daylight--it was a point of credit with him that we should not delay the opposite party the sixtieth part of a second. We drove out into the country in a close carriage, taking a surgeon--who was a friend of Kingsley--along with us. We were on the ground in due season, and some little time before our customers. But they did not fail or delay us. They were there with sufficient promptitude.

Perkins was a man of coolness and courage. He took his position with admirable nonchalance; but I observed, when his eyes met mine, that they were darkened with a scowl of anger. His brows were contracted, and his face which was ordinarily red, had an increased

flush upon it which betrayed unusual excitement. He evidently regarded me with feelings of bitter animosity. Perhaps this was natural enough, if he believed the story of Mrs. Clifford--and my scornful answer to his friend, Mr. Carter, was not calculated to lessen the soreness. For my part, I am free to declare, I had not the smallest sentiment of unkindness toward the fellow. I thought little of him, but did not hate--I could not have hated him. I had no wish to do him hurt; and, as already stated, only went out to put a stop to the further annoyances of insolents and bullies, by the only effectual mode--precisely as I should have used a bludgeon over his head, in the event of a personal assault upon me. Of course, I had no purpose to do him any injury, unless--with the view to my own safety. I resolved secretly to throw away my fire. Kingsley suspected me of some such intention, and earnestly protested against it.

"I should not place you at all," he said, "if I fancied you could do a thing so d---d foolish. The fellow intends to shoot you if he can. Help him to a share of the same sauce."

I nodded as he proceeded to his arrangements. Here some conference ensued between the seconds:--

"Mr. Carter was very sorry that such a business must proceed. Was it yet too late to rectify mistakes? Might not the matter be adjusted?"

Kingsley, on such occasions, the very prince of punctilio, agreed that the matter was a very lamentable one--to be regretted, and so forth--but of the necessity of the thing, he, Mr. Carter, for his principal, must be the only judge.

"Mr. Carter could answer for his friend, Mr. Perkins, that he was always accessible to reason."

"Mr. Kingsley never knew a man more so than HIS principal."

"May we not reconcile the parties?" demanded Mr. Carter.

"Does Mr. Perkins withdraw his message?" answered Kingsley by another question.

"He would do so, readily, were there any prospect of adjusting the matter upon an honorable footing."

"Mr. Carter will be pleased to name the basis for what he esteems an honorable adjustment."

"Mr. Perkins withdraws his challenge."

"We have no objection to that."

"He substitutes a courteous requisition upon Mr. Clifford for an explanation of certain language, supposed to be offensive, made to a lady."

"Mr. Clifford denies, without qualification, the employment of any such language."

"This throws us back on our old ground," said Carter--"there is a

lady in question--"

"Who can not certainly be brought into the controversy," said Kingsley--"I see no other remedy, Mr. Carter, but that we should place the parties. We are here to answer to your final summons."

"Very good, sir; this matter, and what happens, must lie at your door. You are peremptory. I trust you have provided a surgeon."

"His services are at your need, sir," replied Kingsley with military courtesy.

"I thank you, sir--my remark had reference to your own necessity. Shall we toss up for the word?"

These preliminaries were soon adjusted. The word fell to Carter, and thus gave an advantage to Perkins, as his ear was more familiar than mine with the accents of his friend. We were placed, and the pistol put into my hands, without my uttering a sentence.

"Coolly now, my dear fellow," said Kingsley in a whisper, as he withdrew from my side;--"wing him at least--but don't burn powder for nothing."

Scarcely the lapse of a moment followed, when I heard the words "one," "two," "three," in tolerably rapid succession, and, at the utterance of the last, I pulled trigger. My antagonist had done so at the first. His eye was fixed upon mine with deliberate malignity--THAT I clearly saw--but it did not affect my shot. This, I purposely threw away. The skill of my enemy did not correspond (sic) with his evident desires. I was hurt, but very slightly. His bullet merely raised the skin upon the fleshy part of my right thigh. We kept our places while a conference ensued between the two seconds. Mr. Perkins, through his friend, declared himself unsatisfied unless I apologized, or--in less unpleasant language--explained. This demand was answered by Kingsley with cavalier indifference. He came to me with a second pistol. His good-humored visage was now slightly ruffled.

"Clifford!" said he, as he put the weapon into my hand, "you must trifle no longer. This fellow abuses your generosity. He knows, as well as I, that you threw away your fire; and he will play the same game with you, on the same terms, for a month together, Sundays not excepted. I am not willing to stand by and see you risk your life in this manner; and, unless you tell me that you will give him as good as he sends, I leave you on the spot. Will you take aim this time?"

"I will!"

"You promise me then?"

"I do!"

I was conscious of the increased activity of my organ of destructiveness as I said these words. I smiled with a feeling of pleasant bitterness--that spicy sort of malice which you may sometimes rouse in the bosom of the best-natured man in the world, by an attempt to do him injustice. The wound I had received, though

very trifling, had no little to do with this determination. It was not unlike such a wound as would be made by a smart stroke of a whip, and the effect upon my blood was pretty much as if it had been inflicted by some such instrument. I was stung and irritated by it, and the pertinacity of my enemy, particularly as he must have seen that my shot was thrown away, decided me to punish him if I could. I did so! I was not conscious that I was hurt myself, until I saw him falling!--I then felt a heavy and numbing sensation in the same thigh which had been touched before. A faintness relieved me from present sensibility, and when I became conscious, I found myself in the carriage, supported by Kingsley and the surgeon, on my way to my lodgings. My wound was a flesh wound only; the ball was soon extracted, and in a few weeks after, I was enabled to move about with scarcely a feeling of inconvenience. My opponent suffered a much heavier penalty. The bone of his leg was fractured, and it was several months before he was considered perfectly safe. The lesson he got made him a sorer and shorter--a wiser, if not a better man; but as I do not now, and did not then, charge myself with the task of bringing about his moral improvement, it is not incumbent upon me to say anything further on this subject. We will leave him to get better as he may.

CHAPTER X.

HEAD WINDS.

The hurts of Perkins did not, unhappily, delay the progress of my uncle to that destruction to which his silly wife and knavish lawyer had destined him. His business was brought before the court by the claimants, Messrs. Banks & Tressell; and a brief period only was left him for putting in his answer. When I thought of Julia, I resolved, in spite of all previous difficulties--the sneers of the father, and the more direct, coarse insults of the mother--to make one more effort to rescue him from the fate which threatened him. I felt sure that, for the reasons already given, the merchants would still be willing to effect a compromise which would secure them the principal of their claim, without incurring the delay and risk of litigation. Accordingly, I penned a note to Mr. Clifford, requesting permission to wait upon him at home, at a stated hour. To this I received a cold, brief answer, covering the permission which I sought. I went, but might as well have spared myself the labor and annoyance of this visit. Mrs. Clifford was still in the ascendant--still deaf to reason, and utterly blind to the base position into which her meddlesome interference in the business threw her husband. She had her answer ready; and did not merely content herself with rejecting my overtures, but proceeded to speak in the language of one who really regarded me as busily seeking, by covert ways, to effect the ruin of her family. Her looks and language equally expressed the indignation of a mind perfectly convinced of the fraudulent and evil purposes of the person she

addressed. Those of my uncle were scarcely less offensive. A grin of malicious self-gratulation mantled his lips as he thanked me for my counsel, which, he yet remarked, "however wise and good, and well-intended, he did not think it advisable to adopt. He had every confidence in the judgment of Mr. Perkins, who, though without the great legal knowledge of some of his youthful neighbors, had enough for his purposes; and had persuaded him to see the matter in a very different point of view from that in which I was pleased to regard it."

There was no doing anything with or for these people. The fiat for their overthrow had evidently been issued. The fatuity which leads to self-destruction was fixed upon them; and, with a feeling rather of commiseration than anger, I prepared to leave the house. In this interview, I made a discovery, which tended still more to lessen the hostility I might otherwise have felt toward my uncle. I was constrained to perceive that he labored under an intellectual feebleness and incertitude which disconcerted his expression, left his thoughts seemingly without purpose, and altogether convinced me that, if not positively imbecile in mind and memory, there were yet some ugly symptoms of incapacity growing upon him which might one day result in the loss of both. I had always known him to be a weak-minded man, disposed to vanity and caprice, but the weakness had expanded very much in a brief period, and now presented itself to my view in sundry very salient aspects. It was easy now to divert his attention from the business which he had in hand--a single casual remark of courtesy or observation would have this effect--and then his mind wandered from the subject with all the levity and caprice of a thoughtless damsel. He seemed to entertain now no sort of apprehension of his legal difficulties, and spoke of them as topics already adjusted. Nay, for that matter, he seemed to have no serious sense of any subject, whatever might be its personal or general interest; but, passing from point to point, exhibited that instability of mental vision which may not inaptly be compared to that wandering glance which is usually supposed to distinguish and denote, in the physical eye, the presence of insanity. It was not often now that he indulged, while speaking to me, in that manner of hostility--those sneers and sarcastic remarks--which had been his common habit. This was another proof of the change which his mental man had undergone. It was not that he was more prudent or more tolerant than before. He was quite as little disposed to be generous toward me. But he now appeared wholly incapable of that degree of intellectual concentration which could enable him to examine a subject to its close. He would begin to talk with me seriously enough, and with a due solemnity, about the suit against him; but, in a tangent, he would dart off to the consideration of some trifle, some household matter, or petty affair, of which, at any other time, he must have known that his hearers had no wish to hear. Poor Julia confirmed the conjectures which I entertained, but did not utter, by telling me that her father had changed very much in his ways ever since this business had been begun.

"Mother does not see it, but he is no longer the same man. Oh, Edward, I sometimes think he's even growing childish."

The fear was a well-founded one. Before the case was tried, Mr. Clifford was generally regarded, among those who knew him intimately, as little better than an imbecile; and so rapid was the progress of his infirmity, that when the judgment was given, as it was, against

him, he was wholly unable to understand or fear its import. His own sense of guilt had anticipated its effects, and his intense vanity was saved from public shame only by the substitution of public pity. The decree of the court gave all that was asked; and the handsome competence of the Cliffords was exchanged for a miserable pittance, which enabled the family to live only in the very humblest manner.

It will readily be conjectured, from what I have stated in respect to myself, that mine was not the disposition to seek revenge, or find cause for exultation in these deplorable events. I had no hostility against my unhappy uncle; I should have scorned myself if I had. If such a feeling ever filled my bosom, it would have been most effectually disarmed by the sight of the wretched old man, a grinning, gibbering idiot, half-dancing and half-shivering from the cold, over the remnants of a miserable and scant fire in the severest evening in November. It was when the affair was all over; when the property of the family was all in the hands of the sheriff; when the mischievous counsel of such a person as Jonathan Perkins, Esquire could do no more harm even to so foolish a person as my uncle's wife; and when his presence, naturally enough withdrawn from a family from which he could derive no further profit, and which he had helped to ruin, was no longer likely to offend mine by meeting him there--that I proceeded to renew my direct intercourse with the unfortunate people whom I was not suffered to save.

The reader is not to suppose that I had kept myself entirely aloof from the family until these disasters had happened. I sought Julia when occasion offered, and, though she refused it, tendered my services and my means whenever they might be bestowed with hope of good. And now, when all was over, and I met her at the door, and she sank upon my bosom, and wept in my embrace, still less than ever was I disposed to show to her mother the natural triumph of a sagacity which had shown itself at the expense of hers. I forgot, in the first glance of my uncle, all his folly and unkindness. He was now a shadow, and the mental wreck was one of the most deplorable, as it was one of the most rapid and complete, that could be imagined. In less than seven months, a strong man--strong in health--strong, as supposed, in intellect--singularly acute in his dealings among tradesmen--regarded by them as one of the most shrewd in the fraternity--vain of his parts, of his family, and of his fortune--solicitous of display, and constant in its indulgence!--that such a man should be stricken down to imbecility and idiotism--a meagre skeleton in form--pale, puny, timid--crouching by the fireplace--grinning with stealthy looks, momentarily cast around him--and playing--his most constant employment--with the bellows strings that hung beside him, or the little kitten, that, delighted with new consideration, had learned to take her place constantly at his feet! What a wreck!

But the moral man had been wrecked before, or this could not have been. It was only because of his guilt--of its exposure rather--that he sunk. In striving to shake off the oppressive burden, he shook off the intellect which had been compelled chiefly to endure it. The sense of shame, the conviction of loss, and, possibly, other causes of conscience which lay yet deeper--for the progeny of crime is most frequently a litter as numerous as a whelp's puppies--helped to crush the mind which was neither strong enough to resist temptation at first, nor to bear exposure at last. I turned away with a tear, which I could not suppress, from the wretched spectacle. But I could

have borne with more patience to behold this ruin, than to subdue the rising reproach which I felt as I turned to encounter Mrs. Clifford.

This weak woman, still weak, received me coldly, and I could see in her looks that she regarded me as one whom it was natural to suppose would feel some exultation at beholding their downfall. I saw this, but determined to say nothing, in the attempt to undo these impressions. I knew that time was the best teacher in all such matters, and resolved that my deportment should gradually make her wiser on the subject of that nature which she had so frequently abused, and which, I well knew, she could never understand. But this hope I soon discovered to be unavailing. Her disaster had only soured, not subdued her; and, with the natural tendency of the vulgar mind, she seemed to regard me as the person to whom she should ascribe all her misfortunes. As, to her narrow intellect, it seemed natural that I should exult in the accomplishment of my predictions, so it was a process equally natural that she should couple me with their occurrence; and, indeed, I was too nearly connected with the event, through the medium of my unconscious father, not to feel some portion of the affliction on his account also; though neither his memory nor my reputation suffered from the development of the affair in the community where we lived.

Mrs. Clifford did not openly, or in words, betray the feelings which were striving in her soul; but the general restraint which she put upon herself in my presence, the acerbity of her tone, manner, and language, to poor Julia, and the unvaried querulousness of her remarks, were sufficient to apprise me of the spite which she would have willingly bestowed upon myself, had she any tolerable occasion for doing so. A few weeks served still further to humble the conceit and insolence of the unfortunate woman. The affair turned out much more seriously than I expected. A sudden fall in the value of real and personal estate, just about the time when the sheriff's sale took place, rendered necessary a second levy, which swept the miserable remnant of Mr. Clifford's fortune, leaving nothing to my uncle but a small estate which had been secured by settlement to Mrs. Clifford and her daughter, and which the sheriff could not legally lay hands on.

I came forward at this juncture, and, having allowed them to remove into the small tenement to which, in their reduced condition they found it prudent to retire, I requested a private interview with Mrs. Clifford, and readily obtained it.

I was received by the good lady in apparent state. All the little furniture which she could save from the former, was transferred very inappropriately to the present dwelling-house. The one was quite unsuited to the other. The massive damask curtains accorded badly with the little windows over which they were now suspended, and the sofa, ten feet in length, occupied an unreasonable share of an apartment twelve by sixteen. The dais of piled cushions, on which so many fashionable groups had lounged in better times, now seemed a mountain, which begot ideas of labor, difficulty, and up-hill employment, rather than ease, as the eye beheld it cumbering two thirds of the miserable area into which it was so untastefully compressed. These, and other articles of splendor and luxury, if sold, would have yielded her the means to buy furniture more suitable to her circumstances and situation, and left her with

some additional resources to meet the daily and sometimes pressing exigencies of life.

The appearance of this parlor argued little in behalf of the salutary effect which such reverses might be expected to produce in a mind even tolerably sensible. They argued, I fancied, as unfavorably for my suit as for the humility of the lady whom I was about to meet. If the parlor of Mrs. Clifford bore such sufficient tokens of her weakness of intellect, her own costume betrayed still more. She had made her person a sort of frame or rack upon which she hung every particle of that ostentatious drapery which she was in the habit of wearing at her fashionable evenings. A year's income was paraded upon her back, and the trumpery jewels of three generations found a place on every part of her person where it is usual for fashionable folly to display such gewgaws. She sailed into the room in a style that brought to my mind instantly the description which Milton gives of the approach of Delilah to Samson, after the first days of his blind captivity:--

"But who is this, what thing of sea or land?--
Female of sex it seems--
That so bedecked, ornate and gay,
Comes this way sailing, like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for the isles
Of Javan or Gadire,
With all her bravery on and tackle trim,
Sails filled, and streamers waving,
Courted by all the winds that hold their play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger!"

No description could have been more, just and literal in the case of Mrs. Clifford. I could scarce believe my eyes; and when forced to do so, I could scarcely suppose that this bravery was intended for my eyes only. Nor was it;--but let me not anticipate. This spectacle, I need not say, sobered me entirely, if anything was necessary to produce this effect, and increased the grave apprehensions which were already at my heart. The next consequence was to make the manner of my communication serious even to severity. A smile, which was of that doubtful sort which is always sinister and offensive, overspread her lips as she motioned me to resume the seat from which I had risen at her entrance; while she threw herself with an air of studied negligence upon one part of the sofa. I felt the awkwardness of my position duly increased, as her house, dress, and manner, convinced me that she was not yet subdued to hers; but a conscious rectitude of intention carried me forward, and lightened the task to my feelings.

"Mrs. Clifford," I said, without circumlocution, "I have presumed to ask your attention this morning to a brief communication which materially affects my happiness, and which I trust may not diminish, if it does not actually promote, yours. Before I make this communication, however, I hope I may persuade myself that the little misunderstandings which have occurred between us are no longer to be considered barriers to our mutual peace, and happiness--"

"Misunderstandings, Mr. Clifford?--I don't know what misunderstandings

you mean. I'm sure I've never misunderstood you."

I could not misunderstand the insolent tenor of this speech, but I availed myself of the equivoque which it involved to express my gratification that such was the case.

"My path will then be more easy, Mrs. Clifford--my purpose more easily explained."

"I am glad you think so, sir," she answered coolly, smoothing down certain folds of her frock, and crossing her hands upon her lap, while she assumed the attitude of a patient listener. There was something very repulsive in all this; but I saw that the only way to lessen the unpleasantness of the scene, and to get on with her, would be to make the interview as short as possible, and come at once to my object. This I did.

"It is now more than a year, Mrs. Clifford, since I had the honor to say to my uncle, that I entertained for my cousin Julia such a degree of affection as to make it no longer doubtful to me that I should best consult my own happiness by seeking to make her my wife. I had the pleasure at the same time to inform him, which I believed to be true, that Julia herself was not unwilling that such should be the nearer tie between us--"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Clifford, I know all this; but my husband and myself thought better of it, and--" she said with fidgetty impatience.

"And my application was refused," I said calmly; thus finishing the sentence where she had paused.

"Well, sir, and what then?"

"At that time, madam, my uncle gave as a reason that he had other arrangements in view."

"Yes, sir, so we had; and this reminds me that those arrangements were broken off entirely in consequence of the perversity which you taught my daughter. I know it all, sir; there's no more need to tell me of it, than there is to deny it. You put my daughter up to refusing young Roberts, who would have jumped at her, as his father did--and he one of the best families and best fortunes in the city. I'm sure I don't know, sir, what object you can have in reminding me of these things."

Here was ingenious perversity. I bore with it as well as I could, and strove to preserve my consideration and calmness.

