WARNER SUSAN, ANNA BARTLETT WARNER

SAY AND SEAL, VOLUME II

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I

So came the holiday week, wherein was to be done so much less than usual—and so much more. Mr. Linden's work, indeed, was like to double on all hands; for he was threatened with more tea-drinkings, dinners, suppers, and frolics, than the week would hold. How should he manage to give everybody a piece of him, and likewise present himself entire to the assembled boys when ever they chose to assemble?—which promised to be pretty often. How should he go skating, sliding, and sleigh-riding, at all hours of the day and night, and yet spend all those hours where he wanted to spend them? It was a grave question; and not easy, as he remarked to Faith, to hold so many feelings in his hands and hurt none of them. So with the question yet undecided, Christmas day came.

It was a brilliant day—all white and blue; the sky like a sapphire, the earth like a pearl; the sunbeams burnished gold.

> "Ha' ye but seen the light fall of the snow,
> Before the soil hath smutched it?"—

Such was Pattaquasset, Christmas morning. And the bright lily,

> "Before rude hands have touched it,"

that was Faith Derrick when she came down stairs. The dainty little crimson silk hood which Mrs. Derrick had quilted for her, was in her hand, brought down for display; but at present the sitting-room was empty, and Faith passed on to her work-basket, to put the hood in safe keeping. She found a pre-occupied basket. At some unknown hour of the night, Santa Claus had come and left upon it his mark in the shape of a package: a rather large and rather thin package, but done up with that infallible brown paper and small cord which everybody knows by instinct. Who ever looked twice at a parcel from *that* wagon, and doubted whence it came?

Faith's cheeks took an additional tinge, quite as brilliant as if the crimson hood had been on. What doubtful fingers lifted the package from the basket!

The thing—whatever it was—had been done up carefully. Beneath the brown paper a white one revealed itself, beneath that a red leather portfolio—made in the pretty old-fashioned style, and securing its contents by means of its red leather tongue. But when Faith had withdrawn this, and with the caution always exercised on such occasions had also drawn out the contents, she found the prettiest continuation of her Italian journey, in the

shape of very fine photographs of all sorts of Italian places and things, mingled with here and there an excursion into the Swiss mountains.

A few almost awe-stricken glances Faith gave; then she put the photographs in the portfolio again, scarcely seen, and looked at the outside of the red leather; felt of its smooth surface with admiring fingers that hardly believed what they touched, and a face glowing with a very deep glow by this time. Faith thought herself rich, beyond the imagination of a millionaire. But after a little mute amazed consideration of her happiness, she rushed off to the kitchen to signalize the Christmas breakfast —and perhaps spend a few of her too many thoughts—by the preparation and production of one of Madame Danforth's nice, but in Pattaquasset unheard of, delicacies; and when all the rest of the breakfast was ready, Faith demurely went in with her dish.

She had not a word of acknowledgment for Mr. Linden, which was ungrateful. She gave him her hand, however, with a manner and look which were graceful enough; being at once open and shy, very bright, and yet veiled with a shade of reserve. She had been over the fire, so her face was naturally a little rosy. There was no particular reserve about him,—his "Merry Christmas" was not only wished but carried out, so far as breakfast time extended. Faith might be as demure as she liked, but she had to be merry too; so on the whole the breakfast room was beaming with more than sunlight. Yes, it was a merry Christmas!—merry without and merry within,—that sort of merriment which "doeth

good like a medicine." Gay voices and steps and snowballing on the broad street; gay snowbirds and chickadees in the branches; in the house glad faces; over and upon all, clear sunshine and the soft hush of a winter's morning.

"What are you going to do to-day, mother?" said Faith towards the close of breakfast time.

"I'd rather look at you than anything else, child," said her mother, "but I've got to go out, you know. What are *you* going to do Faith?"

"All sorts of things, mother. Mr. Linden?"—

"All sorts of things, Miss Faith—therefore we shall probably meet quite often in the course of the day," he said smiling. "Will you give me any commands?"

"Perhaps—if I can. Mother, how are we to get to Mrs. Somers to-night?—is Crab well?"

"O Crab's gone away for the winter, child, and we've got Mr.Stoutenburgh's Jerry. To be sure—that's since you went away."

The first thing for Faith was the Christmas dinner, into which she plunged, heart and hand. The turkey, the apples, and the pies, were all seen to at last; and about an hour before dinner Faith was ready to take off her kitchen apron and go into the parlour. She longed for a further touch and eyesight of that red leather.

She had it, for that hour; as dainty a luxuriating over her treasures as anybody ever had. Faith pondered and dreamed over the photographs, one after another; with endless marvel

and querying of numberless questions springing out of them,—general and particular, historical, natural, social, and artistic or scientific. Questions that sometimes she knew only enough to form vaguely. What a looking over of prints that was! such an hour as is known by few, few of those who have seen engravings all their lives. Nay, further than that;—such as is not known by many a one that stands on the Bridge of sighs, and crosses the Mer de glace, and sees the smoke curling up from Vesuvius. For once in a while there is an imaginary traveller at home to whom is revealed more of the spirit of beauty residing in these things, than hundreds of those who visit them do ever see. Who

> "Feels the warm Orient in the noontide air,
> And from cloud-minarets hears the sunset call to prayer."

Before dinner time was quite on the stroke came home Mr. Linden, who betaking himself first upstairs and then into the sitting-room, brought Faith her Christmas breastknot of green and red. Stiff holly leaves, with their glossy sheen, and bright winterberries—clear and red, set each other off like jewellers' work; and the soft ribbon that bound them together was of the darkest possible blue. It was as dainty a bit of floral handicraft as Faith had often seen.

"Will you wear it, Miss Faith?" Mr. Linden said as he laid it on the table by her.

Faith had come out of her dream, and gave the holly and

winterberries a downcast look of recognition. It was given in silence, but the pleasure which had been uppermost for some time presently made her overcome shyness, and looking up gratefully she exclaimed, "Mr. Linden—what pleasure you have given me!"—The soft colour which had been in her cheeks before, mounted instantly to deep crimson, and she added timidly, "Wasn't it you?"

"What pleasure you give me!"—he said with a smile at her crimson and all. "Yes, it was I."

"It seems to me I have been at those places to-day," she went on, looking over at the sofa where her portfolio lay. "I have been fancying your sister standing here and there and looking at something I saw in the picture. Now I can understand a little better what she was writing about."

"I am very glad you like them! Some time you must let me give you any explanations they may need. What have you found for me to do this afternoon?"

"Aren't you going to be busy, Mr. Linden?"

"About something—your business shall come first."

"It can wait," said Faith very brightly. "It was just that, Mr. Linden.—I was going to ask you some time to shew them to me. I have been looking at some of them by myself, and going into a great many things over them that I could not understand. But any time will do for that—as well as to-day."

"And to-day as well as any time"—he said smiling; "but I suppose we must wait till after dinner."

There was great satisfaction at that dinner, not to say in it—which indeed the dinner merited. There was the remaining glow of the pleasant morning, and a little dawning of the afternoon, besides the hour's own light. Faith indeed was the radiating point of pleasure, which the two others watched and furnished with new supplies. Then after dinner came the Italian work, and she had as elaborate and careful answers and information as she wished for. Mr. Linden could go back and tell her where each place got its name, and what had been its history, with many stories of its climate and productions and traditions; and so one by one Faith went over again her new treasures. One by one,—until the short afternoon began to fade, and it was time to dress for Mrs. Somers'; and they had made but little progress into the portfolio, after all. Yet it was a great "progress" to Faith;—a grand procession through the years of history and the stages of civilization and the varying phases of nature and humanity.

Very tenderly the photographs were restored to the portfolio and the red leather tongue drawn through, with a little breath heavy with pleasure, and Faith carried off the whole to be put where profane hands should not get hold of it. Then the comparatively ignoble business of dressing occupied her. And Mrs. Derrick yet more, who of course was there to help and look on; while Faith's head was erratically in her portfolio, or at Rome, or at Florence, or—elsewhere,—as the case might be. Her dress was this evening the same she had worn to Mrs. Stoutenburgh's, but the knot of holly and winterberries transformed her more

than the rose and myrtle had done; and she stood an undoubted guest of Christmas night. Faith herself took somewhat of the effect, which her thought however concentrated.

"Mother," she said as she looked in the glass,—"I never saw anything so pretty!"

"Neither did I, child," said Mrs. Derrick smiling.

Faith took still closer note of the beauty of her breastknot; and then gathering up her crimson hood and cloak, they went down stairs. It was not quite the hour yet for Mrs. Somers'. Mr. Linden was ready and in the sitting-room; but Faith did not this time call his attention to her bouquet. She came in and sat down very quietly in a corner of the sofa. He paused in his walk up and down the room however, noting her well as she came in and took her seat; coming presently to take one at her side; and then catching up a book from the table he proceeded to give her the ice palace of the little brook, with which he had threatened her before.—

> "Down swept the cold wind from the mountain peak,
> From the snow five thousand summers old"—etc.

"O," exclaimed Faith, "I have seen just such a brook! I have played in it; when mother was afraid I should take cold, and wouldn't let me stay. But that's as good as the brook," she added timidly.

"Without the danger of taking cold. You are quite sure it has not chilled you, Miss Faith?—do you feel 'winter-proof'?"

"I think I do, for to-day," said Faith. "If the evening were to be even very disagreeable, I think I could stand it."

Which remark was perhaps significant.

The tinkle of Jerry's bells now made itself heard at the door, and Faith was shawled and cloaked and wrapped up by her mother in the house and by Mr. Linden in the sleigh. He was more skilful about it than Squire Stoutenburgh; and contrived to enclose Faith in a little wigwam of buffalo robes, without letting her feel the weight of them. Then they dashed off—Jerry well disposed for exercise after his five minutes' stand, and spurning the snow from a light enough pair of heels. How merrily the bells jingled! how calmly and steadily the stars shone down! There was no moon now, but the whitened earth caught and reflected every bit of the starlight, and made it by no means dark; and the gleams from cottage windows came out and fell on the snow in little streaks of brightness. Sleighs enough abroad!—from the swift little cutters and large family sleighs that glided on towards the parsonage, down to sledding parties of boys, cheered only by a cow-bell and their own laughter. Tinkle, tinkle—everywhere, —near by and in the distance; the dark figures just casting a light shadow on the roadside, the merry voices ignoring anything of the kind.

Mrs. Somers' house was a good long drive from Mrs. Derrick's. The road was first on the way to Mr. Simlins'; from there it turned off at right angles and went winding crookedly down a solitary piece of country; rising and falling over uneven

ground, twisting out of the way of a rock here and there, and for some distance skirting the edge of a woodland. There was light enough to see by, but it was not just the piece of road one would choose of a dark night; and Faith felt thankful Squire Deacon was gone to Egypt.

CHAPTER II

In the dressing-room Faith was seized upon in the warmest manner by Mrs. Stoutenburgh, who looked very pretty in her dress of bright crimson silk.

"I'm so glad you've come back, dear. And how well you're looking!—a little thin, though. But you'll soon make up for that. You're just as lovely as you can be, Faith—do you know it?"

"No, ma'am."—Her *flowers*, she knew, were as lovely as they could be."Jerry brought us, Mrs. Stoutenburgh, after all, and pretty fast too."

"O he can go fast enough. You needn't look so sober, child—of course no one thinks so but me, and nobody ever minds what I say. *That's* pretty, I suppose you'll allow," she said laughing, and bending down closer to Faith's holly leaves,—"what is it, Faith? basswood?"

"Don't you know holly, Mrs. Stoutenburgh? And the berries are winterberries."

"Yes my dear—I perceive. You mustn't get angry with me, child—I tell you nobody does, not even your grave escort. At least not for anything I do to *him*. Well I'll go down and electrify people with the news that you're coming." And the crimson dress floated off to the tune of a light step and a merry voice. And more slowly and more doubtfully the black dress and winterberries followed her. Perhaps in very truth Faith would have been willing

that Mr. Stoutenburgh should have taken her under his broad wing for that going down stairs. At least she was as absolutely grave and quiet as anybody ever saw her, and a little more inclined to be shrinking. But Mr. Linden was alone in the hall at that minute, so there was no one else to shrink from; and if Faith wanted to shrink from him, she hardly could,—there was such an absence of anything to alarm her, both in his look and manner. Therefore, though she had to go down stairs upon his arm, and pass sundry people on their way up, Faith felt that he was a shield between her and the glances and words which he so little regarded. Eyes and tongues indeed ventured hut little in his presence; but that protection of course extended only to the centre of the drawing-room, and the welcome which Faith received from Mrs. Somers,—then she must shield herself. Then truly, for a while, she was taken possession of by Squire Stoutenburgh, who walked with her up and down, and said all manner of kind things.

Faith had no particular skill to shield herself from anything, and indeed gave herself no thought about it. She took what came, in a simple and quiet spirit, which was very apt to strike like a bee the right part of every flower; or that perhaps carried its own honey along. So she walked up and down with Mr. Stoutenburgh; and so she afterwards entered into the demands of a posse of her old and young friends who had not seen her for a good while.

Amidst a little group of these people, collected benignly around Faith, Dr. Harrison presently intruded himself. Now Dr.

Harrison was a lion, and the smaller animals naturally fell off from him, which was precisely what he expected them to do. The doctor had the field soon clear.

"What have you been doing to yourself?" he said to Faith with the kindly, familiar manner which had grown up between them.

"Taking good care,"—she said, in smiling answer to his question.

"Who took the care? yourself?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"Why, Dr. Harrison?"

"Excuse me," said he. "Anybody else would have done it better."

"No," said she shaking her head,—"you are wrong."

"You have been—" said he, looking at her,—"you have been 'doing your duty' too hard."

"Can one do that, Dr. Harrison?"

"Certainly!"

"I haven't been doing it this time."

"Do you remember," he said sitting down by her and lowering his voice,—"what you said once about the flowers of the wilderness?"

"Yes."

"Would you like to see some of them?"

"In the wilderness?"

"No," said he smiling. "I can shew you one family of them, by

their portraits, here—to-night."

"I would like to see them in the wilderness or anywhere!" said Faith.

"Then if you'll come with me"—

And the next thing was Dr. Harrison's walking off the black silk and winterberries before all the eyes of the people and through one room after another, till a little one-side room was reached which was not a thoroughfare to anything. In this little room was a table and a lamp upon it, and also several very large thin books. There was also, which was singular, a very comfortable easy chair. In this Dr. Harrison installed his charge close by the table, and drew up one of the volumes.

"I am going to introduce to you," he said, "the whole family of theRhododendrons."

"Rhododendron?"—said Faith. "I never saw them."

"It is their loss," said the doctor; "but here they are."

It was as he said;—the whole family of the plant, in the most superb style of portraiture and presentation. Full size and full colour; one of the most magnificent of such works. Faith had never seen a Rhododendron, and even in her dreams had never visited a wilderness where such flowers grew. Her exquisite delight fully satisfied Dr. Harrison, and quite kept her attention from herself and the fact of her being shut off from the rest of the company. Now and then one and another would drop in and look at what they were about, with curiosity if not with sympathy; but Rhododendrons were not alluring to most of the people, nor

to say truth was Dr. Harrison. With most urbane politeness he dispersed any desire to remain and look over his proceedings which might have been felt by some of the intruders; or contrived that they should find nothing to detain them.

It was a long business, to turn over all those delicious portraits of floral life and give anything like a sufficient look at each one. Such glories of vegetable beauty Faith had never imagined. It was almost a new revelation. There were deep brilliant crimsons; there was the loveliest rose-colour, in large heads of the close elegant flowers; there were, larger still and almost incredible in their magnificence, enormous clusters of cream-coloured and tinted and even of buff. There were smaller and humbler members of the family, which would have been glorious in any other companionship. There were residents of the rich regions of the tropics; and less superb members of the temperate zones; there were trees and shrubs; and there were little bushy, hardy denizens of the highest and barrenest elevations of rocks and snow to which inflorescence ever climbs. Faith almost caught her breath.

"And these are in the wilderness!" she said.

"Yes. What then?" said the doctor. Faith did not say.

"You are thinking they 'waste their sweetness'?"

"O no, indeed! I don't think that."

"You are thinking something. Please let me be the better for it."

"One ought to be the better for it," said Faith.

"Then I hope you won't refuse it to me," said Dr. Harrison gently laughing at her.

"I was thinking, Dr Harrison, what the Bible says,—'He hath made everything beautiful in his time';—and, 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.'"

The doctor turned over the leaf to a new Rhododendron. Faith's thoughts went to Pequot, and her heart gave a bound of joy at the remembrance of the sick woman there.

Mrs. Stoutenburgh's crimson dress was so softly worn and managed, that the wearer thereof was close in Dr. Harrison's neighbourhood for a minute before he was aware of her presence; which quiet motions, it should be observed, were habitual to Mrs. Stoutenburgh, and not at all assumed for the occasion. Therefore it was with no idea of startling anybody, that she said presently, "My dear Faith, what *are* you looking at through those Rhododendrons?" Faith started, and looked up with a bit of a smile.

"What do you see, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?" said the doctor.

"O several things," said the lady, passing her hand softly over Faith's brow, and then with one of her sudden impulses putting her lips there. "Do you like them, Faith?"

"Does not Mrs. Stoutenburgh like them?" said the doctor, as he placed a chair for her in the best position left for seeing.

"Thank you," said she laughing. "I came here to be seen this evening. And so ought some other people. How much do you pay for the monopoly, doctor?"

"I really don't know!" said Dr. Harrison with a very slight rise of his handsome eyebrows. "I am in Pattaquasset—which is to me a region of uncertainties. You will know better than I, Mrs. Stoutenburgh."

"Well," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh with a wicked look at the doctor for his sole benefit,—"speaking of Rhododendrons, which you've seen often enough before,—don't you admire *this*—which you have *not* seen before?" and she touched Faith's holly leaves with the tip of her little glove. "I should think it must stir what Mr. Linden calls your 'nerves of pleasant sensation'."

"I am honoured by your estimation," said the doctor laughing slightly. "Miss Derrick's taste is matchless. It is an act of benevolence for her to wear flowers."

Faith's very brow crimsoned, till she bent it from view as much as she could. In all her truth she could not rise up there and confess that her skill was not the skill to be commended. She wanted a shield then.