"You do your daughter injustice, Mrs. Clifford, and me no less, in this opinion. But I do not seek to remind you of misunderstandings and mistakes, the memory of which can do no good. My purpose now is to renew the offer to you which I originally made to Mr. Clifford. My attachment to your daughter remains unaltered, and I am happy to say that fortune has favored me so far as to enable me to place her in a situation of comparative comfort and independence which I could not offer then--"

"Which is as much as to say that she don't enjoy comfort and independence where she is; and if she does not, sir, to whom is it

all owing, sir, but to you and your father? By your means it is that we are reduced to poverty; but you shall see, sir, that we are not entirely wanting in independence. My answer, sir, is just the same as Mr. Clifford's was. I am very much obliged to you for THE HONOR you intend my family, but we must decline it. As for the comfort and independence which you proffer to my daughter, I am happy to inform you that she can receive it at any moment from a source perhaps far more able than yourself to afford both, if her perversity does not stand in the way, as it did when young Roberts made his offers. Mr. Perkins, sir, the excellent young man that you tried to murder, is to be here, sir, this very morning, to see my daughter. Here's his letter, sir, which you may read, that you may be under no apprehensions that my daughter will ever suffer from a want of comfort and independence."

She flung a letter down on the sofa beside her, but I simply bowed, and declined looking at it. I did not, however, yield the contest in this manner. I urged all that might properly be urged on the subject, and with as much earnestness as could be permitted in an interview with a lady--and such a lady!--but, as the reader may suppose, my toils were taken in vain: all that I could suggest, either in the shape of reason or expostulation, only served to make her more and more dogged, and to increase her tone of insolence; and sore, stung with vexation, disappointed, and something more than bewildered, I dashed almost headlong out of the house, without seeing either Julia or her father, precisely at the moment when Mr. Perkins was about to enter.

CHAPTER XI.

CRISIS.

The result of this interview of my rival with the mother of Julia, was afforded me by the latter. The mother had already given her consent to his suit--that of Julia alone was to be obtained; and to this end the arts of the suitor and the mother were equally devoted. Her refusal only brought with it new forms of persecution. Her steps were haunted by the swain, to whom Mrs. Clifford gave secret notice of all her daughter's intentions. He was her invariable attendant at church, where I had the pain constantly to behold them, in such close proximity, that I at length abandoned the customary house of worship, and found my pew in another, where I could be enabled to endure the forms of service without being oppressed by foreign and distracting thoughts and fancies.

Of the progress of the suit I had occasional intelligence from Julia herself, whom I had, very reluctantly on her part, persuaded to meet me at the house of a female relative and friend, who favored our desires and managed our interviews. Brief were these stolen moments, but oh, how blissful! The pleasures they afforded, however,

were almost wholly mine. The clandestine character of our meetings served to deprive her of the joy which they otherwise might have yielded; and the fear that she was not doing right, humbled her spirit and made her tremble with frequent apprehensions.

At length Mrs. Clifford suspected our interviews, and detected them. We had a most stormy scene on one occasion, when the sudden entrance of this lady surprised us together, at the house of our friend. The consequence of this was, a rupture between the ladies, which resulted in Julia's being forbidden to visit the house of her relative again. This measure was followed by others of such precaution, that at length I could no longer communicate with her, or even seek her, unless when she was on her way to church. Her appearance then was such as to awaken all my apprehensions. Her form, always slender, was become more so. The change was striking in a single week. Her face, usually pale and delicate, was now haggard. Her walk was feeble, and without elasticity. Her whole appearance was wo-begone and utterly spiritless. Days and weeks passed, and my heart was filled with hourly-increasing apprehensions. I returned to the familiar church, but here I suffered a new alarm. That sabbath the family pew was unoccupied. While I trembled lest something serious had befallen her, I was called on by the family physician. This gentleman had been always friendly. He had been my father's physician, and had been his friend and frequent guest; he knew my history, and sympathized with my fortunes. He now know the history of Julia's affections. She had made him her confidante so far, and he brought me a letter from her. She was sick, as I expected. This letter was of startling tenor:--

"Save me, Edward, if you can. I am now willing to do as you proposed. I can no longer endure these annoyances--these cruel persecutions! My mother tells me that I must submit and marry this man, if we would save ourselves from ruin. It seems he has a claim against the estate for professional services; and as we have no other means of payment, without the sale of all that is left, he is base enough to insist upon my hand as the condition of his forbearance. He uses threats now, since entreaties have failed him. Oh, Edward, if you can save me, come!--for of a certainty, I can not bear this persecution much long and live. I am now willing to consent to do what Aunt Sophy recommended. Do not think me bold to say so, dear Edward--if I am bold, it is despair which makes me so."

I read this letter with mingled feelings of indignation and delight--indignation, because of the cruelties to which the worthless mother and the base suitor subjected one so dear and innocent delight, since the consent which she now yielded placed the means of saving her at my control. The consent was to flight and clandestine marriage, to which I had, with the assistance of our mutual friend, endeavored to persuade her, in several instances, before.

The question now was, how to effect this object, since we had no opportunities for communication; but, before I took any steps in the matter, I made it a point of duty to deprive the infamous attorney, Perkins, of his means of power over the unhappy family. I determined to pay his legal charges; and William Edgerton, at my request, readily undertook this part of the business. They were found to be extortionate, and far beyond anything either warranted by the practice or the fee bill. Edgerton counselled me to resist the claim; but the subject was too delicate in all its relations,

and my own affair with Perkins would have made my active opposition seem somewhat the consequence of malice and inveterate hostility. I preferred to pay the excess, which was done by Edgerton, rather than have any further dispute or difficulty with one whom I so much despised. Complete satisfaction was entered upon the records of the court, and a certified discharge, under the hand of Perkins himself--which he gave with a reluctance full of mortification--was sent in a blank envelope to Mrs. Clifford. She was thus deprived of the only excuse--if, indeed, such a woman ever needs an excuse for wilfulness--for persecuting her unhappy daughter on the score of the attorney.

But the possession of this document effected no sort of change in her conduct. She pursued her victim with the same old tenacity. It was not to favor Perkins that she strove for this object: it was to baffle ME. That blind heart, which misguides all of us in turn, was predominant in her, and rendered her totally incapable of seeing the cruel consequences to her daughter which her perseverance threatened. Julia was now so feeble as scarcely to leave her chamber; the physician was daily in attendance; and, though I could not propose to make use of his services in promoting a design which would subject him to the reproach of the grossest treachery, yet, without counsel, he took it upon him plainly to assure the mother that the disorder of her daughter arose solely from her mental afflictions. He went farther. Mrs. Clifford, whose garrulity was as notorious as her vanity and folly, herself took occasion, when this was told her, to ascribe the effect to me; and, with her own coloring, she continued, by going into a long history of our "course of wooing." The doctor availed himself of these statements to suggest the necessity of a compromise, assuring Mrs. Clifford that I was really a more deserving person than she thought me, and, in short, that some concessions must be made, if it was her hope to save her daughter's life.

"She is naturally feeble of frame, nervous and sensitive, and these excitements, pressing upon her, will break down her constitution and her spirits together. Let me warn you, Mrs. Clifford, while yet in season. Dismiss your prejudices against this young man, whether well or ill founded, and permit your daughter to marry him. Suffer me to assure you, Mrs. Clifford, that such an event will do more toward her recovery than all my medicine."

"What, and see him the master of my house--he, the poor beggar-boy that my husband fed in charity, and who turned from him with ingratitude in his moment of difficulty, and left him to be despoiled by his enemies? Never! never! Daughter of mine shall never be wife of his! The serpent! to sting the hand of his benefactor!"

"My dear Mrs. Clifford, this prejudice of yours, besides being totally unfounded, amounts to monomania. Now, I know something of all these matters, as you should be aware; and I should be sorry to counsel anything to you or to your family which would be either disgraceful or injurious. So far from this young man being ungrateful, neglectful, or suffering your husband to be preyed on by enemies, I am of opinion that, if his counsel had been taken in this late unhappy business, you would probably have been spared all of the misery and nearly one half of the loss which has been incurred by the refusal to do so."

"And so you, too, are against us, doctor? You, too, believe everything that this young man tells you?"

"No, madam; I assure you, honestly, that I never heard a single word from his lips in regard to this subject. It is spoken of by everybody but himself."

"Ay! ay! the whole town knows it, and from who else but him, I wonder? But you needn't to talk, doctor, on the subject. My mind's made up. Edward Clifford, while I have breath to say 'No,' and a hand to turn the lock of the door against him, shall never again darken these doors!"

The physician was a man of too much experience to waste labor upon a case so decidedly hopeless. He knew that no art within his compass could cure so thorough a case of heart-blindness, and he gave her up; but he did not give up Julia. He whispered words of consolation into her ears, which, though vague, were yet far more useful than physic.

"Cheer up, my daughter; be of good heart and faith. I AM SURE that there will be some remedy provided for you, before long, which will do you good. I have given the letter to your aunt, and she promises to do as you wish."

It may be said, en passant, that the billet sent to me had been covered in another to my female friend and Julia's relative; and that the doctor, though not unconscious of the agency of this lady between us, was yet guilty of no violation of the faith which is always implied between the family and the physician. He might SUSPECT, but he did not KNOW; and whatever might have been his suspicions, he certainly did not have the most distant idea of that concession which Julia had made, and of the course of conduct for which her mother's persecutions had now prepared her mind.

Mr. Perkins, though deprived of his lien upon Mrs. Clifford, by reason of his claim, did not in the least forego his intentions. His complaints and threatenings necessarily ceased--his tone was something lowered; but he possessed a hold upon this silly woman's prejudices which was far superior to any which he might before have had upon her fears. His hostility to me was grateful to the hate which she also entertained, and which seemed to be more thoroughly infixed in her after her downfall--which, as it has been seen, she ascribed to me; chiefly because of my predictions that such would be the case. In due proportion to her hate for me, was her desire to baffle my wishes, even though it might be at the expense of her own daughter's life. But a vain mother has no affections--none, at least, worthy of the name, and none which she is not prepared to discard at the first requisition of her dearer self. Her hate of me was so extreme as to render her blind to everything besides--her daughter's sickness, the counsel of the physician, the otherwise obvious vulgarity and meanness of Perkins, and that gross injustice which I had suffered at her hands from the beginning, and which, to many minds, might have amply justified in me the hostile feelings which she laid to my charge. In this blindness she precipitated events, and by her cruelty justified extremities in self-defence. The moment that Julia exhibited some slight improvement, she was summoned to an interview with Perkins, and in this interview her mother solemnly swore that she should marry him. The base-minded

suitors stood by in silence, beheld the loathing of the maiden, heard her distinct refusal, yet clung to his victim, and permitted the violence of the mother, without rebuke--that rebuke which the true gentleman might have administered in such a case, and which, to forbear, was the foulest shame--the rebuke of his own decided refusal to participate in such a sacrifice. But he was not capable of this; and Julia, stunned and terrified, was shocked to hear Mrs. Clifford appoint the night of the following Thursday for the forced nuptials.

"She will consent--she shall consent, Mr. Perkins," were the vehement assurances of the mother, as the craven-spirited suitor prepared to take his leave. "I know her better than you do, and she knows me. Do you fear nothing, but bring Mr--" (the divine) "along with you. We shall put an end to this folly."

"Oh, do not, do not, mother, if you would not drive me mad!" was the exclamation of the destined victim, as she threw herself at the feet of her unnatural parent. "You will kill me to wed this man! I can not marry him--I can not love him. Why would you force this matter upon me--why! why!"

"Why will you resist me, Julia? why will you provoke your mother to this degree? You have only to consent willingly, and you know how kind I am."

"I can not consent!" was the gasping decision of the maiden.

"You shall! you must! you will!"

"Never! never! On my knees I say it, mother. God will witness what you refuse to believe. I will die before I consent to marry where I do not give my heart."

"Oh, you talk of dying, as if it was a very easy matter. But you won't die. It's more easy to say than do. Do you come, Mr. Perkins. Don't you mind--don't you believe in these denials, and oaths, and promises. It's the way with all young ladies. They all make a mighty fuss when they're going to be married; hut they're all mighty willing, if the truth was known. I ought to know something about it. I did just the same as she when I was going to marry Mr. Clifford; yet nobody was more willing than I was to get a husband. Do you come and bring the parson; she'll sing a different tune when she stands up before him, I warrant you."

"That shall never be, Mr. Perkins!" said the maiden solemnly, and somewhat approaching the person whom she addressed. "I have already more than once declined the honor you propose to do me. I now repeat to you that I will sooner marry the grave and the winding-sheet than be your wife! My mother mistakes me and all my feelings. For your own sake, if not for mine, I beg that YOU will not mistake them; for, if the strength is left me for speech, I will declare aloud to the reverend man whom you are told to bring, the nature of those persecutions to which you have been privy. I will tell him of the cruelty which I have been compelled to endure, and which you have beheld and encouraged with your silence."

Perkins looked aghast, muttered his unwillingness to prosecute his suit under such circumstances, and prepared to take his leave.

His mutterings and apologies were all swallowed up in that furious storm of abuse and denunciation which now poured from the lips of the exemplary mother. These we need not repeat. Suffice it that the deep feelings of Julia--her sense of propriety and good taste--prevailed to keep her silent, while her mother, still raving, renewed her assurances to the pettifogger that he should certainly receive his wife at her hands on the evening of the ensuing Thursday. The unmanly suitor accepted her assurances--and took leave of mother and daughter, with the expression of a simpering hope, intended chiefly for the latter, that her objections would resolve themselves into the usual maidenly scruples when the appointed time should arrive. Julia mustered strength enough to reply in language which brought down another storm from her mother upon her devoted head.

"Do not deceive Perkins--do not let the assurances of my mother deceive you. She does not know me. I can not and will not marry you. I will sooner marry the grave--the winding-sheet--the worm!"

Her strength failed her the moment he left the apartment. She sank in a fainting-fit upon the floor, and was thus saved from hearing the bitter abuse which her miserable and misguided parent continued to lavish upon her, even while undertaking the task of her restoration. The evident exhaustion of her frame, her increasing feebleness, the agony of her mind, and the possibly fatal termination of her indisposition, did not in the least serve to modify the violent and vexing mood of this most unnatural woman!

CHAPTER XII.

"GONE TO BE MARRIED."

These proceedings, the tenor of which was briefly communicated to me in a hurried note from Julia, despatched by the hands of the physician, under a cover, to the friendly aunt, rendered it imperatively necessary that, whatever we proposed to do should be done quickly, if we entertained any hope to save.

The tone of her epistle alarmed me exceedingly in one respect, as it evidently showed that she could not much longer save herself. Her courage was sinking with her spirits, which were yielding rapidly beneath the continued presence of that persecution which had so long been acting upon her. She began now to distrust her own strength--her very powers of utterance to declare her aversion to the proposed marriage, if ever the trial was brought to the threatened issue before the holy man.

"What am I to do--what say--" demanded her trembling epistle, "should they go so far? Am I to declare the truth?--can I tell to strange ears that it is my mother who forces this cruel sacrifice upon me? I dread I can not. I fear that my soul and voice will

equally fail me. I tremble, dear Edward, when I think that the awful moment may find me speechless, and my consent may be assumed from my silence. Save me from this trial, dearest Edward; for I fear everything now--and fear myself--my unhappy weakness of nerve and spirit more than all. Do not leave me to this trial of my strength--for I have none. Save me if you can!"

It may be readily believed that I needed little soliciting to exertion after this. The words of this letter occasioned an alarm in my mind, little less--though of a different kind--than that which prevailed in hers. I knew the weakness of hers--I knew hers--and felt the apprehension that she might fail at the proper moment, even more vividly than she expressed it.

This letter did not take me by surprise. Before it was received, and soon after the first with which she had favored me, by the hands of the friendly physician, I had begun my preparations with the view to our clandestine marriage. I was only now required to quicken them. The obstacle, on the face of it, was, comparatively, a small one. To get her from a dwelling, in which, though her steps were watched, she was not exactly a prisoner, was scarcely a difficulty, where the lover and the lady are equally willing.

Our mode of operations was simple. There was a favorite servant--a negro--who had been raised in the family, had been a playmate with my poor deceased cousin and myself, and had always been held in particular regard by both of us. He was not what is called a house-servant, but was employed in the yard in doing various offices, such as cutting wood, tending the garden, going of messages, and so forth. This was in the better days of the Clifford family. Since its downfall he had been instructed to look an owner, and, opportunely, at this moment, when I was deliberating upon the process I should adopt for the extrication of his young mistress, he came to me to request that I would buy him. The presence of this servant suggested to me that he could assist me materially in my plans. Without suffering him to know the intention which I had formed I listened to his garrulous harangue. A negro is usually very copious, where he has an auditor; and though, from his situation, he could directly see nothing of the proceedings in the house of his owner, yet, from his fellow-servants he had contrived to gather, perhaps, a very correct account of the general condition of things. It appeared from his story that the attachment of Miss Julia to myself was very commonly understood. The effort of the mother to persuade her to marry Perkins was also known to him; but of the arrangement that the marriage should take place at the early day mentioned in her note, he told me nothing, and, in all probability, this part of her proceedings was kept a close secret by the wily dame Peter--the name of the negro--went on to add, that, loving me, and loving his young mistress, and knowing that we loved one another, and believing that we should one day be married, he was anxious to have me for his future owner.

"I will buy you, Peter, on one condition."

"Wha's dat, Mas' Ned?"

"That you serve me faithfully on trial, for five days, without letting anybody know who you serve--that you carry my messages without letting anybody hear them except that person to whom you

are sent--and, if I give you a note to carry, that you carry it safely, not only without suffering anybody to see the note but the one to whom I send it, but without suffering anybody to know or suspect that you've got such a thing as a note about you."

The fellow was all promises; and I penned a billet to Julia which, in few words, briefly prepared her to expect my attendance at her house at three in the afternoon of the very day when her nuptials were contemplated. I then proceeded to a friend--Kingsley--the friend who had served me in the meeting with Perkins; a bold, dashing, frank fellow, who loved nothing better than a frolic which worried one of the parties; and who, I well knew, would relish nothing more than to baffle Perkins in a love affair, as we had already done in one of strife. To him I unfolded my plan and craved his assistance, which was promised instantly. My female friend, the relative of Julia, whose assistance had been already given us, and whose quarrel with Mrs. Clifford in consequence, had spiced her determination to annoy her still further whenever occasion offered, was advised of our plans; and William Edgerton readily undertook what seemed to be the most innocent part of all, to procure a priest to officiate for us, at the house of the lady in question, and at the appointed time.

My new retainer, Peter, brought me due intelligence of the delivery of the note, in secret, to Julia, and a verbal answer from her made me sanguine of success. The day came, and the hour; and in obedience to our plan, my friend, Kingsley, proceeded boldly to the dwelling of Mrs. Clifford, just as that lady had taken her seat at the dinner-table, requesting to see and speak with her on business of importance. The interview was vouchsafed him, though not until the worthy lady had instructed the servant to say that she was just then at the dinner-table, and would be glad if the gentleman would call again.

But the gentleman regretted that he could not call again. He was from Kentucky, desirous of buying slaves, and must leave town the next morning for the west. The mention of his, occupation, as Mrs. Clifford had slaves to sell, was sufficient to persuade her to lay down the knife and fork with promptness; and the servant was bade to show the Kentucky gentleman, into the parlor. Our arrangement was, that, with the departure of the lady from the table Julia should leave it also--descend the stairs, and meet me at the entrance.

Trembling almost to fainting, the poor girl came to me, and I received her into my arms, with something of a tremor also. I felt the prize would be one that I should be very loath to lose; and joy led to anxiety, and my anxiety rendered me nervous to a womanly degree. But I did not lose my composure and when I had taken her into my arms, I thought it would be only a prudent precaution to turn the key in the outer door, and leave it somewhere along the highway. This I did, absolutely forgetting, that, in thus securing myself against any sudden pursuit, I had also locked up my friend, the Kentucky trader.

Fortune favored our movements. Our preparations had been properly laid, and Edgerton had the divine in waiting. In less than half an hour after leaving the house of her parents, Julia and myself stood up to be married. Pale, feeble, sad--the poor girl, though she felt no reluctance, and suffered not the most momentary remorse for

the steps she had taken, and was about to take, was yet necessarily and naturally impressed with the solemnity and the doubts which hung over the event. Young, timid, artless, apprehensive, she was unsupported by those whom nature had appointed to watch over and protect her; and though they had neglected, and would have betrayed their trust, she yet could not but feel that there was an incompleteness about the affair, which, not even the solemn accents of the priest, the deep requisitions of those pledges which she was called upon to make, and the evident conviction which she now entertained, that what had been done was necessary to be done, for her happiness, and even her life--could entirely remove. There was an awful but sweet earnestness in the sad, intense glance of entreaty, with which she regarded me when I made the final response. Her large black eye dilated, even under the dewy suffusion of its tears, as it seemed to say:--

"It is to you now--to you alone--that I look for that protection, that happiness which was denied where I had best right to look for it. Ah! let me not look, let me not yield myself to you in vain!"

How imploring, yet how resigned was that glance of tears--love in tears, yet love that trusted without fear! It was the embodiment of innocence, struggling between hope and doubt, and only strengthened for the future by the pure, sweet faith which grew out of their conflict. I look back upon that scene, I recall that glance, with a sinking of the heart which is full of terror and terrible reproach. Ah! then, then, I had no fear, no thought, that I should see that look, and others, more sad, more imploring still, and see them without a corresponding faith and love! I little knew, in that brief, blessed hour, how rapidly the blindness of the heart comes on, even as the scale over the eyes--but such a scale as no surgeon's knife can cut away.

CHAPTER XIII.

BAFFLED FURY.

In the first gush of my happiness--the ceremony being completed, and the possession of my treasure certain--I had entirely forgotten my Kentucky friend, whom I had locked up, in confidential TETE-A-TETE with madam, my exemplary mother-in-law. He was a fellow with a strong dash of humor, and could not resist the impulse to amuse himself at the expense of the lady, by making an admirable scene of the proceeding. He began the business by stating that he had heard she had several negroes whom she wished to sell--that he was anxious to buy--he did not care how many, and would give the very best prices of any trader in the market. At his desire, all were summoned in attendance--some three or four in number, that she had to dispose of--all but the worthy Peter, who, under existing circumstances, was quite too necessary to my proceedings to be

dispensed with. These were all carefully examined by the trader. They were asked their ages, their names, their qualities; whether they were willing to go to Kentucky, the paradise of the western Indian, and so forth--all those questions which, in ordinary cases, it is the custom of the purchaser to ask. They were, then dismissed, and the Kentuckian next discussed with the lady the subject of prices. But let the worthy fellow speak for himself:--

"I was so cursed anxious," he said, "to know whether you had got off and in safety, for I was beginning to get monstrous tired of the old cat, that I jumped up every now and then to take a peep out of the front window. I made an excuse to spit on such occasions--though sometimes I forgot to do so--and then I would go back and begin again, with something about the bargain and the terms, and whether the negroes were honest, and sound, and all that. Well, though I looked out as often as I well could with civility, I saw nothing of you, and began to fear that something had happened to unsettle the whole plan; but, after a while, I saw Peter, with his mouth drawn back and hooked up into his ears, with his white teeth glimmering like so many slips of moonshine in a dark night, and I then concluded that all was as it should be. But seeing me look out so earnestly and often, the good lady at length said:--

"I suppose, sir, your horses are in waiting. Perhaps you'd like to have a servant to mind them.'

"No, ma'am, I'm obliged to you; but I left the hotel on foot.'

"Yes, sir,' said she, 'but I thought it might be your horses seeing you so often look out.'

"I could scarcely keep in my laughter. It did burst out into a sort of chuckle; and, as you were then safe--I knew THAT from Peter's jaws--I determined to have my own fun out of the old woman. So I said--pretty much in this sort of fashion, for I longed to worry her, and knew just how it could be done handsomest--I said:--

"The truth is, ma'am--pardon me for the slight--but really I was quite interested--struck, as I may say, by a very suspicious transaction that met my eyes a while ago, when I first got up to spit from the window.'

"Ah, indeed, sir! and pray, if I may ask, what was it you saw?'

"Really very curious; but getting up to spit, and looking out before I did so--necessary caution, ma'am--some persons might be just under the window, you know--'

"Yes, sir, yes.' The old creature began to look and talk mighty eager.

"An ugly habit, ma'am--that of spitting. We Kentuckians carry it to great excess. Foreigners, I'm told, count it monstrous vulgar--effect of tobacco-chewing, ma'am--a deuced bad habit, I grant you, but 'tis a habit, and there's no leaving it off, even if we would. I don't think Kentuckians, as a people, a bit more vulgar than English, or French, or Turks, or any other respectable people of other countries.'

"No, sir, certainly not; but the transaction--what you saw.'

"Ah yes! beg pardon; but, as I was saying, something really quite suspicious! Just as I was about to spit, when I went to the window, some ten minutes ago--perhaps you did not observe, but I did not spit. Good reason for it, ma'am--might have done mischief"

"How, sir?"

"Ah that brings me to the question I want to ask: any handsome young ladies living about here, ma'am?--here, in your neighborhood?"

"Why, yes, sir," answered the old tabby, with something like surprise; there's several--there's the Masons, just opposite: the Bagbys, next door to them below, and Mr. Wilford's daughter: all of them would be considered pretty by some persons. On the same side with us, there's Mrs. Freeman and her two daughters, but the widow is accounted by many the youngest looking and prettiest of the whole, though, to my thinking, that's saying precious little for any. Next door to us is a Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs, who have a daughter, and she IS rather pretty, but I don't know much about them. It might be a mother's vanity, sir, but I think I may be proud of having a daughter myself, who is about as pretty as any of the best among them; and that's saying a great deal less for her than might be said."

"Ah, indeed--you a daughter, ma'am? But she is not grown-up, of course--a mere child?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, said the old creature, tickled up to the eyes, and looking at me with the sweetest smiles; though it may surprise you very much, she is not only no child, but a woman grown; and, what's more, I think she will be made a wife this very night."

"Egad, then I suspect she's not the only one that's about to be made a wife of. I suspect some one of these young ladies, your neighbors, will be very soon in the same condition."

"Indeed, sir--pray, who?--how do you know? and the old tabby edged herself along the sofa until she almost got jam up beside me."

"Well, said I, I don't KNOW exactly, but I'm deucedly suspicious of it, and, more than that, there's some underhand work going on."

"This made her more curious than ever; and her hands and feet, and indeed her whole body, got such a fidgeting, that I fancied she began to think of getting St. Vitus for a bedfellow. Her eagerness made her ask me two or three times what made me think so; and, seeing her anxiety, I purposely delayed in order to worry her. I wished to see how far I could run her up. When I did begin to explain, I went to work in a round-about way enough--something thus, old Kentuck--as I began: "Well, ma'am, this tobacco-chewing, as I said before, carried me, as you witnessed, constantly to the window. I don't know that I chew more than many others, but I know I chew too much for my good, and for decency, too, ma'am."

"Yes, sir, yes; but the young lady, and--"

"Ah, yes, ma'am. Well, then, going to the window once, twice, or

thrice, I could not help but see a young man standing beneath it, evidently in waiting--very earnest, very watchful--seemingly very much interested and anxious, as if waiting for somebody."

"Is it possible?" whispered the tabby, full of expectation.

"Yes, very possible, ma'am--very true." There he stood; I could even hear his deep-drawn sighs--deep, long, as if from the very bottom of his heart.'

"Was he so VERY near, sir?"

"Just under the window--going to and fro--very anxious. I was almost afraid I had spit on him, he looked up so hard--so--"

"What, sir, up at you? at--at MY windows, sir?"

"Not exactly, ma'am, that was only my notion, for I thought I might have spit upon him, and so wakened his anger; but, indeed, he looked all about him, as, indeed, it was natural that he should, you know, if he meditated anything that wa'n't exactly right. There was a carriage in waiting--a close carriage--not a hundred yards below, and--"

"Ah, sir, do tell me what sort of a looking young gentleman was it--eh?"

"Good-looking fellow enough, ma'am--rather tall, slenderish, but not so slender--wore a black frock." By this time the old creature was up at the window--her long, skinny neck stretched out as far as it could go.

"Ah!" said I, "ma'am, you're quite too late, if you expect to see the sport. They're off; I saw the last of them when I took my last spit from the window. They were then--"

"But, sir, did he--did you say that this person--the person you spit on--carried a young lady away with him?"

"You mistake me, ma'am--"

"Ah"--she drew a mighty long breath as if relieved.

"I did NOT spit upon him; I only came near doing it once or twice. If I hadn't looked, I should very probably have divided my quid pretty equally between both of them."

"Both! both!" she almost screamed. "Did she go with him, then?--was there in truth a young woman?"

"You never saw a creature in such a tearing fidget. Her long nose was nearly stuck into my face, and both her hands, all claws extended, seemed ready for my cheeks. I felt a little ticklish, I assure you; but I kept up my courage, determined to see the game out, and answered very deliberately, after I had put a fresh quid into my jaws:--"

"Ay, that she did, ma'am, and seemed deuced glad to go, as was natural enough. A mighty pretty girl she was, too; rather thin,

but pretty enough to tempt a clever fellow to do anything. I reckon they're nigh on to being man and wife by this time, let the old people say what they will."

"But the old put didn't wait to hear me say all this. Before the words were well out of my mouth, she gave a bounce, to the bell-rope first--I thought she'd ha' jerked it to pieces--and then to the head of the stairs."

"Excuse me for a moment, sir, if you please," she said, in a considerable fidget.

"Certainly, ma'am," says I, with a great Kentucky sort of bow and natural civility; and then I could hear her squalling from the head of the stairs, and at the top of her voice, "Julia! Julia! Julia!"--but there was no answer from Julia. Then came the servants; then came the outcry; then she bounced back into the parlor, and blazed out at me for not telling her at once that it was her daughter who had been carried off, without making so long a story of it, and putting in so much talk about tobacco.

"Lord bless you, my dear woman!" says I, innocent enough, was that pretty girl your daughter? That accounts for the fellow looking up at the window so often; and I to fancy that it was all because I might have given him a quid!"

"You must have seen her THEN!"

"Well, ma'am," said I, "I must come again about the negroes. I see you've got your hands full."

"And, with that, I pushed down stairs, while she blazed out at her husband, whom she called an old fool; and me, whom she called a young one; and the negroes, whom she ordered to fly in a hundred ways in the same breath; and, to make matters worse, she seized her hat and shawl, and bounced down the steps after me. Here we were in a fix again, that made her a hundred times more furious. The street-door was locked on the outside, and the key gone, and I fastened up with the old mad tabby. I tried to stand it while the servants were belaboring to break open, but the storm was too heavy, and, raising a sash, I went through: and, in good faith, I believe she bounced through after me; for, when I got fairly into the street and looked round, there she went, bounce, flounce, pell-mell, all in a rage, steam up, puffing like a porpoise--though, thank Jupiter! she took another course from myself. I was glad to get out of her clutches, I assure you."

Such was Kingsley's account of his expedition, told in his particular manner; and endued with the dramatic vitality which he was well able to give it, it was inimitable. It needs but a few words to finish it. Mrs. Clifford, with unerring instinct, made her way to the house of that friendly lady who had assisted our proceedings. But she came too late for anything but abuse. Julia was irrevocably mine. Bitter was the clamor which, in our chamber, assailed us from below.

"Oh, Edward, how shall I meet her?" was the convulsive speech of Julia, as she heard the fearful sounds of her mother's voice--a voice never very musical, and which now, stimulated by unmeasured

rage--the rage of a baffled and wicked woman--poured forth a torrent of screams rather than of human accents. We soon heard the rush of the torrent up stairs, and in the direction of our chamber.

"Fear nothing, Julia; her power over you is now at an end. You are now mine--mine only--mine irrevocably!"

"Ah, she is still my mother!" gasped the lovely trembler in my arms. A moment more, and the old lady was battering at the door. I had locked it within. Her voice, husky but subdued, now called to her daughter--

"Julia! Julia! Julia!--come out!"

"Who is there? what do you want?" I demanded. I was disposed to keep her out, but Julia implored me to open the door. She had really no strength to reply to the summons of the enraged woman; and her entreaty to me was expressed in a whisper which scarcely filled my own ears. She was weak almost to fainting. I trembled lest her weakness, coupled with her fears, and the stormy scene that I felt might be reasonably anticipated, would be too much for her powers of endurance. I hesitated. She put her hand on my wrist.

"For my sake, Edward, let her in. Let her see me. We will have to meet her, and better now--now, when I feel all the solemnity of my new position, and while the pledges I have just made are most present to my thoughts. Do not fear for me. I am weak and very feeble, but I am resolute. I feel that I am not wrong."

She could scarcely gasp out these brief sentences. I urged her not to risk her strength in the interview.

"As you love me, do as I beg you," she replied, with entreating earnestness. "It does not become me to keep my mother, under any circumstances, thus waiting at the door, and asking entrance."

Meanwhile, the clamors of Mrs. Clifford were continued. Julia's aunt was there also, and the controversy was hot and heavy between them. Annoyed as I was, and apprehensive for Julia. I yet could not forbear laughing at the ludicrousness of my position and the whole scene. I began to think, from the equal violence of the two ancient dames without, that they might finally get to blows. This was also the fear of Julia, and another reason why we should throw open the door. I at length did so; and soon had the doubtful satisfaction of transferring to myself all the wrath of the disappointed mother. She rushed in, the moment the door turned upon its hinges, almost upsetting me in the violence of her onset. Bounding into the apartment with a fury that was utterly beyond her own control, I was led to fear that she might absolutely inflict violence upon her daughter, who by this time had sunk, in equal terror and exhaustion, upon a sofa in the remotest corner of the room. I hastily placed myself between them, and did not scruple, with extended hands, to maintain a safe interval of space between the two. I will not attempt to describe the tigress rage or the shrieking violence which ensued on the part of this veteran termagant. It was only closed at length, when, Julia having fainted under the storm, dead to all appearance, I picked up the assailant VI ET ARMIS, and, in defiance of screams and scratches--for she did not spare the use of her talons--resolutely transported her from the chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE DEBT PAID.

Staggering forward under this burden--a burden equally active and heavy--who should I encounter at the head of the stairs, but the liege lord of the lady--my poor imbecile uncle. As soon as she beheld him--foaming and almost unintelligible in her rage--she screamed for succor--cried "murder" "rape," "robbery," and heaven knows what besides. A moment before, though she scratched and scuffled to the utmost, she had not employed her lungs. A momentary imprecation alone had broken from her, as it were, perforce and unavoidably. Now, nothing could exceed the stentorian tumult which her tongue maintained. She called upon her husband to put me to death--to tear me in pieces--to do anything and everything for the punishing of so dreadful an offender as myself. In thus commanding him, she did not forbear uttering her own unmeasured opinion of the demerits of the man whose performances she required.

"If you had the spirit of a man, Clifford--if you were not a poor shoat--you'd never have submitted so long as you have to this viper's insolence. And there you stand, doing nothing--absolutely still as a stock, though you see him beating your wife. Ah! you monster!--you coward!--that I should ever have married a man that wasn't able to protect me."

This is a sufficient sample of her style, and not the worst. I am constrained to confess that some portions of the good lady's language would better have suited the modes of speech common enough among the Grecian housekeepers at the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries. I have omitted not a few of the bad words, and forbore the repetition of that voluminous eloquence poured out, after the Billingsgate fashion, equally upon myself, her daughter, and husband. During the vituperation she still kicked and scuffled; my face suffered, and my eyes narrowly escaped. But I grasped her firmly; and when her husband, my worthy uncle, in obedience to her orders, sprang upon me, with the bludgeon which he now habitually carried, I confronted him with the lusty person of his spouse, and regret to say, that the first thwack intended for my shoulders, descended with some considerable emphasis upon hers. This increased her fury, and redoubled her screams. But it did not lessen my determination, or make me change my mode of proceeding. I resolutely pushed her before me. The husband stood at the head of the stairs and my object was to carry her down to the lower story. The stairs were narrow, and by keeping up a good watch, I contrived to force him to give ground, using his spouse as a sort of battering-RAM--not to perpetrate a pun at the expense of the genders--which, I happened to know, had always been successful in making him give ground on all

previous occasions. His habitual deference for the dame, assisted me in my purpose. Step by step, however, he disputed my advance; but I was finally successful; without any injury beyond that which had been inflicted by the talons of the fair lady, and perhaps a single and slight stroke upon the shoulder from the club of her husband, I succeeded in landing her upon the lower flat in safety. Beyond a squeeze or two, which the exigency of the case made something more affectionate than any I should have been otherwise pleased to bestow upon her, she suffered no hurt at my hands.

But, though willing to release her, she was not so willing herself to be released. When I set her free, she flew at me with cat-like intrepidity; and I found her a much more difficult customer than her husband. Him I soon baffled. A moment sufficed to grapple with him and wrench the stick from his hands, and then, with a moderate exercise of agility, I contrived to spring up the stairway which I had just descended, regain the chamber, and secure the door, before they could overtake or annoy me with their further movements. My wife's aunt, meanwhile, had been busy with her restoratives. Julia was now recovering from the fainting fit; and I had the satisfaction of hearing from one of the servants that the baffled enemy had gone off in a fury that made their departure seem a flight rather than a mere retreat.

I should have treated the whole event with indifference--their rage and their regard equally--but for my suffering and sensitive wife. Wronged as she had been, and so persecuted as to render all her subsequent conduct justifiable, she yet forgot none of her filial obligations; and, in compliance with her earnest entreaties, I had already, the very day after this conflict, prepared an elaborate and respectful epistle to both father and mother, when an event took place of startling solemnity, which was calculated to subdue my anger, and make the feelings of my wife, if possible, more accessible than ever to the influences of fear and sorrow. Only three days from our marriage had elapsed, when her father was stricken speechless in the street. He was carried home for dead. I have already hinted that, months before, and just after the threatened discovery of those fraudulent measures by which he lost his fortune, his mind had become singularly enfeebled; his memory failing, and all his faculties of judgment--never very strong--growing capricious, or else obtuse and unobserving. These were the symptoms of a rapid physical change, the catastrophe of which was at hand. How far the excitement growing out of his daughter's flight and marriage may have precipitated this result, is problematical. It may be said, in this place, that my wife's mother charged it all to my account. I was pronounced the murderer of her husband. On this head I did not reproach myself. It was necessary, however, that a reconciliation should take place between the father and his child. To this I had, of course, no sort of objection. But it will scarce be believed that the miserable woman, her mother, opposed herself to their meeting with the utmost violence of her character. Nothing but the outcry of the family and all its friends--including the excellent physician whose secret services had contributed so much toward my happiness--compelled her to give way, though still ungraciously, to the earnest entreaty of her daughter for permission to see her father before he died! and even then, by the death-bed of the unhappy and almost unconscious man, she recommenced the scene of abuse and bitter reproach, which, however ample the reader and hearer may have already found it, it appears she had left unfinished.