"Don't flatter yourself that you are an object of charity," said Mrs.Stoutenburgh turning over another leaf to give Faith employment."They're talking of games in the other room, dear," she added in agentle voice,—"may I tell Mrs. Somers you will play too?"

"Yes ma'am, certainly!"

"They're not ready yet—sit still and enjoy your prints—I'll see what they are about." And the lady left the room. Dr. Harrison sought some particularly fine specimens and engaged Faith in

talk about them and their localities and habits, till her self-possession was restored.

"Have you heard the news about Mr. Linden?" he asked with most nonchalant carelessness.

"What news?" said Faith, doubtful whether he meant SquireStoutenburgh's chapter or some other.

"Then he hasn't told you himself?"

"No," said Faith.

"I thought you ought to be authority," the doctor went on in the same tone. "It is very good news—for him—I hope it is true. They say—I have heard,—how beautiful the droop of those petals is!—and the shade of colour is rare—They say, that he has a very dear friend abroad; I mean in Europe, somewhere. Do you think it is true?"

"Yes," said Faith. She thought it was not wonderful news.

"I mean a lady friend?" said the doctor.

"Yes," said Faith again. She knew now what the doctor meant, but she did not feel inclined to enter into the subject or to enlighten him at all. Then too Mr. Linden might have more friends than *one* abroad!—It flashed upon her like a curious illumination.

"Then the story is true?" said the doctor.

"I don't know, sir," said Faith in some distress. "I know nothing about it."

"But you don't know that it is not true?" said he looking at her.

"No, sir. I don't know."

Dr. Harrison's further questions and remarks were cut short by the entrance of the very person referred to; who coming up with his usual light, alert step, held out his hand first of all to the questioner.

"Good evening, doctor!—how do you do again? Miss Faith, may I take you away from these beauties?" And the released hand was offered to her. She put hers in it very willingly but very silently; Faith dared not say a word to him about the Rhododendrons or about anything else.

"Ah, you have two hands again," said Dr. Harrison, "and you turn it against me!"

"Not that fact—" Mr. Linden said as he went off. And then slackening his step, he talked or made Faith talk—and laugh—every inch of the way into the room where all the rest were clustered ready for blind man's buff. It was a triumph of his skill,—or of his power,—for she had left the Rhododendrons in a mood most shy and quiet, and disposed to keep so. Dr. Harrison had not followed them, but soon made his entrance upon the company by another door.

"What is going on? or off, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?" he whispered to that lady.

"Why the bandage is going on, and we're going off," said she laughing."Will you be blinded first, doctor?"

"Blind man's buff!" said the doctor shrugging his shoulders comically. "Barbarous! I would rather 'go off' too—but anything to please you, Mrs. Stoutenburgh. A game to see how much a

man without his five senses can do against other people who have them." But the doctor gallantly stepped up to Mrs. Somers.

"I represent the forlorn hope for the evening, aunt Ellen. Has anybody volunteered to be the first victim?"

"You are the last person in the room that ought to volunteer," saidMrs. Somers,—"however, blindness is proverbial in some cases. MissEssie will bandage your eyes, Julius—and use her own for you in themeanwhile, I dare say. Miss Essie, here is a candidate."

"Not for Miss Essie's good offices!" said the doctor. "I know her. I shall not trust her. I will put myself in safe hands."

And with an inexpressible air of carelessness and easy pleasure-taking, Dr. Harrison carried his handsome person across the room to where Faith yet stood by the side of Mr. Linden; stood looking rather sober. She had not brought any of the rosy Rhododendron colour away in her face; or else it had faded. The doctor came up and spoke in an undertone as wilfully and gracefully independent as his manner.

"If I ask you to do me the honour to put this handkerchief over my eyes, Miss Derrick, I suppose you will not know what it signifies?"

"No, sir," said Faith, with a very slight smile and extra colour.

"Where I have been," said the doctor,—"where we never play it!—it is played in this way. My entreating you to blind my eyes, signifies that without them I shall endeavour to find you."

"Then I wish you'd get somebody else to do it, Dr. Harrison."

"You are not in earnest?" said the doctor.

"Very much in earnest."

"But I should observe," said he smiling, "that even the unkindness of your refusal would not change my endeavour. I only give you, as in honour bound, the chance of doing all you can to prevent my succeeding. Will you do it?"

He tendered the handkerchief. Faith coloured a little more, but to put a stop to his absurdities, as they seemed to her, and to her consequent prominence before the eyes of people, she accepted the office. Dr. Harrison kneeled at her feet, and Faith put the handkerchief round his eyes and tied it on; endeavouring, to do her justice, to perform the task thoroughly. She was not quite sure how well it was done, after all,—for the doctor had interposed a gentle "Softly," as she was drawing the knot and had at the same time also raised his hand to ease the bandage. But Faith had to let it go so; and simply resolved to take care of herself.

Many eyes, meanwhile, surveyed this performance with much edification, glancing too at the motionless figure who at Faith's side looked down upon it. But when the smile in those eyes touched the lips as well, Mrs. Stoutenburgh was roused to a pitch of delight; and running into the middle of the room to meet the doctor as he came to take his stand, she clapped her hands exclaiming, "O, doctor! doctor!—how could you let anybody tie anything over your eyes!"

"Is there treachery, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?" said the doctor with a comic stop.

"Where?"—said the lady.

"Nay,—I know where," said the doctor. And turning from her he addressed himself to the game.

But though Dr. Harrison shewed himself a keen player the game came to no sudden termination. And Faith could not help doubting that her work had not been too effectual. It was beyond question, even if she had not been forewarned, that the doctor was endeavouring to find—or endeavouring to catch her. In vain Mrs. Stoutenburgh's crimson and Miss Essie's blue floated past him and rustled behind him. In vain Mrs. Somers' purple stood in his way. The skirt of that one black silk could go nowhere that some one of the doctor's senses did not inform him of it. Closely he followed upon her flight, and keen work Faith found it, play as well as she would. She began to get out of breath, and the amusement and fun grew uproarious.

It was when her foot was failing that the doctor's gained strength: between him and the prize there was now no barrier; no leap could avail Faith in the corner where she was at last hemmed in. Slowly and securely the doctor advanced, first himself and then his hands, and caught—Mr Linden! Caught him unmistakeably too,—there was no help for it; and Dr. Harrison in his astonishment forgot to pronounce him somebody else!

"Confound you!" said the doctor slowly and comically—"how did you get here?"

"Are you fatigued?" said Mr. Linden, taking off the bandage. "MissFaith, you did *this* part of your work very ill."

"How did you get here?" repeated the doctor, taking hold of his arm and shaking it slightly. "I wasn't looking for *you*, man."

"What were you *looking* for?" said Mr. Linden, with a laughing return of the doctor's gaze.

"Shall I put that on for you?" said the latter with a sort of complicate expression, which however never lost its grace and ease. And then began another chase—but not of Faith this time, —perhaps Mr. Linden thought she needed rest. And the changes ran round the company, but never (as it happened) including Faith or Dr. Harrison, until they reached the finishing round of the game. Then it was Mr. Linden's turn again to wear the bandage, and then he gave Faith the sort of run he had given her before at Mrs. Stoutenburgh's—and with the same success.

"Haven't they played blind man's buff long enough?" Faith whispered, when the bandage was taken off her captor. She was flushed, a little, and sober more than a little.

"Yes—I will move a change," he answered in the same tone. Which he did, after a short consultation.

"Dr. Harrison—you have seen the 'Butterfly,' I suppose?"

"*The* butterfly?" said the doctor. "I have seen many—of all colours; but the butterfly par excellence, I know not. Unless it is one with white wings and black body, and spots of most brilliant red on the breast."

"The one I mean combines more colours," said Mr. Linden. "What were you doing in France, not to see it?"

"Seeing other things, I suppose. However, now you speak of

it, I believe that butterfly has flown over me—sometime."

"Please to imagine yourself a gay rover for the nonce," said Mr. Linden, leading the doctor persuasively into the middle of the floor. "Just suppose you are a Purple Emperor—will you doctor? Miss Essie wants a story and forfeits,—I shall leave you to gratify her." But he himself went to give Miss Faith a seat. That was done with a very different manner from the gay, genial way in which he had addressed the doctor: it was genial enough, certainly, but grave.

"You do not feel well?" he said, as he wheeled up an easy chair for her. It was spoken too low for any one else to hear.

"Yes, I do,"—said Faith quickly. But her face flushed deep, and her eye though it glanced towards him, failed timidly of meeting his; and her voice had lost all the spring of pleasure.

"Then cannot you keep the promise you made about a disagreeable evening?" The tone was very low still—(he was arranging her footstool and chair) a little concerned too, a little —or Faith fancied it—but indeed she was not quite sure what the third part was; and then the doctor began his work.

For a minute or two she did not hear him, or heard without heed. She was thinking over Mr. Linden's question and struggling with it. For its slight tone, of remonstrance perhaps, only met and stirred into life the feeling she was trying to keep down. Her lip took one of its sorrowful curves for an instant; but then Dr. Harrison came towards them.

"What insect on the face of the earth, Linden, will you be?

What does he resemble most, Miss Derrick?"

"I am not particular about being on the face of the earth," said Mr.Linden,—"the air will do just as well."

The doctor was waiting for Faith's answer. Under the exigency of the moment she gave it him, glancing up first at the figure beside her, perhaps to refresh her memory—or imagination—and smiling a little as she spoke.

"I don't think of any he is like, Dr. Harrison."

"Do you think I am like a purple butterfly?" said the doctor.

"Yes, a little,"—said Faith. But it was with a face of such childlike soberness that the doctor looked hard at her.

"What do you think you are like yourself?" said he; not lightly.

"I think I am a little like an ant," said Faith.

The doctor turned half round on his heel.

"'Angels and ministers of grace'!" was his exclamation. "Most winged, gentle, and etherial of all the dwellers in, or on, anthills,—know that thy similitude is nothing meaner than a flower. You must take the name of one, Miss Faith—all the ladies do—what will you be?"

"What will you be?" Mr. Linden repeated,—"Mignonette?—that is even below the level of some of your anthills."

"If you please,"—she said.

"Or one of your Rhododendrons?" said the doctor—"that is better; for you have the art—or the nature, indeed,—of representing all the tints of the family by turns—except the unlovely ones. Be a Rhodora!"

"No"—said Faith—"I am not like that—nor like the other, but I will be the other."

"Mignonette"—said the doctor. "Well, what shall we call him? what is *he* like?"

"I think," said Faith, looking down very gravely, not with the flashing eye with which she would have said it another time, —"he is most like a midge."

The little laugh which answered her, the way in which Mr. Linden bent down and said, "How do you know, Miss Faith?" were slightly mystifying to Dr. Harrison.

"I don't know,"—she said smiling; and the doctor with one or two looks of very ungratified curiosity left them and returned to his post.

"What are they going to play, Mr. Linden?" said Faith. The doctor's explanation, given to the rest generally, she had not heard.

"Do you know what a family connexion you have given me, Miss Faith?—The proverb declares that 'the mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing.'"

An involuntary little caught breath attested perhaps Faith's acquiescence in the truth of the proverb; but the doctor's words prevented the necessity of her speaking.

"Miss Essie—Ladies and gentlemen! Please answer to your names, and thereby proclaim your characters. Mrs. Stoutenburgh, what are you?"

"A poppy, I think," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughing. "I like

to be beforehand with the public."

"Will you please to name your lord and master? He is incapable of naming himself."

"I think you've named him!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh with a gay toss of her pretty head. "I'm not learned in insects, doctor, —call him anything that eats up butter-flies."

"Mr. Stoutenburgh will—you be a grub?" said the doctor. "Or a beetle?I don't know anything else that I—as a butterfly—dislike more."

"No, I'll be a cricket—I'm so spry," said the Squire,—"and I'll be down upon *you* in some other form, doctor."

"You'll have to fly higher first," said the doctor. "Miss Essie declares herself to be a purple Althaea. Miss Davids—an evening primrose. Miss Deacon—a cluster rose. Miss Fax—a sweet pink. Miss Chester—a daisy. Miss Bezac—what shall I put you down?" The butterfly was making a list of his flowers and insects, and cards had been furnished to the different members of the party, and pencils, to do as much for themselves.

"I'd as lieve be balm as anything else, if I knew how," said MissBezac; "but I shouldn't call *that* putting me down."

"That fits, anyhow," said Squire Stoutenburgh.

"'Balm for hurt minds'"—said Dr. Harrison writing. "Miss Julia De Staff is a white lily. Miss Emmons—a morning glory. Mrs. Churchill a peony. Miss Derrick is mignonette. Mrs. Somers—?"

"I may as well be lavender," said Mrs. Somers. "You say I am

in a good state of preservation."

"What is Mr. Somers?"

"Mr. Somers—what are you?" said his wife.

"Ha!—I don't know, my dear," said Mr. Somers blandly. "I think I am—a—out of place."

"Then you're a moth," said the doctor. "That is out of place too, in most people's opinion. Miss Delaney, I beg your pardon—what are you?"

"Here are the two Miss Churchills, doctor," said Miss Essie—"hyacinth and laburnum."

"I am sure you have been sponsor, Miss Essie. Well this is my garden of flowers. Then of fellow insects I have a somewhat confused variety. Mr. Stoutenburgh sings round his hearth in the shape of a black cricket. Mr. Linden passes unnoticed in the invisibility of a midge—nothing more dangerous. Mr. Somers does all the mischief he can in the way of devouring widows' houses. The two Messrs. De Staff" (two very spruce and moustachioed young gentlemen) "figure as wasp and snail—one would hardly think they belonged to the same family—but there is no accounting for these things. Mr. George Somers professes to have the taste of a bee—but luckily the garden belongs to the butterfly."

"In other words, some one has put Dr. Harrison in a flutter," said Mrs.Stoutenburgh.

"I haven't begun yet," said the doctor wheeling round to face her; "when I do, my first business will be to cut you up, Mrs.

Stoutenburgh."

"Miss Faith," said Mr. Linden while the roll went on, "I have not forgotten your question,—they, and we, are going to play a French game called 'the Butterfly and the Flowers;' wherein I, a midge, am in humble attendance oh a sprig of mignonette. Whenever our butterfly gardener chooses to speak the name of any flower or insect, that Flower or insect must reply: when he speaks of the gardener, you flowers must extend one hand in token of welcome, we insects draw back in dismay: if the gardener brings his watering-pot, or there falls a shower of rain, you must hold up your head for joy—I must kneel down for fear. If the sunshine is mentioned, we are free to rejoice together—standing up and making demonstrations. You may reply, Miss Faith, either in your own words or quotations, so that you mention some one of your companions; but if you fail to speak, or break any other rule, you must pay a forfeit first and redeem it afterwards."

"I may mention either insect or flower?" said Faith.

"Yes, just what you like."

"If everybody is ready," said the doctor, "I will begin by remarking that I find myself in an 'embarras de richesses'—so many sweets around me that I—a butterfly—know not which to taste first; and such an array of enemies, hostile alike to the flowers and me, that I know not which to demolish first. I hope a demolishing rain will fall some of these days—ah! that is gratifying! behold my enemies shrinking already, while the

flowers lift up their heads with pleasure and warm themselves in the rays of the sun. What is mignonette doing?"

There was a general outcry of laughter, for as the gentlemen had kneeled and bent their heads, and the flowers had risen to greet the sun,—Faith, in her amusement and preoccupation had sat still. She rose now, blushing a little at being called upon.

"Mignonette loves the sun without making any show for it. She has no face to lift up like the white lily."

"The white lily isn't sweet like lavender," said Miss Julia.

"And the lavender has more to do in the linen press than among butterflies," said Mrs. Somers.

"It is good to know one's place," said the doctor. "But the butterfly, seeking a safe resting place, flutters with unpoised flight, past the false poppy which flaunts its gay colours on the sight."

"And fixes its eyes on the distant gardener with his watering-pot," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh, stretching forth her hand, sibyl-like, towards the now prostrate doctor,—"whereat the mignonette rejoices."

"All the flowers rejoice," said the mignonette, "and the cricket jumps out of the way."

"Into the sunshine"—said Mr. Stoutenburgh, laughing;—"but the moth feels doubtful."

"The moth"—said Mr. Somers—"he—don't like the sunshine so well as the rain. He—ha—he wishes he was a midge there, to get under shelter."

"A midge *here* he can't be," said Mr. Linden, dropping his voice for Faith's benefit,—"'Two suns hold not their courses in one sphere!'"—Then aloud—"Invisibility is a great thing—when you can make up your mind to it, but 'Althaea with the purple eye' looks on life differently."

"I look on it soberly," said Miss Essie.—

> "'Flutter he, flutter he, high as he will,
> A butterfly is but a butterfly still.
> And 'tis better for us to remain where we are,
> In the lowly valley of duty and care,
> Than lonely to soar to the heights above,
> Where there's nothing to do and nothing to love.'"

"I'll flutter no more! after that"—said the doctor. "I'll creep into the heart of the white lily and beg it to shelter me."

"It won't hide you from the sun nor from the rain," said the white lily,—"and I'd as lieve shelter a spider besides."

Faith forgot again that she must welcome the sun; but she was not the only one who had incurred forfeits. Nor the last one who should. For while that interesting member of society who called himself spider, made his reply, Mr. Linden's attention naturally wandered—or came back; and the lively dialogue which then ensued between Messrs. Snail, Wasp, Beetle, etc. failed to arouse him to the duties of a midge or the fear of the gardener: he forgot everything else in the pleasure of making Mignonette laugh. Standing half before her at last, in some animated bit of talk,

more than one sunbeam and watering-pot had come and gone, unnoticed by both midge and mignonette,—a fact of which some other people took note, and smilingly marked down the forfeits.

"Mr. Linden"—said the voice of Miss Essie at his elbow—"do you know what the doctor is saying?—'The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing!' You'd better speak to him."

Mr. Linden turned, with a laughing, recollective glance—

"Who speaks slightingly of the midge?—let him have a dose of syrup of poppies!"

"I guess you can find balm," said Mrs. Stoutenburgh gaily.

"He shall have it if he wants it," said Miss Bezac—"that is if *I*'ve got it,—though I rather guess he's got it himself,—I'm sure I don't know what he hasn't got. And it don't strike me he looks as if he wanted it, either, if I *had*. But it's funny I should and not the doctor—though to be sure most things are,—and *he*'s gone to 'the butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast.'"