It was in the midst of a furious tirade, directed against myself, chiefly, and Julia, in part, that the spasms of death, unperceived by the mother, passed over the contracted muscles of the father's face. The bitter speech of the blind woman--blind of heart--was actually finished after death had given the final blow to the victim. Of this she had no suspicion, until instructed by the piercing shrieks of her daughter, who fell swooning upon the corse before her.

CHAPTER XV.

HONEYMOON PERIOD.

It was supposed by Julia and certain of her friends that an event so solemn, so impressive, and so unexpected, as the death of Mr. Clifford, would reasonably affect the mind of his widow; and the concessions which I had meditated to address to herself and her late husband were now so varied as to apply solely to herself. I took considerable pains in preparing my letter, with the view to soften her prejudices and asperities, as well as to convince her reason. There was one suggestion which Julia was disposed to insist on, to which, however, I was singularly averse. In the destitution of Mrs. Clifford, her diminished and still diminishing resources, not to speak of her loneliness, she thought that I ought to tender her a home with us. Had she been any other than the captious, cross-grained creature that she was--had her misfortunes produced only in part their legitimate and desirable effects of subduing her perversity--I should have had no sort of objection. But I knew her imperious and unreasonable nature; and I may here add, that, by this time, I knew something of my own: I was a man of despotic character. The constant conflicts which I had had from boyhood, resulting as they had done in my frequent successes and final triumph, had, naturally enough, made me dictatorial. Sanguine in temperament, earnest in character, resolute in impulse, I was necessarily arbitrary in mood. It was not likely that Mrs. Clifford would forget her waywardnesses, and it was just as unreasonable that I should submit to her insolences. Besides, one's home ought to be a very sacred place. It is necessary that the peace there should compensate and console for the strifes without. To hope for this in any household where there is more than one master, would be worse than idle. Nay, even if there were peace, the chances are still great that there would be some lack of propriety. Domestic regulations would become inutile. Children and servants would equally fail of duty and improvement under conflicting authorities; and all the sweet social harmonies of family would be jarred away by misunderstandings if not bickerings, leading to coldness, suspicion, and irremediable jealousies. These things seemed to threaten me from the first moment when Julia submitted to me her desire that her mother should be invited to take up her abode with us. I reasoned with her against it; suggested all the grounds of objection which I really felt; and reviewed at length the long

history of our connection from my childhood up, which had been distinguished by her constant hostility and hate. "How," I asked, "can it be hoped that there will be any change for the better now? She is the same woman, I the same man! It is not reasonable to think that the result of our reunion will be other than it has been." But Julia implored.

"I know what you say is reasonable--is just; but, dear Edward, she is my mother, and she is alone."

I yielded to her wishes. Could I else? My letter to her mother concluded with a respectful entreaty that she would take apartments in our dwelling, and a chair at our table, and lessen, to this extent, the expenses of her own establishment.

"What!" exclaimed the frenzied woman to Julia's aunt, to whom the charge of presenting the communication was committed--"what! eat the bread of that insolent and ungrateful wretch? Never! never!"

She flung the epistle from her with disdain; and, to confess a truth, though, on Julia's account, I should have wished a reconciliation, I was by no means sorry, on my own, that such was her ultimatum. I gave myself little further concern about this foolish person, and was happy to see that in a short time my wife appeared to recover from the sadness and stupor which the death of her father and the temper of her mother had naturally induced. The truth is, she had, for so long a period previously to her marriage, suffered from the persecutions of the latter, and moaned over the shame and imbecility of the former, that her present situation was one of great relief, and, for a while, of comparative happiness.

We lived in a pleasant cottage in the suburbs. A broad and placid lake spread out before our dwelling; and its tiny billows, under the pressure of the sweet southwestern breezes, beat almost against our very doors. Green and shady groves environed us on three sides, and sheltered us from the intrusive gaze of the highway; and never was a brighter collection of flowers and blossoms clustered around any habitation of hope and happiness before. I rented the cottage on moderate terms, and furnished it neatly, but simply, as became my resources. All things considered, the prospect was fair and promising before us. Julia had few toils, and ample leisure for painting and music, for both of which she had considerable taste; for the former art, in particular, she possessed no small talent.

Our city, indeed, seemed one peculiarly calculated for these arts. Our sky was blue--deeply, beautifully blue; our climate mild and delightful. Our people were singularly endowed with the genius for graceful and felicitous performances. Music was an ordinary attribute of the great mass; and in no community under the sun was there such an overflow of talent in painting and sculpture. It was the grand error of our wise heads to fancy that our city could be made one of great trade; and, in a vain struggle to give it some commercial superiority over its neighbor communities, the wealth of the people was thrown away upon projects that yielded nothing; and the arts were left neglected in a region which might have been made--and might still be made--if not exclusively, at least pre-eminently their own. The ordinary look of the women was beauty, the ordinary accent was sweetness. The soft moonlight evenings were rendered doubly harmonious by the tender tinkling of the wandering

guitar, or the tones of the plaintive flute; while, from every third dwelling, rose the more stately but scarcely sweeter melodies stricken by pliant fingers from the yielding soul of the divine piano. The tastes even of the mechanic were refined by this language, the purest in which passion ever speaks; and an ambition--the result of the highest tone of aristocratic influence upon society--prompted his desires to purposes and a position to which in other regions he is not often permitted to aspire. These influences were assisted by the peculiar location of our city--by its suburban freedom from all closeness; its innumerable gardens, the appanage of every household; its piazzas, verandahs, porches; its broad and minstrel-wooing rivers; and the majestic and evergreen forests, which grew and gathered around us on every hand. If ever there was a city intended by nature more particularly than another for the abodes and the offices of art, it was ours. It will become so yet: the mean, money-loving soul of trade can not always keep it from its destinies. We may never see it in our day; but so surely as we live, and as it shall live, will it become an Athens in our land--a city of empire by the sea, renowned for genius and taste--and the chosen retreat of muses, younger and more vigorous, and not less lovely, than the old!

Julia was in a very high degree impregnated with the taste and desire for art which seemed so generally the characteristic of our people. I speak not now of the degree of skill which she possessed. Her teacher was a foreigner, and a mere mechanic; but, while he taught her only the ordinary laws of painting, her natural endowment wrought more actively in favor of her performances. She soon discovered how much she could learn from the little which her teacher knew; and when she made this discovery, she ceased to have any use for his assistance. Books, the study of the old masters, and such of the new as were available to her, served her infinitely more in the prosecution of her efforts; and these I stimulated by all means in my power: for I esteemed her natural endowments to be very high, and very well knew how usual it is for young ladies, after marriage, to give up those tastes and accomplishments which had distinguished and heightened their previous charms. It was quite enough that I admired the art, and tasked her to its pursuit, to make her cling to it with alacrity and love. We wandered together early in the morning and at the coming on of evening, over all the sweet, enticing scenes which were frequent in our suburbs. Environed by two rivers, wide and clear, with deep forests beyond--a broad bay opening upon the sea in front--lovely islands of gleaming sand, strewn at pleasant intervals, seeming, beneath the transparent moonlight, the chosen places of retreat for naiads from the deep and fairies from the grove--there was no lack of objects to delight the eye and woo the pencil to its performances. Besides, never was blue sky, and gold-and-purple sunset, more frequent, more rich, more shifting in its shapes and colors, from beauty to superior beauty, than in our latitude. The eye naturally turned up to it with a sense of hunger; the mind naturally felt the wish to record such hues and aspects for the use of venerating love; and the eager spirit, beginning to fancy the vision wrought according to its own involuntary wish, seemed spontaneously to cry aloud, in the language of the artist, on whom the consciousness of genius was breaking with a sun-burst for the first time, "I, too, am a painter!"

Julia's studio was soon full of beginnings. Fragmentary landscapes were all about her. Like most southrons, she did not like to finish.

There is an impatience of toil--of its duration at least--in the southern mind, which leaves it too frequently unperforming. This is a natural characteristic of an excitable people. People easily moved are always easily diverted from their objects. People of very vivid fancy are also very capricious. There is yet another cause for the non-performance of the southern mind--its fastidiousness. In a high state of social refinement, the standards of taste become so very exacting, that the mind prefers not to attempt, rather than to offend that critical judgment which it feels to be equally active in its analysis and rigid in its requisitions. Genius and ambition must be independent of such restraints. "Be bold, be bold, be bold!" is the language of encouragement in Spenser; and when he says, at the end, "Be not too bold," we are to consider the qualification as simply a quiet caution not to allow proper courage to rush into rashness and insane license. The GENIUS that suffers itself to be fettered by the PRECISE, will perhaps learn how to polish marble, but will never make it live, and will certainly never live very long itself!

With books and music, painting and flowers, we passed the happy moments of the honeymoon. I yielded as little of myself and my mind to my office and clients, in that period, as I possibly could. My cottage was my paradise. My habits, as might be inferred from my history, were singularly domestic. Doomed, as I had been, from my earliest years, to know neither friends nor parents; isolated, in my infancy, from all those tender ties which impress upon the heart, for all succeeding years, tokens of the most endearing affection; denied the smiles of those who yet filled my constant sight--my life was a long yearning for things of love--for things to love! While the struggle continued between Julia's parents and myself, though confiding in her love, I had yet no confidence in my own hope to realize and to secure it. Now that it was mine--mine, at last--I grew uxorious in its contemplation. Like the miser, I had my treasure at home, and I hastened home to survey it with precisely the same doubts, and hopes, and fears, which the disease of avarice prompts in the unhappy heart of its victim. To this disease, in chief, I have to attribute all my future sorrows; but the time is not yet for that. It is my joys now that I have to contemplate and describe. How I dwelt, and how I dreamed! how I seemed to tread on air, in the unaccustomed fullness of my spirit! how my whole soul, given up to the one pursuit, I fondly fancied had secured its object! I fancied--nay, for the time, I was happy! Surely, I was happy!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HAPPY SEASON.

Surely, I then was happy! I can not deceive myself as to the character of those brief Eden moments of security and peace. Even

now, lone as I appear in the sight of others--degraded as I feel myself--even now I look back on our low white cottage, by the shores of that placid lake--its little palings gleaming sweetly through its dense green foliage--recall those happy, halcyon days, and feel that we both, for the time, had attained the secret--the secret worth all the rest--of an enjoyment actually felt, and quite as full, flush, and satisfactory, as it had seemed in the perspective. Possession had taken nothing of the gusto from hope. Truth had not impaired a single beauty of the ideal. I looked in Julia's face at morning when I awakened, and her loveliness did not fade. My lips, that drank sweetness from hers, did not cease to believe the sweetness to be there--as pure, as warm, as full of richness, as when I had only dreamed of their perfections. Our days and nights were pure, and gentle, and fond. One twenty-four hours shall speak for all.

When we rose at morning, we prepared for a ramble, either into the woods, or along the banks of the lovely river that lay west of, and at a short distance only from, our dwelling. There, wandering, as the sun rose, we imparted to each other's eyes the several objects of beauty which his rising glance betrayed. Sometimes we sat beneath a tree, while she hurriedly sketched a clump of woods, the winding turn of the shore, its occasional crescent form or abrupt headland, as they severally appeared in a new light, and at a happy moment of time, beneath our vision. The songs of pleasant birds allured us on; the sweet scent of pines and myrtle refreshed us; and a gay, wholesome, hearty spirit was awakened in our mutual bosoms, as thus, day after day, while, like the d&y, our hearts were in their first youth, we resorted to the ever-fresh mansions of the sovereign Nature. This habit produces purity of feeling, and continues the habit in its earliest simplicity. The childlike laws which it encourages and strengthens are those which virtue most loves, and which strained forms of society are the first to overthrow. The pure tastes of youth are those which are always most dear to humanity; and love is easy of access, and peace not often a stranger to the mind, where these tastes preserve their ascendancy.

My profession was something at variance with these tastes and feelings. The very idea of law, which presupposes the frequent occurrence of injustice, engenders, by its practice, a habit of suspicion. To throw doubt upon the fact, and defeat and prevent convictions of the probable, are habits which lawyers soon acquire. This is natural from the daily encounter with bad and striving men--men who employ the law as an instrument by which to evade right, or inflict wrong; and, this apart, the acute mind loves, for its own sake, the very exercise of doubt, by which ingenuity is put in practice, and an adroit discrimination kept constantly at work.

I was saved, however, from something of this danger. The injustice which I had been subjected to, in my own boyhood, had filled me with the keenest love for the right. The idea of injustice aroused my sternest feelings of resistance. I had adopted the law as a profession with something of a patriotic feeling. I felt that I could make it an instrument for putting down the oppressor, the wrong-doer--for asserting right, and maintaining innocence! I had my admiration, too, at that period, of that logical astuteness, that wonderful tenacity of hold and pursuit, and discrimination

of attribute and subject, which distinguish this profession beyond all others, and seem to confirm the assumption made in its behalf, by which it has been declared the perfection of human reason. It will not be subtracting anything from this estimate, if I express my conviction, founded upon my own experience, that, though such may be the character of the law as an abstract science, it deserves no such encomium as it is ordinarily practised. Lawyers are too commonly profound only in the technicalities of the profession; and a very keen study and acquaintance with these--certainly a too great reliance upon them, and upon the dicta of other lawyers--leads to a dreadful departure from elementary principles, and a most woful (sic) disregard, if not ignorance, of those profounder sources of knowledge without which laws multiply at the expense of reason, and not in support of it; and lawyers may be compared to those ignorant captains to whom good ships are intrusted, who rely upon continual sounding to grope their way along the accustomed shores. Let them once leave the shores, and get beyond the reach of their plummets, and the good ship must owe its safety to fortune and the favor of the winds, for further skill is none.

I did not find the practice of the law affect my taste for domestic pleasures; on the contrary, it stimulated and preserved them. After toiling a whole morning in the courts, it was a sweet reprieve to be allowed to hurry off to my quiet cottage, and hear the one dear voice of my household, and examine the quiet pictures. These never stunned me with clamors; I was never pestered by them to determine the meum et tuum between noisy disputants, neither of whom is exactly right. There, my eye could repose on the sweetest scenes--scenes of beauty and freshness--the shady verdure of the woods, the rich variety of flowers, and pure, calm, transparent waters, hallowed by the meek glances of the matron moon. No creature could have been more gentle than my wife. She met me with a composed smile, equally bright and meek. I never heard a complaint from her lips. The evils of which other men complain--the complaints about servants, scoldings about delay or dinner--never reached my ears. The kindest solicitude that, in my fatigue, or amid the toils of a business of which wives can know little, and for which they make too little allowance, there should be nothing at home to make me irritable or give me disquiet, distinguished equally her sense and her affection. If it became her duty to communicate any unpleasant intelligence--any tidings which might awaken anger or impatience--she carefully waited for the proper time, when the excitement of my blood was overcome, and repose of blood and brain had naturally brought about a kindred composure of mind.

Our afternoons were usually spent in the shade of the garden or piazza. Sometimes, I sat by her while she was sketching. At others,

she helped me to dress and train my garden-vines. Now and then we renewed our rambles of the morning, heedfully observing the different aspects of the same scenes and object, which had then delighted us, under the mellowing smiles of the sun at its decline. With books, music, and chess, our evenings passed away without our consciousness; and day melted into night, and night departed and gave place to the new-born day, as quietly as if life had, in truth, become to us a great instrument of harmony, which bore us over the smooth seas of Time, to the gentle beating of fairy and unseen minstrelsy. Truly, then, we were two happy children. The older children of this world, stimulated by stronger tastes and more

lofty indulgences, may smile at the infantile simplicity of such resources and modes of enjoyment. They were childish, but perhaps not the less wise for that. Infancy lies very near to heaven. Childhood is a not unfit study for angels; and happy were it for us could we maintain the hearts and the hopes of that innocent period for a longer day within our bosoms. In our world we grow too fast, too presumptuously. We live on too rich food, moral and intellectual. The artifices of our tastes prove most fatally the decline of our reason. But, for us--we two linked hearts, so segregated from all beside--we certainly lived the lives of children for a while. But we were not to live thus always. In some worldly respects, I was still a child: I cared little for its pomps, its small honors, its puny efforts, its tinselly displays. But I had vices of mind--vices of my own--sufficient to embitter the social world where all seems now so sweet--where all, in truth, WAS sweet, and pure, and worthy --and which might, under other circumstances, have been kept so to the last. I am now to describe a change!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EVIL PRINCIPLE.

Heretofore, I have spoken of the blind hearts of others--of Mr. Clifford and his wilful wife--I have yet said little to show the blindness of my own. This task is now before me, and, with whatever reluctance, the exhibition shall resolutely be made. I have described a couple newly wed--eminently happy--blessed with tolerable independence--resources from without and within--dwelling in the smiles of Heaven, and not uncheered by the friendly countenance of man. I am to display the cloud, which hangs small at first, a mere speck, but which is to grow to a gloomy tempest that is to swallow up the loveliness of the sky, and blacken with gloom and sorrow the fairest aspects of the earth. I am to show the worm in the bud which is to bring blight--the serpent in the garden which is to spoil the Eden. Wo, beyond all other woes, that this serpent should be engendered in one's own heart, producing its blindness, and finally working its bane! Yet, so it is! The story is a painful one to tell; the task is one of self-humiliation. But the truth may inform others--may warn, may strengthen, may save--before their hearts shall be utterly given up to that blindness which must end in utter desperation and irretrievable overthrow.

If the reader has not been utterly unmindful of certain moral suggestions which have been thrown out passingly in my previous narrative, he will have seen that, constitutionally, I am of an ardent, impetuous temper--an active mind, ready, earnest, impatient of control--seeking the difficult for its own sake, and delighting in the conquest which is unexpected by others.

Such a nature is usually frank and generous. It believes in the

affections--it depends upon them. It freely gives its own, but challenges the equally free and spontaneous gift of yours in return. It has little faith in the things which fill the hearts of the mere worldlings. Worldly honors may delight it, but not worldly toys. It has no veneration for gewgaws. The shows of furniture and of dress it despises. The gorgeous equipage is an encumbrance to it; the imposing jewel it would not wear, lest it might subtract something from that homage which it prefers should be paid to the wearer. It is all selfish--thoroughly selfish--but not after the world's fashion of selfishness. It hoards nothing, and gives quite as much as it asks. What does it ask? What? It asks for love--devoted attachment; the homage of the loved one and the friends; the implicit confidence of all around it! Ah! can anything be more exacting? Cruelly exacting, if it be not worthy of that it asks!

Imagine such a nature, denied from the beginning! The parents of its youth are gone!--the brother and the sister--the father and the friend! It is destitute, utterly, of these! It is also destitute of those resources of fortune which are supposed to be sufficient to command them. It is thrown upon the protection, the charge of strangers. Not strangers--no! From strangers, perhaps, but little could be expected. It is thrown upon the care of relatives--a father's brother! Could the tie be nearer? Not well! But it had been better if strangers had been its guardians. Then it might have learned to endure more patiently. At least, it would have felt less keenly the pangs inflicted by neglect, contumely, injustice. In this situation it grows up, like some sapling torn from its parent forest, its branches hacked off, its limbs lacerated! It grows up in a stranger soil. The sharp winds assail it from every quarter. But still it lives--it grows. It grows wildly, rudely, ungracefully; but it is strong and tough, in consequence of its exposure and its trials. Its vitality increases with every collision which shakes and rends it; until, in the pathetic language of relatives unhappily burdened with such encumbrances, "it seems impossible to kill it!"

I will not say that mine tried to kill me, but I do say that they took precious little care that I was not killed. The effect upon my body was good, however--the effect of their indifference. This roughening process is a part of physical training which very few parents understand. It is essential--should be insisted on--but it must not be accompanied with a moral roughening, which forces upon the mind of the pupil the conviction that the ordeal is meant for his destruction rather than for his good. There will be a recoil of the heart--a cruel recoil from the humanities--if such a conviction once fills the mind. It was this recoil which I felt! With warm affections seeking for objects of love--with feelings of hope and veneration, imploring for altars to which to attach themselves--I was commanded to go alone. The wilderness alone was open to me: what wonder if my heart grew wild and capricious even as that of the savage who dwells only amid their cheerless recesses? With a smile judiciously bestowed--with a kind word, a gentle tone, an occasional voice of earnest encouragement--my uncle and aunt might have fashioned my heart at their pleasure. I should have been as clay in the hands of the potter--a pliant willow in the grasp of the careful trainer. A nature constituted like mine is, of all others, the most flexible; but it is also, of all others, the most resisting and incorrigible. Approach it with a judicious regard to its affections, and you do with it what you please. Let it but fancy that it is the victim of your injustice, however slight,

and the war is an interminable one between you!

Thus did I learn the first lessons of suspiciousness. They attended me to the schoolhouse; they governed and made me watchful there. The schoolhouse, the play-places--the very regions of earnest faith and unlimited confidence--produced no such effects in me. They might have done so, had I ceased, on going to school, to see my relatives any longer. But the daily presence of my uncle and aunt, with their system of continued injustice, at length rendered my suspicious moods habitual. I became shy. I approached nobody, or approached them with doubt and watchfulness. I learned, at the earliest period, to look into character, to analyze conduct, to pry into the mysterious involutions of the working minds around me. I traced, or fancied that I traced, the performance to the unexpressed and secret motive in which it had its origin. I discovered, or believed that I discovered, that the world was divided into banditti and hypocrites. At that day I made little allowance for the existence of that larger class than all, who happen to be the victims. Unless this were the larger class, the other two must very much and very rapidly diminish. My infant philosophy did not carry me very deeply into the recesses of my own heart. It was enough that I felt some of its dearest rights to be outraged--I did not care to inquire whether it was altogether right itself.

At length, there was a glimpse of dawn amid all this darkness. The world was not altogether evil. All hearts were not shut against me; and in the sweet smiles of Julia Clifford, in her kind attentions, soothing assurances, and fond entreaties, there was opportunity, at last, for my feelings to overflow. Like a mountain-stream long pent up, which at length breaks through its confinements, my affections rushed into the grateful channel which her pliant heart afforded me. They were wild, and strong, and, devoted, in proportion to their long denial and restraint. Was it not natural enough that I should love with no ordinary attachment--that my love should be an impetuous torrent--all-devoted--struggling, striving--rushing only in the one direction--believing, in truth, that there was none other in the world in which to run?

This was a natural consequence of the long sophistication of my feelings. I knew nothing of the world--of society. I had shared in none of its trusts; I had only felt its exactions. Like some country-boy, or country-girl, for the first time brought into the great world, I surrendered myself wholly to the first gratified impulse. I made no conditions, no qualifications. I set all my hopes of heart upon a single cast of the die, and did not ask what might be the consequences if the throw was unfortunate.

One of the good effects of a free communication of the young with society is, to lessen the exacting nature of the affections. People who live too much to themselves--in their own centre, and for their own single objects--become fastidious to disease. They ask too much from their neighbors. Willing to surrender their OWN affections at a glance, they fancy the world wanting in sensibility when they find that their readiness in this respect fails to produce a corresponding readiness in others. This is the natural history of that enthusiasm which is thrown back upon itself and is chilled by denial. The complaint of coldness and selfishness against the world is very common among very young or very inexperienced men. The world gets a bad character, simply because it refuses to lavish

its affections along the highways--simply because it is cautious in giving its trusts, and expects proofs of service and actual sympathy rather than professions. Men like myself, of a warm, impetuous nature, complain of the heartlessness of mankind. They fancy themselves peculiarly the victims of an unkind destiny in this respect; and finally cut their throats in a moment of frenzy, or degenerate into a cynicism that delights in contradictions, in sarcasms, in self-torture, and the bitterest hostility to their neighbors.

Society itself is the only and best corrective of this unhappy disposition. The first gift to the young, therefore, should be the gift of society. By this word society, however, I do not mean a set, a clique, a pitiable little circle. Let the sphere of movement be sufficiently extended--as large as possible--that the means of observation and thought may be sufficiently comprehensive, and no influences from one man or one family shall be suffered to give the bias to the immature mind and inexperienced judgment. In society like this, the errors, prejudices, weaknesses, of one man, are corrected by a totally opposite form of character in another. The mind of the youth hesitates. Hesitation brings circumspection, watchfulness; watchfulness, discrimination; discrimination, choice; and a capacity to choose implies the attainment of a certain degree of deliberateness and judgment with which the youth may be permitted to go upon his way, supposed to be provided for in the difficult respect of being able henceforward to take care of himself.

I had no society--knew nothing of society--saw it at a distance, under suspicious circumstances, and was myself an object of its suspicion. Its attractions were desirable to me, but seemed unattainable. It required some sacrifices to obtain its entree, and these sacrifices were the very ones which my independence would not allow me to make. My independence was my treasure, duly valued in proportion to the constant strife by which it was assailed. I had that! THAT could not be taken from me. THAT kept me from sinking into the slave the tool, the sycophant, perhaps the brute; THAT prompted me to hard study in secret places; THAT strengthened my heart, when, desolate and striving against necessity, I saw nothing of the smiles of society, and felt nothing of the bounties of life. Then came my final emancipation--my success--my triumph! My independence was assailed no longer. My talents were no longer doubted or denied. My reluctant neighbors sent in their adhesion. My uncle forbore his sneers. Lastly, and now--Julia was mine! My heart's desires were all gratified as completely as my mind's ambition!

Was I happy? The inconsiderate mind will suppose this very probable--will say, I should be. But evil seeds that are planted in the young heart grow up with years--not so rapidly or openly as to offend--and grow to be poisonous weeds with maturity. My feelings were too devoted, too concentrative, too all-absorbing, to leave me happy, even when they seemed gratified. The man who has but a single jewel in the world, is very apt to labor under a constant apprehension of its loss. He who knows but one object of attachment--whose heart's devotion turns evermore but to one star of all the countless thousands in the heavens--wo is he, if that star be shrouded from his gaze in the sudden overflow of storms!--still more wo is he, when that star withdraws, or seems to withdraw, its corresponding gaze, or turns it elsewhere upon another worshipper! See you not

the danger which threatened me? See you not that, never having been beloved before--never having loved but the one--I loved that one with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength; and required from that one the equal love of heart, soul, strength? See you not that my love--linked with impatient mind, imperious blood, impetuous enthusiasm, and suspicious fear--was a devotion exacting as the grave--searching as fever--as jealous of the thing whose worship it demands as God is said to be of ours?

Mine was eminently a jealous heart! On this subject of jealousy, men rarely judge correctly. They speak of Othello as jealous--Othello, one of the least jealous of all human natures! Jealousy is a quality that needs no cause. It makes its own cause. It will find or make occasion for its exercise, in the most innocent circumstances. The PROOFS that made Othello wretched and revengeful, were sufficient to have deceived any jury under the sun. He had proofs. He had a strong case to go upon. It would have influenced any judgment. He did not seek or find these proofs for himself. He did not wish to find them. He was slow to see them. His was not jealousy. His error was that of pride and self-esteem. He was outraged in both. His mistake was in being too prompt of action in a case which admitted of deliberation. This was the error of a proud man, a soldier, prompt to decide, prompt to act, and to punish if necessary. But never was human character less marked by a jealous mood than that of Othello. His great self-esteem was, of itself, a sufficient security against jealousy. Mine might have been, had it not been so terribly diseased by ill-training.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PRESENTIMENTS.

Without apprehending the extent of my own weakness, the forms that it would take, or the tyrannies that it would inflict, I was still not totally uninformed on the subject of my peculiar character; and, fearing then rather that I might pain my wife by some of its wanton demonstrations, than that she would ever furnish me with, an occasion for them, I took an opportunity, a few evenings after our marriage, to suggest to her the necessity of regarding my outbreaks with an indulgent eye.

My heart had been singularly softened by the most touching associations. We sat together in our piazza, beneath a flood of the richest and balmiest moonlight, screened only from its silvery blaze by interposing masses of the woodbine, mingled with shoots of oleander, arbor-vitae, and other shrub-trees. The mild breath of evening sufficed only to lift quiveringly their green leaves and glowing blossoms, to stir the hair upon our cheeks, and give to the atmosphere that wooing freshness which seems so necessary a concomitant of the moonlight. The hand of Julia was in mine.

There were few words spoken between us; love has its own sufficing language, and is content with that consciousness that all is right which implores no other assurances. Julia had just risen from the piano: we had both been touched with a deeper sense of the thousand harmonies in nature, by listening to those of Rossini; and now, gazing upon some transparent, fleecy, white clouds that were slowly pressing forward in the path of the moonlight, as if in duteous attendance upon some maiden queen, our mutual minds were busied in framing pictures from the fine yet fantastic forms that glowed, gathering on our gaze. I felt the hand of Julia trembling in my own. Her head sank upon my shoulder; I felt a warm drop fall from her eyes upon my hand, and exclaimed--

"Julia, you weep! wherefore do you weep, dear wife?"

"With joy, my husband! My heart is full of joy. I am so happy, I can only weep. Ah! tears alone speak for the true happiness."

"Ah! would it last, Julia--would it last!"

"Oh, doubt not that it will last. Why should it not? What have we to fear?"

Mine was a serious nature. I answered sadly, if not gloomily:--

"Because it is a joy of life that we feel, and it must share the vicissitudes of life."

"True, true, but love is a joy of eternal life as well as of this."

There was a beautiful and consoling truth in this one little sentence, which my self-absorption was too great, at the time, to suffer me to see. Perhaps even she herself was not fully conscious of the glorious and pregnant truth which lay at the bottom of what she said. Love is, indeed, not merely a joy of eternal life: it is THE joy of eternal life!--its particular joy--a dim shadow of which we sometimes feel in this--pure, lasting, comparatively perfect, the more it approaches, in its performances and its desires, the divine essence, of which it is so poor a likeness. We should so live, so love, as to make the one run into the other, even as a small river runs down, through a customary channel, into the great deeps of the sea. Death should be to the affections a mere channel through which they pass into a natural, a necessary condition, where their streams flow with more freedom, and over which, harmoniously controlling, as powerful, the spirit of love broods ever with "dovelike wings outspread." I answered, still gloomily, in the customary world commonplaces:--

"We must expect the storm. It will not be moonlight always. We must look for the cloud. Age, sickness, death!--ah! do these not follow on our footsteps, ever unerring, certain always, but so often rapid? Soon, how soon, they haunt us in the happiest moments--they meet us at every corner! They never altogether leave us."

"Enough, dear husband. Dwell not upon these gloomy thoughts. Ah! why should you--NOW?"

"I will not; but there are others, Julia."

"What others? Evils?"

"Sadder evils yet than these."

"Oh, no!--I hope not."

"Coldness of the once warm heart. The chill of affection in the loved one. Estrangement--indifference!--ah, Julia!"

"Impossible, Edward! This can not, MUST not be, with us You do not think that I could be cold to you; and you--ah! surely YOU will never cease to love me?"

"Never, I trust, never!"

"No! you must not--SHALL not. Oh, Edward, let me die first before such a fear should fill my breast. You I love, as none was loved before. Without your love, I am nothing. If I can not hang upon you, where can I hang?"

And she clung to me with a grasp as if life and death depended on it, while her sobs, as from a full heart, were insuppressible in spite of all her efforts.

"Fear nothing, dearest Julia: do you not believe that I love you?"

"Ah! if I did not, Edward--"

"It is with you always to make me love you. You are as completely the mistress of my whole heart as if it had acknowledged no laws but yours from the beginning."

"What am I to do, dear Edward?"

"Forbear--be indulgent--pity me and spare me!"

"What mean you, Edward?"

"That heart which is all and only yours, Julia, is yet, I am assured, a wilful and an erring heart! I feel that it is strange, wayward, sometimes unjust to others, frequently to itself. It is a cross-grained, capricious heart; you will find its exactions irksome."

"Oh, I know it better. You wrong yourself."

"No! In the solemn sweetness of this hour, dear Julia--now, while all things are sweet to our eyes, all things dear to our affections--I feel a chill of doubt and apprehension come over me. I am so happy--so unusually happy--that I can not feel sure that I am so--that my happiness will continue long. I will try, on my own part, to do nothing by which to risk its loss. But I feel that I am too wilful, at times, to be strong in keeping a resolution which is so very necessary to our mutual happiness. You must help--you must strengthen me, Julia."

"Oh, yes! but how? I will do anything--be anything."

"I am capricious, wayward; at times, full of injustice. Love me not less that I am so--that I sometimes show this waywardness to

you--that I sometimes do injustice to your love. Bear with me till the dark mood passes from my heart. I have these moods, or have had them, frequently. It may be--I trust it will be--that, blessed with your love, and secure in its possession, there will be no room in my heart for such ugly feelings. But I know not. They sometimes take supreme possession of me. They seize upon me in all places. They wrap my spirit as in a cloud. I sit apart. I scowl upon those around me. I feel moved to say bitter things--to shoot darts in defiance at every glance--to envenom every sentence which I speak. These are cruel moods. I have striven vainly to shake them off. They have grown up with my growth--have shared in whatever strength I have; and, while they embitter my own thoughts and happiness, I dread that they will fling their shadow upon yours!"

She replied with gayety, with playfulness, but there was an effort in it.

"Oh, you make the matter worse than it is. I suppose all that troubles you is the blues. But you will never have them again. When I see them coming on I will sit by you and sing to you. We will come out here and watch the evening; or you shall read to me, or we will ramble in the garden--or--a thousand things which shall make you forget that there was ever such a thing in the world as sorrow."

"Dear Julia--will you do this?"

"More--everything to make you happy." And she drew me closer in her embrace, and her lips with a tremulous, almost convulsive sweetness, were pressed upon my forehead; and clinging there, oh! how sweetly did she weep!

"You will tire of my waywardness--of my exactions. Ah! I shall force you from my side by my caprice."

"You can not, Edward, if you would," she replied, in mournful accents like my own, "I have no remedy against you! I have nobody now to whom to turn. Have I not driven all from my side--all but you?"

It was my task to soothe her now.

"Nay, Julia, be not you sorrowful. You must continue glad and blest, that you may conquer my sullen moods, my dark presentiments. When I tell you of the evils of my temper, I tell you of occasional clouds only. Heaven forbid that they should give an enduring aspect to our heavens!"

She responded fervently to my ejaculation. I continued:--

"I have only sought to prepare you for the management of my arbitrary nature, to keep you from suffering too much, and sinking beneath its exactions. You will bear with me patiently. Forgive me for my evil hours. Wait till the storm has overblown; and find me your own, then, as much as before; and let me feel that you are still mine--that the tempest has not separated our little vessels."

"Will I not? Ah! do not fear for me, Edward. It is a happiness for me to weep here--here, in your arms. When you are sad and moody, I will come as now."

"What if I repulse you?"

"You will not--no, no!--you will not."

"But if I do I Suppose---"

"Ah! it is hard to suppose that. But I will not heed it. I will come again."

"And again?"

"And again!"

"Then you will conquer, Julia. I feel that you will conquer! You will drive out the devils. Surely, then, I shall be incorrigible no longer."

Such was my conviction then. I little knew myself.

CHAPTER XIX.

DISTRUST.

I little knew myself! This knowledge of one's self is the most important knowledge, which very few of us acquire. We seldom look into our own hearts for other objects than those which will administer to their petty vanities and passing triumphs. Could we only look there sometimes for the truth! But we are blind--blind all! In some respects I was one of the blindest!

I have given a brief glimpse of our honeymoon. Perhaps, as the world goes, the picture is by no means an attractive one. Quiet felicity forms but a small item in the sources of happiness, now-a-days, among young couples. Mine was sufficiently quiet and sufficiently humble. One would suppose that he who builds so lowly should have no reason to apprehend the hurricane. Social ambition was clearly no object with either of us. We sighed neither for the glitter nor the regards of fashionable life. Neither upon fine houses, jewels, or equipages, did we set our hearts. For the pleasures of the table I had no passion, and never was young woman so thoroughly regardless of display as Julia Clifford. To be let alone--to be suffered to escape in our own way, unharmed, unharmed, through the dim avenues of life--was assuredly all that we asked from man. Perhaps--I say it without cant--this, perhaps, was all that we possibly asked from heaven. This was all that I asked, at least, and this was much. It was asking what had never yet been accorded to humanity. In the vain assumption of my heart I thought that my demands were moderate.

Let no man console himself with the idea that his chances of success are multiplied in degree with the insignificance, or seeming insignificance, of his aims. Perhaps the very reverse of this is the truth. He who seeks for many objects of enjoyment--whose tastes are diversified--has probably the very best prospect that some of them may be gratified. He is like the merchant whose ventures on the sea are divided among many vessels. He may lose one or more, yet preserve the main bulk of his fortune from the wreck. But he who has only a single bark--one freightage, however costly--whose whole estate is invested in the one venture--let him lose that, and all is lost. It does not matter that his loss, speaking relatively, is but little. Suppose his shipment, in general estimation, to be of small value. The loss to him is so much the greater. It was the dearer to him because of its insignificance, and being all that he had; is quite as conclusive of his ruin, as would be the foundering of every vessel which the rich merchant sent to sea.

I was one of these petty traders. I invested my whole capital of the affections in one precious jewel. Did I lose it, or simply fear its loss? Time must show. But, of a truth, I felt as the miser feels with his hoarded treasure. While I watched its richness and beauty, doubts and dread beset me. Was it safe? Everything depended upon its security. Thieves might break in and steal. Enough, for the present, to say, that much of my security, and of the security of all who, like me, possess a dear treasure, depends upon our convictions of security. He who apprehends loss, is already robbed. The reality is scarcely worse than the hourly anticipation of it.