"The grasshopper's feast being just now announced," said Mrs. Somers stepping forward, "I shall hope to set the flowers free from their natural enemies without more delay."

"I shall not confess to that!" said Mr. Linden under-tone. "But will you come, Miss Faith—the insects are all gone—

> 'Save the few that linger, even yet,
> Round the Alyssum's tuft and the Mignonette.'"

The midge's prompt action had perhaps disappointed several

other people. Dr. Harrison at any rate contrived with Miss Essie to be the immediately preceding couple in the walk to the supper-room.

"I'm glad of some refreshment!" said the doctor; "butterflies cannot live on the wing. Linden! have you been singing all the evening, in the character of a midge?"

"No," said Mr. Linden—"all the singing I have done has been in my own character."

"I am glad to hear it. By the way," said Dr. Harrison as they reached the supper-room and paired off from their respective charges,—"I am sorry to hear that Pattaquasset has no hold on you, Linden."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Linden,—an "indeed" which might refer to the doctor's sorrow, or the supposed fact.

"Nay I know nothing about it!" said the doctor lightly as he attacked the supper-table—"but Miss Derrick tells me it is true that your heart is in another place."

"Dr. Harrison!" Mr. Linden said, with a momentary erectness of position. But he said no more; turning off then towards Faith with her oysters. And the gentle respect and quick attention with which she was served, Faith might feel, and take note of —yet not guess that its peculiar tone this night was warring, hand to hand, with the injustice done her name. The doctor had unwittingly betrayed at least one point of talk held over the Rhododendrons—furnished a clue he dreamed not of; and stirred a power of displeasure which perhaps he thought Mr. Linden did

not possess.

Faith did not indeed guess anything from the manner of the latter to her, although she felt it; she felt it as his own, kind and watchful and even affectionate; but like him, belonging to him, and therefore not telling upon the question. With a very humbled and self-chiding spirit, she was endeavouring to keep the face and manner which suited the place, above a deep sinking of heart which was almost overcoming. Her success was like the balance of her mind—doubtful. Gentle her face was as ever; all the crosses of the evening had not brought an angle there; but it was shadowed beyond the fitness of things; and she was still and retiring so far as it was possible to be, shrinking into a very child's lowness of place.

Ladies were in the majority that night and the gentlemen were obliged to be constantly on the move. In one of the minutes when Faith was alone, Mrs. Stoutenburgh came up.

"Faith," she whispered, "have you been doing anything to vex my friend?"

Faith started a little, with a sort of shadow of pain crossing her face.

"Who is your friend, Mrs. Stoutenburgh?"

"Hush, child!" she answered—"*your* friend, if you like it better." And she added softly but seriously, "Don't vex him,—he doesn't deserve it."

Faith's lip was that touchingly sorrowful child's lip for an instant. She was beyond speaking. Then came up help, in the

shape of Miss Essie; with questions about the forfeits and about Mr. Linden. All Mrs. Stoutenburgh's kindness made itself into a screen for Faith, on the instant,—neither eyes nor tongues were allowed to come near her.

"Mr. Linden!" said Miss Essie as he just then came up, "will you help us give out forfeits? Who do you think is best to do it?"

"Mr. Linden," said Mrs. Somers, "we are all very anxious to know whether all the reports about you are true."

Mr. Linden bowed to the anxiety, but gave it no further heed.

"Are they?" she repeated.

"Do all the reports agree, Mrs. Somers?"

"I must confess they are at swords' points."

"Then they cannot all be true,—let them fight it out."

"But suppose some of the fighting should come upon you?"

"That is a supposition I have just refused to take up," said Mr.Linden, stepping towards the table and bringing a bunch of grapes toFaith's plate.

"Yes, but everybody hasn't the patience of Job," said Mrs. Somers."Julius, for instance."

"He has at least his own ways of obtaining information," said Mr. Linden, and Faith felt the slight change of voice. "Miss Essie, what will you have?"

"Has the doctor any forfeits to pay?" was the somewhat irrelevant answer. "I should so like to see you two set against each other! Dr. Harrison!—have you any forfeits?"

"No," said the doctor;—"but as severe service to perform as

if I had.Linden, we shall want your help—it's too much for one man."

Faith edged away behind this growing knot of talkers, and presently was deeply engaged in conversation with Miss Cecilia Deacon, at a table in the corner, and alternating her attention between grapes and words. Then Squire Stoutenburgh walked softly up and stood behind Faith's chair.

"My dear, will you have anything more?"

"No, sir, thank you."

"Then I am going to carry you off!" said the Squire,—"if I wait a quarter of a second more I shall lose my chance. Come!"

Faith was very willing to come, indeed; and they went back to the drawing-room, all the company pouring after them; and Faith feeling as if she had got under a kind of lee shore, on Mr. Stoutenburgh's arm. It could not shelter her long, for the forfeits began.

The doctor and Mr. Linden, with Miss Essie and Mrs. Stoutenburgh for coadjutors, were constituted the awarding committee; and the forfeits were distributed to them indifferently. There were many to be redeemed; and at first there was a crowd of inferior interest, Messrs. Spider and Wasp, Mesdemoiselles White Lily and Cluster rose; who were easily disposed of and gallantly dismissed. But there were others behind. One of Faith's forfeits came up; it was held by Dr. Harrison.

"Please to stand forth, Miss Derrick, and hear your sentence,"

said the doctor, leading her to a central position in the floor; which Faith took quietly, but with what inward rebellion one or two people could somewhat guess.

"Have the goodness to state to the company what you consider to be the most admirable and praiseworthy of all the characters of flowers within your knowledge; and to describe the same, that we may judge of the justness of your opinion."

"Describe the character?" said Faith in a low voice.

"Yes. If you please."

She stood silent a moment, with downcast eyes, and did not raise them when she spoke. Her colour was hardly heightened, and though her voice rose little above its former pitch, its sweet accents were perfectly audible everywhere. The picture would have been enough for her forfeit.

"The prettiest character of a flower that I know, is that of a little species of Rhododendron. It is one of the least handsome, to look at, of all its family; its beauty is in its living. It grows on the high places of high mountains, where frost and barrenness give it no help nor chance; but there, where no other flower ever blossoms, it opens its flowers patiently and perseveringly; and its flowers are very sweet. Nothing checks it nor discourages it. As soon as the great cold lets it come, it comes; and as long as the least mildness lets it stay, it stays. Amidst snow and tempest and desolation it opens its blossoms and spreads its sweetness, with nobody to see it nor to praise it; where from the nature of the place it lives in, its work is all alone. For no other flower will bear

what it bears.—Will that do?" said Faith, looking up gravely at her questioner.

Very gently, very reverently even, he took her hand, put it upon his arm and led her to a seat, speaking as he went low words of gratified pardon asking. "You must forgive me!" he said. "Forfeits must be forfeits, you know. I couldn't resist the temptation."

"Now wasn't that pretty?" whispered Miss Essie in the mean time in Mr.Linden's ear.

He had listened, leaning against the mantelpiece, and with shaded eyes looking down; and now to Miss Essie's question returned only a grave bend of the head.

"If you have been looking at the floor all this while, you have lost something," said the lady. "Do you know your turn comes next? Mr. Linden—ladies and gentlemen!—is condemned to tell us what he holds the most precious thing in this world; and to justify himself in his opinion by an argument, a quotation, and an illustration!"—

"Now will he find means to evade his sentence!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughing.

"He has confessed himself addicted to witchcraft in my hearing," said the doctor, who had remained standing by Faith's chair.

"The most precious thing in the world," said Mr. Linden, in a tone as carelessly graceful as his attitude, "is that which cannot be bought,—for if money could buy it, then were money equally

valuable. Take for illustration, the perfection of a friend."

"*I* don't understand,"—said Miss Essie; "but perhaps I shall when I hear the rest."

He smiled a little and gave the quotation on that point in his own clear and perfect manner.

> "'A sweet, attractive kind of grace;
> A full assurance given by looks;
> Continual comfort in a face;
> The lineaments of gospel books,—
> I trow that countenance cannot lye
> Whose thoughts are legible in the eye.'"

The quotation was received variously, but in general with vast admiration. Miss Essie turned to Mrs. Stoutenburgh and remarked, half loud,

"*That's* easy to understand. I was dull."

"What do you think of it?" said the doctor softly, stooping towards Faith. But if she heard she did not answer him. She sat with downcast eyes that did not move. She had been wondering whether that was a description of "Pet,"—or of somebody else.

"Faith," whispered Mrs. Stoutenburgh's kind mischievous voice in her ear,—"in whose face do you suppose he finds 'continual comfort'?" But she was sorry the next instant, for the pained, startled look which flashed up at her. Sorry and yet amused—the soft little kiss on Faith's cheek was smiling although apologetic.

"Mr. Linden," said the doctor, who held the bag of forfeits,—"it is your duty to punish Miss Essie with some infliction, such as you can devise."

"Miss Essie," said Mr. Linden, walking gravely up to her, "if there is any person in this room towards whom you entertain and practise malicious, mischievous, and underhand designs, you are hereby sentenced to indicate the person, declare the designs, and to 'shew cause.'"

"Why I never did in my life!" said Miss Essie, with a mixture of surprise and amusement in her gracious black eyes.

"The court is obliged to refuse an unsupported negative," said Mr.Linden bowing.