My friends naturally became the visitors of my family. Certain of the late Mrs. Clifford's friends were also ours. Our circle was sufficiently large for those who already knew how to distinguish between the safe pleasures of a small set, and the horse-play and heartless enjoyments of fashionable jams. Were we permitted in this world to live only for ourselves, we should have been perfectly gratified had this been even less. We should have been very well content to have gone on from day to day without ever beholding the shadow of a stranger upon our threshold.

This was not permitted, however. We had a round of congratulatory visits. Among those who came, the first were the old, long-trying friends to whom I owed so much--the Edgertons. No family could have been more truly amiable than this; and William Edgerton was the most amiable of the family. I have already said enough to persuade the reader that he was a very worthy man. He was more. He was a principled one. Not very highly endowed, perhaps, he was yet an intelligent gentleman. None could be more modest in expression--none less obtrusive in deportment--none more generous in service. The defects in his character were organic--not moral. He had no vices--no vulgarities. But his temperament was an inactive one. He was apt to be sluggish, and when excited was nervous. He was not irritable, but easily discomposed. His tastes were active at the expense of his genius. With ability, he was yet unperforming. His standards were morbidly fastidious. Fearing to fall below them, he desisted until the moment of action was passed for ever; and the feeling of his own weakness, in this respect, made him often sad, but to do him justice, never querulous.

With a person so constituted, the delicate tastes and sensibilities are like to be indulged in a very high degree. William Edgerton

loved music and all the quiet arts. Painting was his particular delight. He himself sketched with great spirit. He had the happy eye for the tout ensemble in a fine landscape. He knew exactly how much to take in and what to leave out, in the delineation of a lovely scene. This is a happy talent for discrimination which the ordinary artist does not possess. It is the capacity which, in the case of orators and poets, informs them of the precise moment when they should stop. It is the happiest sort of judgment, since, though the artist may be neither very excellent in drawing, nor very felicitous in color, it enables him always to bestow a certain propriety on his picture which compensates, to a certain degree, for inferiority in other respects. To know how to grasp objects with spirit, and bestow them with a due regard to mutual dependence, is one of the most exquisite faculties of the landscape-painter.

William Edgerton, had he been forced by necessity to have made the art of painting his profession would have made for himself a reputation of no inferior kind. But amateur art, like amateur literature, rarely produces any admirable fruits. Complete success only attends the devotee to the muse. The worship must be exclusive at her altar; the attendance constant and unremitting. There must be no partial, no divided homage. She is a jealous mistress, like all the rest. The lover of her charms, if he would secure her smiles, must be a professor at her shrine. He can not come and go at pleasure. She resents such impertinence by neglect. In plain terms, the fine arts must be made a business by those who desire their favor. Like law, divinity, physic, they constitute a profession of their own; require the same diligent endeavor, close study, fond pursuit! William Edgerton loved painting, but his business was the law. He loved painting too much to love his profession. He gave too much of his time to the law to be a successful painter--too much time to painting to be a lawyer. He was nothing! At the bar he never rose a step after the first day, when, together, we appeared in our mutual maiden case; and contenting himself with the occasional execution of a landscape, sketchy and bold, but without finish, he remained in that nether-land of public consideration, unable to grasp the certainties of either pursuit at which he nevertheless was constantly striving; striving, however, with that qualified degree of effort, which, if it never could secure the prize, never could fatigue him much with the endeavor to do so.

He was perfectly delighted when he first saw some of the sketches of my wife. He had none of that little jealousy which so frequently impairs the temper and the worth of amateurs. He could admire without prejudice, and praise without reserve. He praised them. He evidently admired them. He sought every occasion to see them, and omitted none in which to declare his opinion of their merits. This, in the first pleasant season of my marriage--when the leaves were yet green and fresh upon the tree of love--was grateful to my feelings. I felt happy to discover that my judgment had not erred in the selection of my wife. I stimulated her industry that I might listen to my friend's eulogy. I suggested subjects for her pencil. I fitted up an apartment especially as a studio for her use. I bought her some fine studies, lay figures, heads in marble and plaster; and lavished, in this way, the small surplus fund which had heretofore accrued from my professional industry, and that personal frugality with which it was accompanied.

William Edgerton was now for ever at our house. He brought his own

pictures for the inspection of my wife. He sometimes painted in her studio. He devised rural and aquatic parties with sole reference to landscape scenery and delineation; and indifferent to the law always, he now abandoned himself almost entirely to those tastes which seemed to have acquired of a sudden, the strangest and the strongest impulse.

In this--at least for a considerable space of time--I saw nothing very remarkable. I knew his tastes previously. I had seen how little disposed he was to grapple earnestly with the duties of his profession; and did not conceive it surprising, that, with family resources sufficient to yield him pecuniary independence, he should surrender himself up to the luxurious influence of tastes which were equally lovely in themselves, and natural to the first desires of his mind. But when for days he was missed from his office--when the very hours of morning which are most religiously devoted by the profession to its ostensible if not earnest pursuit, were yielded up to the easel--and when, overlooking the boundaries which, according to the conventional usage, made such a course improper, he passed many of these mornings at my house, during my absence, I began to entertain feelings of disquietude.

For these I had then no name. The feelings were vague and indefinable, but not the less unpleasant. I did not fancy for a moment that I was wronged, or likely to be wronged, but I felt that he was doing wrong. Then, too, I had my misgivings of what the world would think! I did not fancy that he had any design to wrong me; but there seemed to me a cruel want of consideration in his conduct. But what annoyed me most was, that Julia should receive him at such periods. He was thoughtless, enthusiastic in art, and thoughtless, perhaps, in consequence of his enthusiasm. But I expected that she should think for both of us in such a case. Women, alone, can be the true guardians of appearances where they themselves are concerned; and it was matter of painful surprise to me that she should not have asked herself the question: "What will the neighbors think, during my husband's absence, to see a stranger, a young man, coming to visit me with periodical regularity, morning after morning?"

That she did not ask herself this question should have been a very strong argument to show me that her thoughts were all innocent. But there is a terrible truth in what Caesar said of his wife's reputation: "She must be free from suspicion." She must not only do nothing wrong, but she must not suffer or do anything which might incur the suspicion of wrong doing. There is nothing half so sensible to the breath of calumny, as female reputation, particularly in regions of high civilization, where women are raised to an artificial rank of respect, which obviates, in most part, the obligations of their dependence upon man, but increases, in due proportion, some of their responsibilities to him. Poor Julia had no circumspection, because she had no feeling of evil. I believe she was purity itself; I equally believe that William Edgerton was quite incapable of evil design. But when I came from my office, the first morning that he had thus passed at my house in my absence, and she told me that he had been there, and how the time had been spent, I felt a pang, like a sharp arrow, suddenly rush into my brain. Julia had no reserve in telling me this fact. It was a subject she seemed pleased to dwell upon. She narrated with the earnest, unseeing spirit of a self-satisfied child, the sort of conversation which had taken place

between them--praised Edgerton's taste, his delicacy, his subdued, persuasive manners, and showed herself as utterly unsophisticated as any Swiss mountain-girl who voluntarily yields the traveller a kiss, and tells her mother of it afterward. I listened with chilled manners and a troubled mind.

"You are unwell, Edward," she remarked tenderly, approaching and throwing her arms around my neck, as she perceived the gradual gathering of that cloud upon my brows.

"Why do you think so, Julia?"

"Oh, you look so sad--almost severe, Edward, and your words are so few and cold. Have I offended you, dear Edward?"

I was confused at this direct question. I felt annoyed, ashamed. I pleaded headache in justification of my manner--it did ache, and my heart, too, but not with the ordinary pang; and I felt a warm blush suffuse my cheek, as I yielded to the first suggestion which prompted me to deceive my wife.

A large leading step was thus taken, and progress was easy afterward.

Oh! sweet spirit of confidence, thou only true saint, more needful than all, to bind the ties of kindred and affection! why art thou so prompt to fly at the approach of thy cold, dark enemy, distrust? Why dost thou yield the field with so little struggle? Why, when the things, dearest to thee of all in the world's gift--its most valued treasure, its purest, sweetest, and proudest trophies--why, when these are the stake which is to reward thy courage, thy adherence, to compensate thee for trial, to console thee for loss and outrage--why is it that thou art so ready to despond of the cause so dear to thee, and forfeit the conquest by which alone thy whole existence is made sweet. This is the very suicide of self. Fearful of loss, we forsake the prize, which we have won; and hearkening to the counsel of a natural enemy, eat of that bitter fruit which banishes for ever from our lips the sweet savor which we knew before, and without which, no savor that is left is sweet.

CHAPTER XX.

PROGRESS OF THE EVIL SPIRIT.

If I felt so deeply annoyed at the first morning visit which William Edgerton paid to my wife, what was my annoyance when these visits became habitual. I was miserable but could not complain. I was ashamed of the language of complaint on such a subject. There is something very ridiculous in the idea of a jealous husband--it has always provoked the laughter of the world; and I was one of those men who shrunk from ridicule with a more than mortal dread. Besides,

I really felt no alarm. I had the utmost confidence in my wife's virtue. I had not the less confidence in that of Edgerton. But I was jealous of her deference--of her regard--for another. She was, in my eyes, as something sacred, set apart--a treasure exclusively my own! Should it be that another should come to divide her veneration with me? I was vexed that she should derive satisfaction from another source than myself. This satisfaction she derived from the visits of Edgerton. She freely avowed it.

"How amiable--how pleasant he is," she would say, in the perfect innocence of her heart; "and really, Edward, he has so much talent!"

These praises annoyed me. They were as so much wormwood to my spirit. It must be remembered that I was not myself what the world calls an amiable man. I doubt if any, even of my best friends, would describe me as a pleasant one. I was a man of too direct and earnest a temperament to establish a claim, in reasonable degree, to either of these characteristics. I was, accordingly, something blunt in my address--the tones of my voice were loud--my manner was all emprossement, except when I was actually angry, and then it was cold. hard, dry, inflexible. I was the last person in the world to pass for an amiable. Now, Julia, on the other hand, was quiet, subdued, timorous--the tones of a strong, decided voice startled her--she shrunk from controversy--yielded always with a happy grace in anticipation of the conflict, and showed, in all respects, that nice, almost nervous organization which attaches the value of principles and morals to mere manners, and would be as much shocked, perhaps, at the expression of a rudeness, as at the commission of a sin. Not that such persons would hold a sin to be less criminal or innocuous than would we ourselves; but that they regard mere conduct as of so much more importance.

When, therefore, she praised William Edgerton for those qualities which I well knew I did not possess, I could not resist the annoyance. My self-esteem--continually active--stimulated as it had been by the constant moral strife, to which it had been subjected from boyhood--was continually apprehending disparagement. Of the purity of Julia's heart, and the chastity of her conduct, the very freedom of her utterance was conclusive. Had she felt one single improper emotion toward William Edgerton, her lips would never have voluntarily uttered his name, and never in the language of applause. On this head I had not then the slightest apprehension. It was not jealousy so much as EGOISME that was preying upon me. Whatever it was, however, it could not be repressed as I listened to the eulogistic language of my wife. I strove, but could not subdue, altogether, the evil spirit which was fast becoming predominant within me. Yet, though speaking under its immediate influence, I was very far from betraying its true nature. My egoisme had not yet made such advances as to become reckless and incautious. I surprised her by my answer to her eulogies.

"I have no doubt he is amiable--he is amiable--but that is not enough for a man. He must be something more than amiable, if he would escape the imputation of being feeble--something more if he would be anything!"

Julia looked at me with eyes of profound and dilating astonishment. Having got thus far, it was easy to advance. The first step is half the journey in all such cases.

"William Edgerton is a little too amiable, perhaps, for his own good. It makes him listless and worthless. He will do nothing at pictures, wasting his time only when he should be at his business."

"But did I not understand you, Edward, that he was a man of fortune, and independent of his profession?" she answered timidly.

"Even that will not justify a man in becoming a trifler. No man should waste his time in painting, unless he makes a trade of it."

"But his leisure, Edward," suggested Julia, with a look of increasing timidity.

"His leisure, indeed, Julia;--but he has been here all day--day after day. If painting is such a passion with him, let him abandon law and take to it. But he should not pursue one art while processing another. It is as if a man hankered after that which he yet lacked the courage to challenge and pursue openly.'

"I don't think you love pictures as you used to, Edward," she remarked to me, after a little interval passed in unusual silence.

"Perhaps it is because I have matters of more consequence to attend to. YOU seem sufficiently devoted to them now to excuse my indifference."

"Surely, dear Edward, something I have done vexes you. Tell me, husband. Do not spare me. Say, in what have I offended?"

I had not the courage to be ingenuous. Ah! if I had!

"Nay, you have not offended," I answered hastily--"I am only worried with some unmanageable thoughts. The law, you know, is full of provoking, exciting, irritating necessities."

She looked at me with a kind but searching glance. My soul seemed to shrink from that scrutiny. My eyes sunk beneath her gaze.

"I wish I knew how to console you, Edward: to make you entirely happy. I pray for it, Edward. I thought we were always to be so happy. Did you not promise me that you would always leave your cares at your office--that our cottage should be sacred to love and peace only?"

She put her arms about my neck, and looked into my face with such a sweet, strange, persuasive smile--half mirth, half sadness--that the evil spirit was subdued within me. I clasped her fervently in my embrace, with all my old feelings of confidence and joy renewed. At this moment the servant announced Mr. Edgerton, and with a start--a movement--scarcely as gentle as it should have been, I put the fond and still beloved woman from my embrace!

CHANGES OF HOME.

From this time my intercourse with William Edgerton was, on my part, one of the most painful and difficult constraint. I had nothing to reproach him with; no grounds whatever for quarrel; and could not, in his case--regarding the long intimacy which I had maintained with himself and father, and the obligations which were due from me to both--adopt such a manner of reserve and distance as to produce the result of indifference and estrangement which I now anxiously desired. I was still compelled to meet him--meet him, too, with an affectation of good feeling and good humor, which I soon found it, of all things in the world, the most difficult even to pretend. How much would I have given could he only have provoked me to anger on any ground--could he have given me an occasion for difference of any sort or to any degree--anything which could have justified a mutual falling off from the old intimacy! But William Edgerton was meekness and kindness itself. His confidence in me was of the most unobservant, suspicionless character; either that, or I succeeded better than I thought in the effort to maintain the external aspects of old friendship. He saw nothing of change in my deportment. He seemed not to see it, at least; and came as usual, or more frequently than usual, to my house, until, at length, the studio of my wife was quite as much his as hers--nay, more; for, after a brief space, whether it was that Julia saw what troubled me, or felt herself the imprudence of Edgerton's conduct, she almost entirely surrendered it to him. She was not now so often to be seen in it.

This proceeding alarmed me. I dreaded lest my secret should be discovered. I was shocked lest my wife should suppose me jealous. The feeling is one which carries with it a sufficiently severe commentary, in the fact that most men are heartily ashamed to be thought to suffer from it. But, if it vexed me to think that she should know or suspect the truth, how much more was I troubled lest it should be seen or suspected by others! This fear led to new circumspection. I now affected levities of demeanor and remark; studiously absented myself from home of an evening, leaving my wife with Edgerton, or any other friend who happened to be present; and, though I began no practices of profligacy, such as are common to young scapegraces in all times, I yet, to some moderate extent, affected them.

A tone of sadness now marked the features of my wife. There was an expression of anxiety in her countenance, which, amid all her previous sufferings, I had never seen there before. She did not complain; but sometimes, when we sat alone together, I reading, perhaps, and she sewing, she would drop her work in her lap, and sigh suddenly and deeply, as if the first shadows of the upgathering gloom were beginning to cloud her young and innocent spirit, and force her apprehensions into utterance. This did not escape me, but I read its signification, as witches are said to read the Bible, backward. A gloomier fancy filled my brain as I heard her unconscious sigh.

"It is the language of regret. She laments our marriage. She could have found another, surely, who could have made her happier. Perhaps, had Edgerton and herself known each other intimately before!--"

Dark, perverse imagining! It crushed me. I felt, I can not tell, what bitterness. Let no one suppose that I endured less misery than I inflicted. The miseries of the damned could not have exceeded mine in some of the moments when these cruel conjectures filled my mind. Then followed some such proofs as these of the presence of the Evil One:--

"You sigh, Julia. You are unhappy."

"Unhappy? no, dear Edward, not unhappy! What makes you think so?"

"What makes you sigh, then?"

"I do not know. I am certainly not unhappy. Did I sigh, Edward?"

"Yes, and seemingly from the very bottom of your heart. I fear, Julia, that you are not happy; nay, I am sure you are not! I feel that I am not the man to make you happy. I am a perverse--"

"Nay, Edward, now you speak so strangely, and your brow is stern, and your tones tremble! What can it be afflicts you? You are angry at something, dear Edward. Surely, it can not be with me."

"And if it were, Julia, I am afraid it would give you little concern."

"Now, Edward, you are cruel. You do me wrong. You do yourself wrong. Why should you suppose that it would give me little concern to see you angry? So far from this, I should regard it as the greatest misery which I had to suffer. Do not speak so, dearest Edward--do not fancy such things. Believe me, my husband, when I tell you that I know nothing half so dear to me as your love--nothing that I would not sacrifice with a pleasure, to secure, to preserve THAT!"

"Ah! would you give up painting?"

"Painting! that were a small sacrifice! I worked at it only because you used to like it."

"What, you think I do not like it now?"

"I KNOW you do not."

"But you paint still?"

"No! I have not handled brush or pencil for a week. Mr. Edgerton was reproaching me only yesterday for my neglect."

"Ah, indeed! Well, you promised him to resume, did you not? He is a rare persuader! He is so amiable, so mild--you could not well resist."

It was from her face that I formed a rational conjecture of the expression that must have appeared in mine. Her eyes dilated with

a look of timid wonder, not unmixed with apprehension. She actually shrunk back a space; then, approaching, laid her hand upon my wrist, as she exclaimed:--

"God of heaven, Edward, what strange thought is in your bosom? what is the meaning of that look? Look not so again, if you would not kill me!"

I averted my face from hers, but without speaking. She threw her arms around my neck.

"Do not turn away from me, Edward. Do not, do not, I entreat you! You must not--no! not till you tell me what is troubling you--not till I soothe you, and make you love me again as much as you did at first."

When I turned to her again, the tears--hot, scalding tears--were already streaming down my cheeks.

"Julia, God knows I love you! Never woman yet was more devotedly loved by man! I love you too much--too deeply--too entirely! Alas, I love nothing else!"

"Say not that you love me too much--that can not be! Do I not love you--you only, you altogether? Should I not have your whole love in return?"

"Ah, Julia! but my love is a convulsive eagerness of soul--a passion that knows no limit! It is not that my heart is entirely yours: it is that it is yours with a frenzied desperation. There is a fanaticism in love as in religion. My love is that fanaticism. It burns--it commands--where yours would but soothe and solicit."

"But is mine the less true--the less valuable for this, dear Edward?"

"No, perhaps not! It may be even more true, more valuable; it may be only less intense. But fanaticism, you know, is exacting--nothing more so. It permits no half-passion, no moderate zeal. It insists upon devotion like its own. Ah, Julia, could you but love as I do!"