"Well," said Miss Essie, with no diminishing of the lustre of her black orbs,—"I had a design against you, sir!"

"Of what sort?" said Mr. Linden with intense gravity, while everybody else laughed in proportion.

"I had a design to enter your mind by private fraud, and steal away its secrets;—and the reason was, because the door was so terribly strong and had such an uncommon good lock! and I couldn't get in any other way."

"I hope that is news to the rest of the company," said Mr. Linden laughing as he bowed his acknowledgments. "It is none to me! Miss Essie, may your shadow never be less!"—

"Aint you ashamed!" said Miss Essie reproachfully. "Didn't such a confession deserve better? Who's next, Mr. Harrison?"

Some unimportant names followed, with commonplace

forfeits according; then Faith's name came to Mr. Linden. Then was there an opening of eyes and a pricking of ears of all the rest of the company. Only Faith herself sat as still as a mouse, after one little quick glance over to where the person stood in whose hands she was. He stood looking at her,—then walked with great deliberation across the room to her low seat, and taking both her hands lifted her up.

"You need not be frightened," he said softly, as keeping one hand in his clasp he led her back to where he had been standing; then placed her in a great downy easy chair in that corner of the fireplace, and drew up a footstool for her feet.

"Miss Faith," he said, "you are to sit there in absolute silence for the next fifteen minutes. If anybody speaks to you, you are not to answer,—if you are longing to speak yourself you must wait. It is also required that you look at nobody, and hear as little as possible." With which fierce sentence, Mr. Linden took his stand by the chair to see it enforced.

"What a man you are!" said Mrs. Stoutenburgh laughing.

"That's not fair play!" said Mrs. Somers. "She don't want to sit there—if you think she does, you're mistaken."

"She should have been more careful then," said Mr. Linden. "Dr.Harrison, you have the floor."

Dr. Harrison did not appear to think that was much of a possession;—to judge by his face, which cast several very observant glances towards the chair, and by his manner which for a moment was slightly abstracted and destitute of the spirit

of the game. Miss Essie's eyes took the same direction, with a steady gaze which the picture justified. Faith sat where she had been placed, in most absolute obedience to the orders she had received,—except possibly—not probably—the last one. The lids drooped over her eyes, which moved rarely from the floor, and never raised themselves. Her colour had risen indeed to a rich tint, where it stayed; but Mrs. Somers' declaration nevertheless was hardly borne out by a certain little bit-in smile which lurked there too, spite of everything. Otherwise she sat like an impersonation of silence, happily screened, by not looking at anybody, from any annoyance of the eyes that were levelled at her and at the figure that held post by her side.

"Mrs. Stoutenburgh," said the doctor, "you have my aunt Ellen."

Mrs. Stoutenburgh however was lenient in that quarter, and told Mrs. Somers they would require nothing of her but the three last items of Pattaquasset news—which she, as pastor's wife, was bound to know. And Mrs. Somers was not backward in declaring them; the first being the engagement of two people who hated each other, the second the separation of two people who loved each other; the third, that Mr. Linden shot himself—to make a sensation.

"Mr. Linden," said the doctor, "you come next—and you are mine. What shall I do with you?"

"Why—anything," said Mr. Linden.

"Well—I am greatly at a loss what you are good for," said the

doctor lightly,—"but on the whole I order you to preach a sermon to the company."

"Have you any choice as to the text?"

"I am not in the way of those things," said the doctor laughingly."Give us the lesson you think we want most."

The clear, grave look that met him—Dr. Harrison had seen it before. The change was like the parting of a little bright vapour, revealing the steadfast blue beneath.

"Nay doctor, you must bid me do something else! I dare not play at marbles with precious stones."

There was probably a mixture of things in the doctor's mind; —but the outward show in answer to this was in the highest degree seemly and becoming. The expression of Dr. Harrison's face changed; with a look gentle and kind, even winning, he came up to Mr. Linden's side and took his hand.

"You are right!" said he, "and I have got my sermon—which I deserve. But now, Linden, *that* is not your forfeit;—for that you must tell me—honestly—what you think of me." There was always a general air of carelessness about Dr. Harrison, as to what he said himself or what others said in his presence. Along with this carelessness, which whether seeming or real was almost invariable, there mingled now a friend's look and tone and something of a friend's apology making.

"But do you want me to tell everybody else?" said Mr. Linden, smiling in his old way at the doctor. "Do you like to blush before so many people?"

"That's your forfeit!" said the doctor resuming also his old-fashioned light tone. "You're to tell me—and you are *not* to tell anybody else!"

"Well—if you will have it," said Mr. Linden looking at him, —"Honestly, I think you are very handsome!—of course that is news to nobody but yourself."

"Mercy on you, man!" said the doctor; "do you think that is news to *me?*"

"It is supposed to be—by courtesy," said Mr. Linden laughing.

"Well—give me all the grace courtesy will let you," said the doctor; whether altogether lightly, or with some feeling, it would have been hard for a by-stander to tell. "Is Miss Derrick's penance out? She comes next—and Miss Essie has her."

"No,"—said Mr. Linden consulting his watch. "I am sorry to interfere with your arrangements, doctor, but justice must have its course."

"Then there is a 'recess'"—said the doctor comically. "Ladies and gentlemen—please amuse yourselves."—

He had no intention of helping them, it seemed, for he stood fast in his place and talked to Mr. Linden in a different tone till the minutes were run out. No thing could be more motionless than the occupant of the chair.

"Miss Faith," Mr. Linden said then, "it is a little hard to pass from one inquisitor to another—but I must hand you over to Miss Essie."

Faith's glance at him expressed no gratification. Meanwhile

the doctor had gone for Miss Essie and brought her up to the fireplace.

"Miss Derrick," said the black-eyed lady, "I wish you to tell —as the penalty of your forfeit—why, when you thought the Rhododendron the most perfect flower, you did not take it for your name?"

If anybody had known the pain this question gave Faith—the leap of dismay that her heart made! Nobody knew it; her head drooped, and the colour rose again to be sure; but one hand sheltered the exposed cheek and the other was turned to the fire. She could not refuse to answer, and with the doctor's weapons she would not; but here, as once before, Faith's straightforwardness saved her.

"Why didn't you call yourself Rhodora?" repeated Miss Essie. And Faith answered,—

"Because another name was suggested to me."

The question could not decently be pushed any further; and both Miss Essie and the doctor looked as if they had failed. Faith's own tumult and sinking of heart prevented her knowing how thoroughly this was true.

"And you two people," said Mr. Linden, "come and ask Miss Derrick why she chose to appropriate a character that she thought fell short of perfection!—what is the use of telling anybody anything, after that?"

"I am only one people," said Miss Essie.

"I am another," said the doctor; "and I confess myself curious.

Besides, a single point of imperfection might be supposed, without injury to mortal and human nature."

"Julius," said Miss Harrison, "will you have the goodness to do so impolite a thing as to look at your watch? Aunt Ellen will expect us to set a proper example. Dear Faith, are you bound to sit in that big chair all night?"

Then there was a general stir and break-up of the party. One bit of conversation Faith was fated to hear as she slowly made her way out of the dressing-room door, among comers and goers: the first speaker was a young De Staff.

"Since that shooting affair there's been nothing but reports about you,Linden."

"Reports seldom kill," said Mr. Linden.

"Don't trust to that!" said another laughing moustache, —"keep 'em this side the water. By the way—is there any likeness of that fair foreigner going? How do you fancy *she* would like reports?"

"When you find out I wish you would let me know," said Mr. Linden with a little accent of impatience, as he came forward and took Faith in charge.

CHAPTER III

It was pretty late when Jerry and his little sleigh-load got clear of the gates. The stars were as bright as ever, and now they had the help of the old moon; which was pouring her clear radiance over the snow and sending long shadows from trees and fences. The fresh air was pleasant too. Faith felt it, and wondered that starlight and snow and sleigh-bells were such a different thing from what they were a few hours before. She chid herself, she was vexed at herself, and humbled exceedingly. She endeavoured to get back on the simple abstract ground she had held in her own thoughts until within a day or two; she was deeply ashamed that her head should have allowed even a flutter of imagination from Mr. Stoutenburgh's words, which now it appeared might bear a quite contrary sense to that which she had given them. What was *she*, to have anything to do with them? Faith humbly said, nothing. And yet,—she could not help that either,—the image of the possibility of what Dr. Harrison had suggested, raised a pain that Faith could not look at. She sat still and motionless, and heard the sleigh-bells without knowing to what tune they jingled.

It was a quick tune, at all events,—for the first ten or fifteen minutes Jerry dashed along to his heart's content, and his driver even urged him on,—then with other sleighs left far behind and a hill before him, Jerry brought the tune to a staccato, and Mr. Linden spoke. But the words were not very relevant to either stars

or sleigh-bells.

"Miss Faith, I thought you knew me better."

They startled her, for she was a minute or two without answering; then came a gentle, and also rather frightened,

"Why?—why do you say that, Mr. Linden?"

"Do you think you know me?" he said, turning towards her with a little bit of a smile, though the voice was grave. "Do you think you have any idea how much I care about you?"

"I think you do," she said. "I am sure you do—very much!"

"Do you know how much?"—and the smile was full then, and followed by a moment's silence. "I shall not try to tell you, Miss Faith; I could not if I would—but there is something on the other side of the question which I want you to tell me."