"I love you all, Edward, all that I can, and as it belongs in my nature to love. But I am a woman, and a timid one, you know. I am not capable of that wild passion which you feel. Were I to indulge it, it would most certainly destroy me. Even as it sometimes appears in you, it terrifies and unnerves me. You are so impetuous!"

"Ah, you would have only the meek, the amiable!"

And thus, with an implied sarcasm, our conversation ended. Julia turned on me a look of imploring, which was naturally one of reproach. It did not have its proper influence upon me. I seized my hat, and hurried from the house. I rushed, rather than walked, through the streets; and, before I knew where I was, I found myself on the banks of the river, under the shade of trees, with the soft evening breeze blowing upon me, and the placid moon sailing quietly above. I threw myself down upon the grass, and delivered myself up to gloomy thoughts. Here was I, then, scarcely twenty-five years old; young, vigorous; with a probable chance of fortune before me; a young and lovely wife, the very creature of my first and only

choice, one whom I tenderly loved, whom, if to seek again, I should again, and again, and only, seek! Yet I was miserable--miserable in the very possession of my first hopes, my best joys--the very treasure that had always seemed the dearest in my sight. Miserable blind heart! miserable indeed! For what was there to make me miserable? Absolutely nothing--nothing that the outer world could give--nothing that it could ever take away. But what fool is it that fancies there must be a reason for one's wretchedness? The reason is in our own hearts; in the perverseness which can make of its own heaven a hell! not often fashion a heaven out of hell!

Brooding, I lay upon the sward, meditating unutterable things, and as far as ever from any conclusion. Of one thing alone I was satisfied--that I was unutterably miserable; that my destiny was written in sable; that I was a man foredoomed to woe! Were my speculations strange or unnatural! Unnatural indeed! There is a class of surface-skimming persons, who pronounce all things unnatural which, to a cool, unprovoked, and perhaps unprovokable mind, appear unreasonable: as if a vexed nature and exacting passions were not the most unreasonable yet most natural of all moral agents. My woes may have been groundless, but it was surely not unnatural that I felt and entertained them.

Thus, with bitter mood, growing more bitter with every moment of its unrestrained indulgence, I gloomed in loneliness beside the banks of that silvery and smooth-flowing river. Certainly the natural world around me lent no color to my fancies. While all was dark within, all was bright without. A fiend was tugging at my heart; while from a little white cottage, a few hundred yards below, which grew flush with the margin of the stream, there stole forth the tender, tinkling strains of a guitar, probably touched by fair fingers of a fair maiden, with some enamored boy, blind and doting, hovering beside her. I, too, had stood thus and hearkened thus, and where am I--what am I!

I started to my feet. I found something offensive in the music. It came linked with a song which I had heard Julia sing a hundred times; and when I thought of those hours of confidence, and felt myself where I was, alone--and how lone!--bitterer than ever were the wayward pangs which were preying upon the tenderest fibres of my heart.

In the next moment I ceased to be alone. I was met and jostled by another person as I bounded forward, much too rapidly, in an effort to bury myself in the deeper shadow of some neighboring trees. The stranger was nearly overthrown in the collision, which extorted a hasty exclamation from his lips, not unmingled with a famous oath or two. In the voice. I recognised that of my friend Kingsley--the well-known pseudo-Kentucky gentleman, who had acted a part so important in extricating my wife from her mother's custody. I made myself known to him in apologizing for my rudeness.

"You here!" said he; "I did not expect to meet you. I have just been to your house, where I found your wife, and where I intended to stop a while and wait for you. But Bill Edgerton, in the meanwhile, popped in, and after that I could hear nothing but pictures and paintings, Madonnas, Ecce Homos, and the like; till I began to fancy that I smelt nothing but paint and varnish. So I popped out, with a pretty blunt excuse, leaving the two amateurs to talk in oil

and water-colors, and settle the principles of art as they please. Like you, I fancy a real landscape, here, by the water, and under the green trees, in preference to a thousand of their painted pictures."

It may be supposed that my mood underwent precious little improvement after this communication. Dark conceits, darker than ever, came across my mind. I longed to get away, and return to that home from which I had banished confidence!--ah, only too happy if there still lingered hope! But my friend, blunt, good-humored, and thoughtless creature as he was, took for granted that I had come to look at the landscape, to admire water-views by moonlight, and drink fresh draughts of sea-breeze from the southwest; and, thrusting his arm through mine, he dragged me on, down, almost to the threshold of the cottage, whence still issued the tinkle, tinkle, of the guitar which had first driven me away.

"That girl sings well. Do you know her--Miss Davison? She's soon to be married, THEY say (d--n 'they say,' however--the greatest scandal-monger, if not mischief-maker and liar, in the world!)--she is soon to be married to young Trescott--a clover lad who sniffles, plays on the flute, wears whisker and imperial on the most cream-colored and effeminate face you ever saw! A good fellow, nevertheless, but a silly! She is a good fellow, too, rather the cleverest of the twain, and perhaps the oldest. The match, if match it really is to be, none of the wisest for that very reason. The damsel, now-a-days, who marries a lad younger than herself, is laying up a large stock of pother, which is to bother her when she becomes thirty--for even young ladies, you know, after forty, may become thirty. A sort of dispensation of nature. She sings well, nevertheless."

I said something--it matters not what. Dark images of home were in my eyes. I heard no song--saw no landscape The voice of Kingsley was a sort of buzzing in my ears.

"You are dull to-night, but that song ought to soothe you. What a cheery, light-hearted wench it is! Her voice does seem so to rise in air, shaking its wings, and crying tira-la! tira-la! with an enthusiasm which is catching! I almost feel prompted to kick up my heels, throw a summerset, and, while turning on my axis, give her an echo of tira-la! tira-la! tira-la! after her own fashion."

"You are certainly a happy, mad fellow, Kingsley!" was my faint, cheerless commentary upon a gayety of heart which I could not share, and the unreserved expression of which, at that moment, only vexed me.

"And you no glad one, Clifford. That song, which almost prompts me

to dance, makes no impression on you! By-the-way, your wife used to sing so well, and now I never hear her. That d---d painting, if you don't mind, will make her give up everything else! As for Bill Edgerton, he cares for nothing else out his varnish, trees, and umber-hills, and streaky water. You shouldn't let him fill your wife's mind with this oil-and-varnish spirit--giving up the piano, the guitar, and that sweeter instrument than all, her own voice. D--n the paintings!--his long talk on the subject almost makes me sick of everything like a picture. I now look upon a beautiful landscape like this. as a thing that is shortly to be desecrated--taken

in vain--scratched out of shape and proportion upon a deal-board, and colored after such a fashion as never before was seen in the natural world, upon, or under, or about this solid earth. D--n the pictures, I say again!--but, for God's sake, Clifford, don't let your wife give up the music! Make her play, even if she don't like it. She likes the painting best, but I wouldn't allow it! A wife is a sort of person that we set to do those things that we wish done and can't do for ourselves. That's my definition of a wife. Now, if I were in your place, with my present love for music and dislike of pictures, I'd put her at the piano, and put the paint-saucers, and the oil, and the smutted canvass, out of the window; and then--unless he came to his senses like other people--I'd thrust Bill Edgerton out after them! I'd never let the best friend in the world spoil my wife."

The effect of this random chatter of my good-natured friend upon my mind may well be imagined. It was fortunate that he was quite too much occupied in what he was saying to note my annoyance. In vain, anxious to be let off, was I restrained in utterance--cold, unpliant. The good fellow took for granted that it was an act of friendship to try to amuse; and thus, yearning with a nameless discontent and apprehension to get home I was marched to and fro along the river-bank, from one scene to another--he, meanwhile, utterly heedless of time, and as actively bent on perpetual motion as if his sinews were of steel and his flesh iron. Meanwhile, the guitar ceased, and the song in the cottage of Miss Davison; the lights went out in that and all the other dwellings in sight; the moon waned; and it was not till the clock from a distant steeple tolled out the hour of eleven with startling solemnity, that Kingsley exclaimed:--

"Well, mon ami, we have had a ramble, and I trust I have somewhat dissipated your gloomy fit. And now to bed--what say you?--with what appetite we may!"

With what appetite, indeed! We separated. I rushed homeward, the moment he was out of sight--once more stood before my own dwelling. There the lights remained unextinguished and William Edgerton was still a tenant of my parlor!

CHAPTER XXII.

SELF-HUMILIATION.

I had not the courage to enter my own dwelling! My heart sank within me. It was as if the whole hope of a long life, an intense desire, a keen unremitting pursuit, had suddenly been for ever baffled. Let no one who has not been in my situation; who has not been governed by like moral and social influences from the beginning; who knows not my sensibilities, and the organization--singular and

strange it may be--of my mind and body; let no such person jump to the conclusion that there was any thing unnatural, however unreasonable and unreasoning, in the wild passion which possessed me. I look back upon it with some surprise myself. The fears which I felt, the sufferings I endured, however unreasonable, were yet true to my training. That training made me selfish; how selfish let my blindness show! In the blindness of self I could see nothing but the thing I feared, the one phantom--phantom though it were--which was sufficient to quell and crush all the better part of man within me, banish all the real blessings which were at command around me. I gave but a single second glance through the windows of my habitation, and then darted desperately away from the entrance! I bounded, without a consciousness, through the now still and dreary streets, and found myself, without intending it, once more beside the river, whose constant melancholy chidings, seemed the echoes--though in the faintest possible degree--of the deep waters of some apprehensive sorrow then rolling through all the channels of my soul.

What was it that I feared? What was it that I sought? Was it love? Can it be that the strange passion which we call by this name, was the source of that sad frenzy which filled and afflicted my heart? And was I not successful in my love? Had I not found the sought?--won the withheld? What was denied to me that I desired? I asked of myself these questions. I asked them in vain. I could not answer them. I believe that I can answer now. It was sincerity, earnestness, devotion from her, all speaking through an intensity like that which I felt within my own soul.

Now, Julia lacked this earnestness, this intensity. Accustomed to submission, her manner was habitually subdued. Her strongest utterance was a tear, and that was most frequently hidden. She did not respond to me in the language in which my affections were wont to speak. Sincerity she did not lack--far from it--she was truth itself! It is the keener pang to my conscience now, that I am compelled to admit this conviction. Her modes of utterance were not less true than mine. They were not less significant of truth; but they were after a different fashion. In a moment of calm and reason, I might have believed this truth; nay, I knew it, even at those moments when I was most unjust. It was not the truth that I required so much as the presence of an attachment which could equal mine in its degree and strength. This was not in her nature. She was one taught to subdue her nature, to repress the tendencies of her heart, to submit in silence and in meekness. She had invariably done so until the insane urgency of her mother made her desperate. But for this desperation she had still submitted, perhaps, had never been my wife. In the fervent intensity of my own love, I fancied, from the beginning, that there was something too temperate in the tone of hers. Were I to be examined now, on this point, I should say that her deportment was one which declared the nicest union of sensibility and maidenly propriety. But, compared with mine, her passions were feeble, frigid. Mine were equally intense and exacting. Perhaps, had she even responded to my impetuosity with a like fervor, I should have recoiled from her with a feeling of disgust much more rapid and much more legitimate, than was that of my present frenzy.

Frenzy it was! and it led me to the performance of those things of which I shame to speak. But the truth, and its honest utterance

now, must be one of those forms of atonement with which I may hope, perhaps vainly, to lessen, in the sight of Heaven, some of my human offences. I had scarcely reached the water-side before a new impulse drove me back. You will scarcely believe me when I tell you that I descended to the base character of the spy upon my household. The blush is red on my cheek while I record the shameful error. I entered the garden, stole like a felon to the lattice of the apartment in which my wife sat with her guest, and looked in with a greedy fear, upon the features of the two!

What were my own features then? What the expression of my eyes? It was well that I could not see them; I felt that they must be frightful. But what did I expect to see in this espionage? As I live, honestly now, and with what degree of honesty I then possessed, I may truly declare that when I THOUGHT upon the subject at all, I had no more suspicion that my wife would be guilty of any gross crime, than I had of the guilt of the Deity himself. Far from it. Such a fancy never troubled me. But, what was it to me, loving as I did, exclusive, and selfish, and exacting as I was--what was it to me if, forbearing all crime of conduct, she yet regarded another with eyes of idolatry--if her mind was yielded up to him in deference and regard; and thoughts, disparaging to me, filled her brain with his superior worth, manners, merits? He had tastes, perhaps talents, which I had not. In the forum, in all the more energetic, more imposing performances of life, William Edgerton, I knew, could take no rank in competition with myself. But I was no ladies' man. I had no arts of society. My manners were even rude. My address was direct almost to bluntness. I had no discriminating graces, and could make no sacrifice, in that school of polish, where the delicacy is too apt to become false, and the performances trifling. It is idle to dwell on this; still more idle to speculate upon probable causes. It may be that there are persons in the world of both sexes, and governed by like influences, who have been guilty of like follies; to them my revelations may be of service. My discoveries, if I have made any, were quite too late to be of much help to me.

To resume, I prowled like a guilty phantom around my own habitation. I scanned closely, with the keenest eyes of jealousy, every feature, every movement of the two within. In the eyes of Edgerton, I beheld--I did not deceive myself in this--I beheld the speaking soul, devoted, rapt, full of love for the object of his survey. That he loved her was to me sufficiently clear. His words were few, faintly spoken, timid. His eyes did not encounter hers; but when hers were averted, they riveted their fixed glances upon her face with the adherence of the yearning steel for the magnet! Bitterly did I gnash my teeth--bitterly did my spirit rise in rebellion, as I noted these characteristics. But, vainly, with all my perversity of feeling and judgment, did I examine the air, the look, the action, the expression, the tones, the words of my wife, to make a like discovery. All was passionless, all seeming pure, in her whole conduct. She was gentle in her manner, kind in her words, considerate in her attentions; but so entirely at ease, so evidently unconscious, as well of improper thoughts in herself as of an improper tendency in him, that, though still resolute to be wilful and unhappy, I yet could see nothing of which I could reasonably complain. Nay, I fancied that there was a touch of listlessness, amounting to indifference, in her air, as if she really wished him to be gone; and, for a moment, my heart beat with a returning flood of tenderness,

that almost prompted me to rush suddenly into the apartment and clasp her to my arms.

At length, Edgerton departed. When he rose to do so, I felt the awkwardness of my situation--the meanness of which I had been guilty--the disgrace which would follow detection. The shame I already felt; but, though sickening beneath it, the passion which drove me into the commission of so slavish an act, was still superior to all others, and could not then be overcome. I hurried from the window and from the premises while he was taking his leave. My mind was still in a frenzy. I rambled off, unconsciously, to the most secluded places along the suburbs, endeavoring to lose the thoughts that troubled me. I had now a new cause for vexation. I was haunted by a conviction of my own shame. How could I look Julia in the face--how meet and speak to her, and hear the accents of her voice and my own after the unworthy espionage which I had instituted upon her? Would not my eyes betray me--my faltering accents, my abashed looks, my flushed and burning cheeks? I felt that it was impossible for me to escape detection. I was sure that every look, every tone, would sufficiently betray my secret. Perhaps I should not have felt this fear, had I possessed the courage to resolve against the repetition of my error. Could I have declared this resolution to myself, to forego the miserable proceeding which I had that night begun, I feel that I should then have taken one large step toward my own deliverance from that formidable fiend which was then raging unmastered in my soul. But I lacked the courage for this. Fatal deficiency! I felt impressed with the necessity of keeping a strict watch upon Edgerton. I had seen, with eyes that could not be deceived, the feeling which had been expressed in his. I saw that he loved her, perhaps, without a consciousness himself of the unhappy truth. I hurried to the conclusion, accordingly, that he must be looked after. I did not so immediately perceive that in looking after him, I was, in truth, looking after Julia; for what was my watch upon Edgerton but a watch upon her? I had not the confidence in her to leave her to herself. That was my error. The true reasoning by which a man in my situation should be governed, is comprised in a nutshell. Either the wife is virtuous or she is not. If she is virtuous, she is safe without my espionage. If she is not, all the watching in the world will not suffice to make her so. As for the discovery of her falsehood, he will make that fast enough. The security of the husband lies in his wife's purity, not in his own eyes. It must be added to this argument that the most virtuous among us, man or woman, is still very weak; and neither wife, nor daughter, nor son, should be exposed to unnecessary temptation. Do we not daily implore in our own prayers, to be saved from temptation?

I need not strive to declare what were my thoughts and feelings as I wandered off from my dwelling and place of espionage that night. No language of which I am possessed could embody to the idea of the reader the thousandth part of what I suffered. An insane and morbid resentment filled my heart. A close, heavy, hot stupor, pressed upon my brain. My limbs seemed feeble as those of a child. I tottered in the streets. The stars, bright mysterious watchers, seemed peering down into my face with looks of smiling inquiry. The sudden bark of a watch-dog startled and unnerved me. I felt with the consciousness of a mean action, all the humiliating weakness which belongs to it.

It took me a goodly hour before I could muster up courage to return home, and it was then midnight. Julia had retired to her chamber, but not yet to her couch. She flew to me on my entrance--to my arms. I shrunk from her embraces; but she grasped me with greater firmness. I had never witnessed so much warmth in her before. It surprised me, but the solution of it was easy. My long stay had made her apprehensive. It was so unusual. My coldness, when she embraced me, was as startling to her, as her sudden warmth was surprising to me. She pushed me from her--still, however, holding me in her grasp, while she surveyed me. Then she started, and with newer apprehensions.

Well she might. My looks alarmed her. My hair was dishevelled and moist with the night-dews. My cheeks were very pale. There was a quick, agitated, and dilating fullness of my eyes, which rolled hastily about the apartment, never even resting upon her. They dared not. I caught a hasty glance of myself in the mirror, and scarcely knew my own features. It was natural enough that she should be alarmed. She clung to me with increased fervency. She spoke hurriedly, but clearly, with an increased and novel power of utterance, the due result of her excitement. Could that excitement be occasioned by love for me--by a suspicion of the truth, namely, that I had been watching her? I shuddered as this last conjecture passed into my mind. That, indeed, would be a humiliation--worse, more degrading, by far, than all.

"Oh, why have you left me--so long, so very long? where have you been? what has happened?"

"Nothing--nothing."

"Ah, but there is something, Edward. Speak! what is it, dear husband? I see it in your eyes, your looks! Why do you turn from me? Look on me! tell me! You are very pale, and your eyes are so wild, so strange! You are sick, dear Edward; you are surely sick: tell me, what has happened?"

Wild and hurried as they were, never did tones of more touching sweetness fall from any lips. They unmanned--nay, I use the wrong word--they MANNED me for the time. They brought me back to my senses, to a conviction of her truth, to a momentary conviction of my own folly. My words fell from me without effort--few, hurried, husky--but it was a sudden heartgush, which was unrestrainable.

"Ask me not, Julia--ask me nothing; but love me, only love me, and all will be well--all is well."

"Do I not--ah! do I not love you, Edward?"

"I believe you--God be praised, I DO believe you!"

"Oh, surely, Edward, you never doubted this."

"No, no!--never!"

Such was the fervent ejaculation of my lips; such, in spite of its seeming inconsistency, was the real belief within my soul. What was it, then, that I did doubt? wherefore, then, the misery, the suspense, the suspicion, which grew and gathered, corroding

in my heart, the parent of a thousand unnamed anxieties? It will be difficult to answer. The heart of man is one of those strange creations, so various in its moods, so infinite in its ramifications, so subtle and sudden in its transitions, as to defy investigation as certainly as it refuses remedy and relief. It is enough to say that, with one schooled as mine had been, injuriously, and with injustice, there is little certainty in any of its movements. It becomes habitually capricious, feeds upon passions intensely, without seeming detriment; and, after a season, prefers the unwholesome nutriment which it has made vital, to those purer natural sources of strength and succor, without which, though it may still enjoy life, it can never know happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PROGRESS OF PASSION.

"But, do not leave me another time--not so long, Edward Do not leave me alone. Your business is one thing. THAT you must, of course, attend to; but hours--not of business--hours in which you do no business--hours of leisure--your evenings, Edward--these you must share with me--you must give to me entirely. Ah! will you not? will you not promise me?"

These were among the last words which she spoke to me ere we slept that night. The next morning, almost at awaking, she resumed the same language. I could not help perceiving that she spoke in tones of greater earnestness than usual--an earnestness expressive of anxiety for which I felt at some loss to account. Still, the tenor of what she said, at the time, gave me pleasure--a satisfaction which I did not seek to conceal, and which, while it lasted, was the sweetest of all pleasures to my soul. But the busy devil in my heart made his suggestions also, which were of a kind to produce any other but satisfying emotions. While I stood in my wife's presence--in the hearing of her angel-voice, and beholding the pure spirit speaking out from her eyes--he lay dormant, rebuked, within his prison-house, crouching in quiet, waiting a more auspicious moment for activity. Nor was he long in waiting; and then his cold, insinuating doubts--his inquiries--begot and startled mine!

"Very good--all very good!" Such was the tone of his suggestions. She may well compound for the evenings with you, since she gives her whole mornings to your rival."

Archimedes asked but little for the propulsion of the world. The jealous spirit--a spirit jealous like mine--asks still for the moving of that little but densely-populous world, the human heart. I forgot the sweet tones of my wife's words--the pure-souled words themselves--tones and words which, while their sounds yet lingered in my ears, I could not have questioned--I did not dare to question.

The tempter grew in the ascendant the moment I had passed out of her sight; and when I met William Edgerton the next day, he acquired greatly-increased power over my understanding.

William Edgerton had evidently undergone a change. He no longer met my glances boldly with his own. Perhaps, had he done so, my eyes would have been the first to shrink from the encounter. He looked down, or looked aside, when he spoke to me; his words were few, timorous, hesitating, but studiously conciliatory; and he lingered no longer in my presence than was absolutely unavoidable. Was there not a consciousness in this? and what consciousness? The devil at my heart answered, and answered with truth, "He loves your wife." It would have been well, perhaps, had the cruel fiend said nothing farther. Alas! I would have pardoned, nay, pitied William Edgerton, had the same chuckling spirit not assured me that she also was not insensible to him. I was continually reminded of the words, "Your business must, of course, be attended to!"

--"What a considerate wife!" said the tempter; "how very unusual with young wives, with whom business is commonly the very last consideration!"

That very day, I found, on reaching home, that William Edgerton had been there--had gone there almost the moment after he had left me at the office; and that he had remained there, obviously at work in the studio, until the time drew nigh for my return to dinner. My feelings forbade any inquiries. These, facts were all related by my wife herself. I did not ask to hear them. I asked for nothing more than she told. The dread that my jealousy should be suspected made me put on a sturdy aspect of indifference; and that exquisite sense of delicacy, which governed every movement of my wife's heart and conduct, forbade her to say--what yet she certainly desired I should know--that, in all that time, she had not seen him, nor he her. She had studiously kept aloof in her chamber so long as he remained. Meanwhile, I brooded over their supposed long and secret interviews. These I took for granted. The happiness they felt--the mutual smile they witnessed--the unconscious sighs they uttered! Such a picture of their supposed felicity as my morbid imagination conjured up would have roused a doubly damned and damning fiend in the heart of any mortal.

What a task was mine, struggling with these images, these convictions!--my pride struggling to conceal, my feelings struggling to endure. Then, there were other conflicts. What friends had the Edgertons been to me--father, mother--nay, that son himself, once so fondly esteemed, once so fondly esteeming! Of course, no ties such as these could have made me patient under wrong. But they were such as to render it necessary that the wrong should be real, unquestionable, beyond doubt, beyond excuse. This I felt, this I resolved.

"I will wait! I will be patient! I will endure, though the vulture gnaws incessant at my heart! I will do nothing precipitate. No, no: I must beware of that! But let me prove them treacherous--let them once falter, and go aside from the straight path, and then--oh, then!"

Such, as in spoken words, was the unspoken resolution of my soul; and this resolution required, first of all, that I should carry out the base purpose which, without a purpose, I had already begun.

I must be a spy upon their interviews. They must be followed, watched--eyes, looks, hands! Miserable necessity! but, under my present feelings and determination, not the less a necessity. And I, alone, must do it; I, alone, must peer busily into these mysteries, the revelation of which can result only in my own ruin--seeking still, with an earnest diligence, to discover that which I should rather have prayed for eternal and unmitigated blindness, that I might not see! Mine was, indeed, the philosophy of the madman.

I persevered in it like one. I yielded all opportunities for the meeting of the parties--all opportunities which, in yielding, did not expose me to the suspicion of having any sinister object. If, for example, I found, or could conjecture, that William Edgerton was likely to be at my house this or that evening, I studiously intimated, beforehand, some necessity for being myself absent. This carried me frequently from home--lone, wandering, vexing myself with the most hideous conjectures, the most self-torturing apprehensions. I sped away, obviously, into the city--to alleged meetings with friends or clients--or on some pretence or other which seemed ordinary and natural. But my course was to return, and, under cover of night, to prowl, around my own premises, like some guilty ghost, doomed to haunt the scene of former happiness, in its wantonness rendered a scene of ever-during misery. Certainly, no guilty ghost ever suffered in his penal tortures a torture worse than mine at these humiliating moments. It was torture enough to me that I was sensible of all the unhappy meanness of my conduct. On this head, though I strove to excuse myself on the score of a supposed necessity, I could not deceive myself--not--not for the smallest moment.

Weeks passed in this manner--weeks to me of misery--of annoyance and secret suffering to my wife. In this time, my espionage resulted in nothing but what has been already shown--in what was already sufficiently obvious to me. William Edgerton continued his insane attentions: he sought my dwelling with studious perseverance--sought it particularly at those periods when he fancied I was absent--when he knew it--though such were not his exclusive periods of visitation. He came at times when I was at home. His passion for my wife was sufficiently evident to me, though her deportment was such as to persuade me that she did not see it. All that I beheld of her conduct was irreproachable. There was a singular and sweet dignity in her air and manner, when they were together, that seemed one of the most insuperable barriers to any rash or presumptuous approach. While there was no constraint about her carriage, there was no familiarity--nothing to encourage or invite familiarity. While she answered freely, responding to all the needs of a suggested subject, she herself never seemed to broach one; and, after hours of nightly watch, which ran through a period of weeks, in which I strove at the shameful occupation of the espial, I was compelled to admit that all her part was as purely unexceptionable as the most jealous husband could have wished it.

But not so with the conduct of William Edgerton. His attentions were increasing. His passion was assuming some of the forms of that delirium to which, under encouragement, it is usually driven in the end. He now passionately watched my wife's countenance, and no longer averted his glance when it suddenly encountered hers. His eyes, naturally tender in expression, now assumed a look of irrepressible ardency, from which, I now fancied--pleased to fancy--that hers recoiled! He would linger long in silence, silently

watching her, and seemingly unconscious, the while, equally of his scrutiny and his silence. At such times, I could perceive that Julia would turn aside, or her own eyes would be marked by an expression of the coldest vacancy, which, but for other circumstances, or in any other condition of my mind, would have seemed to me conclusive of her indignation or dislike. But, when such became my thought, it was soon expelled by some suggestion from the busy devil of my imagination:--

"They may well put on this appearance now; but are such their looks when they meet, sometimes for a whole morning, in the painting-room?" Even here, the fiend was silenced by a fact which was revealed to me in one of my nocturnal watches.

"Clifford not at home?" said Edgerton one evening as he entered, addressing my wife, and looking indifferently around the room. "I wished to tell him about some pictures which are to be seen at ----'s room--really a lovely Guido--an infant Savior--and something, said to be by Carlo Dolce, though I doubt. You must see them. Shall I call for you tomorrow morning?"

"I thank you, but have an engagement for the morning."

"Well, the next day. They will remain but a few days longer in the city."

"I am sorry, but I shall not be able to go even the next day, I am so busy."

"Busy? ah! that reminds me to ask if you have given up the pencil altogether? Have you wholly abandoned the studio? I never see you now at work in the morning. I had no thought that you had so much of the fashionable taste for morning calls, shopping, and the like."

"Nor have I," was the quiet answer. "I seldom leave home in the morning."

"Indeed!" with some doubtfulness of countenance, almost amounting to chagrin--"indeed! how is it that I so seldom see you, then?"

"The cares of a household, I suppose, might be my sufficient excuse. While my liege lord works abroad, I find my duties sufficiently urgent to task all my time at home."

"Really--but you do not propose to abandon the atelier entirely? Clifford himself, with his great fondness for the art, will scarcely be satisfied that you should, even on a pretence of work."

"I do not know. I do not think that MY HUSBAND"--the last two words certainly emphasized--"cares much about it. I suspect that music and painting, however much they delighted and employed our girlhood, form but a very insignificant part of our duties and enjoyments when we get married."

"But you do not mean to say that a fine landscape, or an exquisite head, gives you less satisfaction than before your marriage?"

"I confess they do. Life is a very different thing before and after marriage. It seems far more serious--it appears to me a possession

now, and time a sort of property which has to be economized and doled out almost as cautiously as money. I have not touched a brush this fortnight. I doubt if I have been in the painting-room more than once in all this time."

This conversation, which evidently discomfited William Elgerton, was productive to me of no small satisfaction. After a brief interval, consumed in silence, he resumed it:--

"But I must certainly get you to see these pictures. Nay, I must also--since you keep at home--persuade you to look into the studio tomorrow, if it be only to flatter my vanity by looking at a sketch which I have amused myself upon the last three mornings. By-the-way, why may we not look at it tonight?"

"We shall not be able to examine it carefully by night," was the answer, as I fancied, spoken with unwonted coldness and deliberation.

"So much the better for me," he replied, with an ineffectual attempt to laugh; "you will be less able to discern its defects."

"The same difficulty will endanger its beauties," Julia answered, without offering to rise.

"Well, at least, you must arrange for seeing the pictures at ----'s. They are to remain but a few days, and I would not have you miss seeing them for the world. Suppose you say Saturday morning?"

"If nothing happens to prevent," she said; "and I will endeavor to persuade Mr. Clifford to look at them with us."

"Oh, he is so full of his law and clients, that you will hardly succeed."

This was spoken with evident dissatisfaction. The arrangement, which included me, seemed unnecessary. I need not say that I was better pleased with my wife than I had been for some time previous; but here the juggling fiend interposed again, to suggest the painful suspicion that she knew of my whereabouts, of my jealousy, of my espionage; that her words were rather meant for my ears than for those of Edgerton; or, if this were not the case, her manner to Edgerton was simply adopted, as she had now become conscious of her own feelings--feelings of peril--feelings which would not permit her to trust herself. Ah! she feared herself: she had discovered the passion of William Edgerton, and it had taught her the character and tendency of her own. Was there ever more self-destroying malice than was mine? I settled down upon this last conviction. My wife's coldness was only assumed to prevent Edgerton from seeing her weakness; and, for Edgerton himself, I now trembled with the conviction that I should have to shed his blood.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GROUP.

This conviction now began to haunt my mind with all the punctuality of a shadow. It came to me unconsciously, uncalled for; mingled with other thoughts and disturbed them all. Whether at my desk, or in the courts; among men in the crowded mart, or in places simply where the idle and the thoughtless congregate, it was still my companion. It was, however, still a shadow only; a dull, intangible, half-formed image of the mind; the crude creature of a fear rather than a desire; for, of a truth, nothing could be more really terrible to me than the apparent necessity of taking the life of one so dear to me once, and still so dear to the only friends I had ever known. I need not say how silently I strove to banish this conviction. My struggles on this subject were precisely those which are felt by nervous men suddenly approaching a precipice, and, though secure, flinging themselves off, in the extremity of their apprehensions of that danger which has assumed in their imaginations an aspect so absorbing. With such persons, the extreme anxiety to avoid the deed, whether of evil or of mere danger, frequently provokes its commission. I felt that this risk encountered me. I well knew that an act often contemplated may be already considered half-performed; and though I could not rid myself of the impression that I was destined to do the deed the very idea of which made me shudder, I yet determined, with all the remaining resolution of my virtue, to dismiss it from my thought, as I resolved to escape from its performance if I could.

It would have been easy enough for me to have kept this resolution as it was enough for me to make it, had it not clashed with a superior passion in my mind; but that blindness of heart under which I labored, impaired my judgment, enfeebled my resolution, baffled my prudence, defeated all my faculties of self-preservation. I was, in fact, a monomaniac. On one subject, I was incapable of thought, of sane reasoning, of fixed purpose. I am unwilling to distinguish this madness by the word "jealousy." In the ordinary sense of the term it was not jealousy. Phrenologists would call it an undue development of self-esteem, diseased by frequent provocation into an irritable suspiciousness, which influenced all the offices of thought. It was certain, to myself, that in instituting the watch which I did over the conduct of my wife and William Edgerton, I did not expect to discover the commission of any gross act which, in the vulgar acceptance of the world, constitutes the crime of infidelity. The pang would not have been less to my mind, though every such act was forborne, if I perceived that her eyes yearned for his coming, and her looks of despondency took note of his absence. If I could see that she hearkened to his words with the ears of one who deferred even to devotedness, and found that pleasure in his accents which should only have been accorded to mine. It is the low nature, alone, which seeks for developments beyond these, to constitute the sin of faithlessness. Of looks, words, consideration, habitual deference, and eager attention, I was quite as uxorious as I should have been of the warm kiss, or the yielding, fond embrace. They were the same in my eyes. It was for the momentary glance, the passing word, the forgetful sigh, that I looked and listened, while I pursued the unhappy espionage upon my wife and her lover. That he was her lover, was sufficiently evident--how

far she was pleased with his devotion was the question to be asked and--answered!

The self-esteem which produced these developments of jealousy, in my own home, was not unexercised abroad. The same exacting nature was busy among my friends and mere acquaintance. Of these I had but few; to these I could be devoted; for these I could toil; for these I could freely have perished! But I demanded nothing less from them. Of their consideration and regard I was equally uxorious as I was of the affections of my wife. I was an INTENSIFIER in all my relations, and was not willing to divide or share my sympathies. I became suspicious when I found any of my acquaintance forming new intimacies, and sunk into reserves which necessarily produced a severance of the old ties between us. It naturally followed that my few friends became fewer, and I finally stood alone. But enough of self-analysis, which, in truth, owes its origin to the very same mental quality which I have been discussing--the presence and prevalence of EGOISME. Let us hurry our progress.

My wife advised me of the visit which William Edgerton had proposed to the picture collection.

"I will go," she said, "if you will."

"You must go without me."

"Ah, why? Surely, you can go one morning?"

"Impossible. The morning is the time for business. THAT must be attended to, you know."

"But you needn't slave yourself at it because it is business, Edward. But that I know that you are not a money-loving man, I should suppose, sometimes, from the continual plea of business, that you were a miser, and delighted in filling old stockings to hide away in holes and chinks of the wall. Come, now, Saturday is not usually a busy day with you lawyers; steal it this once and go with us. I lose half the pleasure of the sight always, when you are not with me, and when I know that you are engaged in working for me elsewhere."

"Ah, you mistake, Julia. You shall not flatter me into such a faith. You lose precious little by my absence."

"But, Edward, I do; believe me--it is true."

"Impossible! No, no, Julia, when you look on the Carlo Dolce and the Guido, you will forget not only the toils of the husband, but that you have one at all. You will forget my harsh features in the contemplation of softer ones."

"Your features are not harsh ones, Edward."

"Nay, you shall not persuade me that I am not an Orson--a very wild man of the woods. I know I am. I know that I have harsh features; nay, I fancy you know it too, by this time, Julia."

"I admit the sternness at times, Edward, but I deny the harshness. Besides, sternness, you know, is perfectly compatible with the possession of the highest human beauty. I am not sure that a certain

portion of sternness is not absolutely necessary to manly beauty. It seems to me that I have never yet seen what I call a handsome man, whose features had not a certain sweet gravity, a sort of melancholy defiance, in them which neutralized the effect of any effeminacy which mere beauty must have had; and imparted to them a degree of character which compelled you to turn again and look, and made you remember them, even when they had disappeared from sight. Now, it may be the vanity of a wife, Edward, but it seems to me that this is the very sort of face which you possess."

"Ah! you are very vain of me, I know--very!"

"Proud, fond--not vain!"

"You deceive yourself still, I suspect, even with your distinctions. But you must forego the pleasure of displaying my 'stern beauties,' as your particular possession, at the gallery. You must content yourself with others not so stern, though perhaps not less beautiful, and certainly more amiable. Edgerton will be your sufficient chaperon."

"Yes, but I do not wish to be troubling Mr. Edgerton so frequently; and, indeed, I would rather forego the pleasure of seeing the pictures altogether, than trespass in this way upon his attention and leisure."

"Indeed, but I am very sure you do not trespass upon either. He is an idle, good fellow, relishes anything better than business, and you know has such a passion for painting and pictures that its indulgence seems to justify anything to his mind. He will forget everything in their pursuit."

All this was said with a studious indifference of manner. I was singularly successful in concealing the expression of that agony which was gnawing all the while upon my heart. I could smile, too, while I was speaking--while I was suffering! Look calmly into her face and smile, with a composure, a strength, the very consciousness of which was a source of terrible overthrow to me at last. I was surprised to perceive an air of chagrin upon Julia's countenance, which was certainly unstudied. She was one of those who do not well conceal or cloak their real sentiments. The faculty of doing so is usually much more strongly possessed by women than by men--much more easily commanded--but SHE had little of it. Why should she wear this expression of disappointment--chagrin! Was she really anxious that I should attend her? I began to think so--began to relent, and think of promising that I would go with her, when she somewhat abruptly laid her hand upon my arm.

"Edward, you leave me too frequently. You stay from me too long, particularly at evening. Do not forget, dear husband, how few female friends I have; how few friends of any sort--how small is my social circle. Besides, it is expected of all young people, newly married, that they will be frequently together; and when it is seen that they are often separate--that the wife goes abroad alone, or goes in the company of persons not of the family, it begets a suspicion that all is not well--that there is no peace, no love, in the family so divided. Do not think, Edward, that I mean this reproachfully--that I mean complaint--that I apprehend the loss of your love: oh no! I dread too greatly any such loss to venture upon its suspicion lightly, but I would guard against the conjectures of others--"

"So, then, it is not that you really wish my company. It is be-cause you would simply maintain appearances."

"I would do both, Edward. God knows I care as little for mere appearances, so long as the substances, are good, as you do; but I confess I would not have the neighbors speak o

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