And Jerry walked slowly up the snowy hill, and the slight tinkle of his bells was as silvery as the starlight of Orion overhead.

Faith looked at her questioner and then off again, while a rich colour was slowly mantling in her cheeks. But the silence was breathless. Jerry's bells only announced it. And having by that time reached the top of the hill he chose—and was permitted—to set off at his former pace; flinging off the snow right and left, and tossing his mane on the cool night air. Down that hill, and up the next, and down that—and along a level bit of road to the foot of another,—then slowly.

"Miss Faith," said Mr. Linden when they were half way up, "do you never mean to speak to me again?"

A very low-breathed although audible "yes."

"Is that all you mean to say?—I shall take it very comprehensively."

She was willing probably that he should take it any way that he pleased; but to add was as much beyond Faith's power at the moment as to subtract from her one word. She did not even look.

"Do you know what this silence is promising?" Mr. Linden said in the same tone, and bending down by her. "I do—and yet I want to hear you speak once more. If there is any reason why I should try not to love you better than all the rest of the world, you must tell me now."

One other quick, inquiring, astonished glance her eyes gave into his face; and then, as usual, his wish to have her speak made her speak, through all the intense difficulty. There was a minute's further hesitation, and then the words, very low, very simple, and trembling,

"Do—if you can."

"Do *try?*" he said in a lower and graver tone.

"Try?"—she said; then with a change of voice and in very much confusion,—"O no, Mr. Linden!"

"I should not succeed"—was all his answer, nor was there time for much more; for having now turned into the main street where other homeward-bound sleighs were flying along, there was nothing to do but fly along with the rest; and a very few minutes brought them home.

Mr. Skip was probably reposing in parts unknown, for there

was no sign of him at his post; and when Faith had been silently taken out of the sleigh and into the hall, Mr. Linden went back to Jerry—telling her she must take good care of herself for five minutes.

Bewilderedly, and trembling yet, Faith turned into the sitting-room. It was warm and bright, Mrs. Derrick having only lately left it; and taking off hood and cloak in a sort of mechanical way, with fingers that did not feel the strings, she sat down in the easy chair and laid her head on the arm of it; as very a child as she had been on the night of that terrible walk;—wondering to herself if this were Christmas day—if she were Faith Derrick—and if anything were anything!—but with a wonder of such growing happiness as made it more and more difficult for her to raise her head up. She dreaded—with an odd kind of dread which contradicted itself—to hear Mr. Linden come in; and in the abstract, she would have liked very much to jump up and run away; but that little intimation was quite enough to hold her fast. She sat still drawing quick little breaths. The loud voice of the clock near by, striking its twelve strokes, was not half so distinct to her as that light step in the hall which came so swiftly and quick to her side.

"What is the problem now, pretty child?" Mr. Linden said, laying both hands upon hers,—"it is too late for study to-night. You must wait till to-morrow and have my help."

She rose up at that, however gladly she would have hidden the face her rising revealed; but yet with no awkwardness she stood

before him, rosily grave and shy, and with downcast eyelids that could by no means lift themselves up to shew what was beneath; a fair combination of the child's character and the woman's nature in one; both spoken fairly and fully. Mr. Linden watched her for a minute, softly passing his hand over that fair brow; then drew her closer.

"I suppose I may claim Mr. Stoutenburgh's privilege now," he said. But it was more than that he took. And then with one hand still held fast, Faith was put back in her chair and wheeled up to the fire "to get warm," and Mr. Linden sat down by her side.

Did he really think she needed it, when she was rosy to her fingers' ends? But what could she do, but be very still and very happy Even as a flower whose head is heavy with dew,—never more fragrant than then, yet with the weight of its sweet burden it bends a little;—like that was the droop of Faith's head at this minute. Whither had the whirl of this evening whirled her? Faith did not know. She felt as if, to some harbour of rest, broad and safe; the very one where from its fitness it seemed she ought to be. But shyly and confusedly, she felt it much as a man feels the ground, who is near taken off it by a hurricane. Yet she felt it, for her head drooped more and more.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said, half smiling, half seriously, "what has made you so sober all this evening—so much afraid of me?"

The quick answer of the eye stayed not a minute; the blush was more abiding.

"You don't want me to tell you that!"—she said in soft

pleading.

"Do you know now who I think has—

'A sweet attractive kind of grace'?"

"O don't, please, speak so, Mr. Linden!" she said bowing her face in her hands,—"it don't belong to me."—And pressing her hands closer, she added, "*You* have made me all I am—that is anything."

"There is one thing I mean to make you—if I live," he answered smiling, and taking down her hand. "Faith, what do you mean by talking to me in that style?—haven't you just given me leave to think what I like of you? You deserve another half hour's silent penance."

A little bit of smile broke upon her face which for an instant she tried to hide with her other hand. But she dropped that and turned the face towards him, rosy, grave, and happy, more than she knew, or she perhaps would have hidden it again. Her eyes indeed only saw his and fell instantly; and her words began and stopped.

"There is one comfort—"

"What, dear child?"

"That you know what to think," she said, looking up with a face that evidently rested in the confidence of that fact.

"About what?" Mr. Linden said with an amused look. "I have known what to think about *you* for some time."

"I meant that,"—she said quietly and with very downcast eyes again.

"I am not in a good mood for riddles to-night," said Mr. Linden,—"just what does this one mean?"

"Nothing, only—" said Faith flushing,—"you said—"

She was near breaking down in sheer confusion, but she rallied and went on. "You said I had given you leave to think what you liked of me,—and I say it is a comfort that you know *what* to think."

Mr. Linden laughed.

"You are a dear little child!" he said. "Being just the most precious thing in the world to me, you sit there and rejoice that I am in no danger of overestimating you—which is profoundly true. My comfort in knowing what to think, runs in a different line."

It is hard to describe Faith's look; it was a mixture of so many things. It was wondering, and shamefaced; and curious for its blending of humility and gladness; but gladness moved to such a point as to be near the edge of sorrowful expression. She would not have permitted it to choose such expression, and indeed it easily took another line; for even as she looked, her eye caught the light from Mr. Linden's and the gravity of her face broke in a sunny and somewhat obstinate smile, which Faith would have controlled if she could.

"That penance was not so very bad," she said, perhaps by way of diversion.

"I enjoyed it," said Mr. Linden,—"I am not sure that everybody else did. Are you longing for another piece of rest?—

Look up at me, and let me see if *I* ought to keep you here any longer."

She obeyed, though shyly; the smile lingering round her lips yet, and her whole face, to tell the truth, bearing much more resemblance to the dawn of a May morning than to the middle of a December night. Mr. Linden was in some danger of forgetting why he had asked to see it; but when her eyes fell beneath his, then he remembered.

"I must let you go," he said,—"I suppose the sooner I do that, the sooner I may hope to see you again. Will you sleep diligently, to that end?"

"I don't know—" she said softly; rising at the same time to gather up her wrappers which lay strewed about, around and under her. Her lips had the first answer to that; only as he let her go Mr. Linden said,

"You must try."

And a little scarce-spoken "yes" promised it.

It was easier than she thought. When Faith had got to her room, when she had as usual laid down her heart's burden —joyful or careful—in her prayer, there came soon a great subsiding; and mind and body slept, as sleep comes to an exhausted child; or as those sleep, at any age, whose hearts bear no weight which God's hand can bear for them, and who are contented to leave their dearest things to the same hand. There was no "ravelled sleeve of care" ever in Faith's mind, for sleep to knit up; but "tired nature's sweet restorer" she needed like the

rest of the human family; and on this occasion sleep did her work without let or hindrance from the time ten minutes after Faith's head touched her pillow till the sun was strong and bright on the morning of the 26th of December. Yes, and pretty high up too; for the first thing that fell upon her waking senses was eight clear strokes of the town clock.

Faith got up and dressed herself in a great hurry and in absolute dismay; blushing to think where was her mother; and breakfast—and everybody—all this while, and what everybody was thinking of her. From her room Faith went straight to dairy and kitchen. She wanted her hands full this morning. But her duties in the kitchen were done; breakfast was only waiting, and her mother talking to the butcher. Faith stood till he was dismissed and had turned his back, and then came into Mrs. Derrick's arms.

"Mother!—why *didn't* you call me!"

"Pretty child!" was the fond answer, "why should I?—I've been up to look at you half a dozen times, Faith, to make sure you were not sick; but Mr. Linden said he was in no hurry for breakfast—and of course I wasn't. Did you have a good time last night?"

"I should think you *ought* to be in a hurry for breakfast by this time." And Faith busied herself in helping Cindy put the breakfast on the table.

"You run and call Mr. Linden, child," said her mother, "and I'll see to this. He was here till a minute ago, and then some of

the boys wanted to see him."

Faith turned away, but with no sort of mind to present herself before the boys, and in tolerable fear of presenting herself before anybody. The closing hall door informed her that one danger was over; and forcing herself to brave the other, she passed into the sitting-room just as Mr. Linden reëntered it from the hall. Very timidly then she advanced a few steps to meet him and stood still, with cheeks as rosy as it was possible to be, and eyes that dared not lift themselves up.

The greeting she had did not help either matter very much, but that could not be helped either.

"What colour are your cheeks under all these roses?" Mr. Linden said smiling at her. "My dear Faith, were you quite tired out?"

"No—You must think so," she said with stammering lips —"but breakfast is ready at last. If you'll go in—I'll come, Mr. Linden."

"Do you want me to go in first?"

"Yes. I'll come directly."

He let her go, and went in as she desired; and having persuaded Mrs. Derrick that as breakfast was on the table it had better have prompt attention, Mr. Linden engaged her with a lively account of the people, dresses, and doings, which had graced the Christmas party; keeping her mind pretty well on that subject both before and after Faith made her appearance. How little it engrossed him, only one person at the table could even guess. But

she knew, and rested herself happily under the screen he spread out for her; as quiet and demure as anything that ever sat at a breakfast table yet. And all the attention she received was as silent as it was careful; not till breakfast was over did Mr. Linden give her more than a passing word; but then he inquired how soon she would be ready for philosophy.

Faith's hesitating answer was "Very soon;"—then as Mr. Linden left the room she asked, "What are you going to do to-day, mother?"

"O just the old story," said Mrs. Derrick,—"two or three sick people I must go and see,—and some well people I'd rather see, by half. It's so good to have you home, dear!" And she kissed Faith and held her off and looked at her—several feelings at work in her face. "Pretty child," she said, "I don't think I ever saw you look so pretty."

Faith returned the kiss, and hid her face in her mother's neck; more things than one were in her mind to say, but not one of them could get out. She could only kiss her mother and hold her fast. The words that at last came, were a very commonplace remark about—"going to see to the dinner."

"I guess you will!" said Mrs. Derrick—"with Mr. Linden waiting for you in the other room. I wonder what he'd say to you, or to me either. And besides—people that want to see about dinner must get up earlier in the morning."

The words, some of them, were a little moved; but whatever Mrs. Derrick was thinking of, she did not explain, only bade

Faith go off and attend to her lessons and make up for lost time.

Which after some scouting round kitchen and dairy, Faith did. She entered the sitting-room with the little green book in her hand, as near as possible as she would have done three weeks ago. Not quite.

She had a bright smile of welcome, and Mr. Linden placed a chair for her and placed her in it; and then the lessons went on with all their old gentle care and guidance. More, they could hardly have—though Faith sometimes fancied there was more; and if the old sobriety was hard to keep up, still it was done, for her sake. A little play of the lips which she could sometimes see, was kept within very quiet bounds; whatever novelty there might be in look or manner was perhaps unconscious and unavoidable. She might be watched a little more than formerly, but her work none the less; and Mr. Linden's explanations and corrections were given with just their old grave freedom, and no more. And yet how different a thing the lessons were to him!—

As to Faith, her hand trembled very much at first, and even her voice; but for all that, the sunshine within was easy to see, and there came a bright flash of it sometimes. In spite of timidity and shyness, every now and then something made her forget herself, and then the sunlight broke out; to be followed perhaps by a double cloud of gravity. But for the rest, she worked like a docile pupil, as she always had done.

Apparently her teacher's thoughts had not been confined to the work, if they had to her; for when all was done that could be

done before dinner, he made one of those sudden speeches with which he sometimes indulged himself.

"Faith—I wish you would ask me to do half a dozen almost impossible things for you."

What a pretty wondering look she gave him. One of the flashes of the sunlight came then. But then came an amused expression.

"What would be the good of that, Mr. Linden?"

"I should have the pleasure of doing them."

"I believe you would," said Faith. "I think the only things quite impossible to you are wrong things."

"The only thing you ever did ask of me was impossible," he said with a smile, upon which there was a shadow too—as if the recollection pained him. "Child, how could you?—It half broke my heart to withstand you so, do you know that? I want the almost impossible things to make me forget it."

Her lip trembled instantly and her command of herself was nearly gone. She had risen for something, and as he spoke she came swiftly behind him, putting herself where he could not see her face, and laid her hand on his shoulder. It lay there as light as thistle-down; but it was Faith's mute way of saying a great many things that her voice could not.

Very quick and tenderly Mr. Linden drew her forward again, and tried the power of his lips to still hers.

"Hush, dear child!" he said—"you must not mind any thing I say,—I am the last person in the world you ought to be afraid of. And you must not claim it as your prerogative to get before me

in danger and behind me at all other times—because that is just reversing the proper order of things. Faith, I am going to ask an almost impossible thing of you."

"What is it?" Faith was secretly glad, for afraid of his *requests* she could not be.

"You will try to do it?"

"Yes—certainly!"

"It is only to forget that 'Mr. Linden' is any part of my name," he said smiling.

She had been rosy enough before, but now the blood reddened her very brow, till for one instant she put up her hands to hide it.

"What then?"—she said in a breathless sort of way.

"What you like"—he answered brightly. "I have not quite as many names as a Prince Royal, but still enough to choose from. You may separate, combine, or invent, at your pleasure."

There came a summons to dinner then; and part of the hours which should follow thereafter, Mr. Linden was pledged to spend somewhere with somebody—away from home. But he promised to be back to tea, and before that, if he could; and so left Faith to the quiet companionship of her mother and her lessons—if she felt disposed for them. They were both in the sitting-room together, Mrs. Derrick and the books,—both helping the sunlight that came in at the windows. But Faith neglected the books, and came to her mother's side. She sat down and put her arms round her, and nestled her head on her mother's bosom, as she had done in the morning. And then was silent. That might have been

just what Mrs. Derrick expected, she was so very ready for it; her work was dropped so instantly, her head rested so fondly on Faith's. But her silence was soon broken.

"How long do you think I can wait, pretty child?" she said in the softest, tenderest tone that even she could use.

"Mother!" said Faith startling. "For what?"

"Suppose you tell me."

"Do you know, mother?" said Faith in a low, changed tone and drawing closer. But Mrs. Derrick only repeated,

"What, child?"

"What Mr. Linden has said to me,"—she whispered.

"I knew what he would"—but the words broke off there, and Mrs. Derrick rested her head again in silence as absolute as Faith's.

For awhile; and then Faith lifted up her flushed face and began to kiss her.

"Mother!—why don't you speak to me?"

It was not very easy to speak—Faith could see that; but Mrs. Derrick did command her voice enough to give a sort of answer.

"He had my leave, child,—at least he has talked to me about you in a way that I should have said no to, if I had meant it,—and he knew that. Do you think I should have let him stay here all this time if I had *not* been willing?"

Faith laid her head down again.

"Mother—dear mother!"—she said,—"I want more than that!"—

She had all she wanted then,—Mrs. Derrick spoke clearly and steadily, though the tears were falling fast.

"I am as glad as you are, darling—or as he is,—I cannot say more than that. So glad that you should be so happy—so glad to have such hands in which to leave you." The last words were scarce above a whisper.

Faith was desperate. She did not cry, but she did everything else. With trembling fingers she stroked her mother's face; with lips that trembled she kissed her; but Faith's voice was steady, whatever lay behind it.

"Mother—mother!—why do you do so? why do you speak so? Does this look like gladness?" And lips and hands kissed away the tears with an eagerness that was to the last degree tender.

"Why yes, child!" her mother said rousing up, and with a little bit of a smile that did not belie her words,—"I tell you I'm as glad as I can be!—Tears don't mean anything, Faith,—I can't help crying sometimes. But I'm just as glad as he is," she repeated, trying her soothing powers in turn,—"and if you'd seen his face as I did when he went away, you'd think that was enough. I don't know whether I *could* be," she added softly, "if I thought he would take you away from me—but I know he'll never do that, from something he said once. Why pretty child! any one but a baby could see this long ago,—and as for that, Faith, I believe I love him almost as well as you do, this minute."

The last few minutes had tried Faith more than she could bear, with the complete reaction that followed. The tears that very

rarely made their way from her eyes in anybody's sight, came now. But they were not permitted to be many; her mother hardly knew they were come before they were gone; and half nestling in her arms, Faith lay with her face hid; silent and quiet. It seemed to Mrs. Derrick as if she was too far off still, for she lifted Faith softly up, and took her on her lap after the old childish fashion, kissing her once and again.

"Now, pretty child," she said, softly stroking the uncovered cheek, "keep your hands down and tell me all about it. I don't mean every word," she added smiling, "but all you like to tell."

But Faith could not do that. She made very lame work of it. She managed only with much difficulty to give her mother a very sketchy and thin outline of what she wanted to know; which perhaps was as much as Mrs. Derrick expected; and was given with a simplicity as bare of additions as her facts were. A very few words told all she had to tell. Yes, her mother was satisfied, —she loved to hear Faith speak those few words, and to watch her the while—herself supplying all deficiencies; and then was content that her child should lie still and go to sleep, if she chose —it was enough to look at her and think: rejoicing with her and for her with a very pure joy, if it was sometimes tearful.

Faith presently changed her position, and gave a very particular attention to the smoothing of the hair over her mother's forehead. Then pulling her cap straight, and giving her a finishing look and kiss, she took a low seat close beside her, laid one of her study books on her mother's lap, resting one arm there fondly,

and went hard to work remarking however that Mrs. Derrick might talk as much as she liked and she would talk too. But Mrs. Derrick either did not want to talk, or else she did not want to interrupt; for she watched Faith and smiled upon her, and stroked her hair, and said very little.

Just at the end of the afternoon, when Faith was finishing her work by firelight, Mr. Linden came in. She did not see the look that passed between her mother and him—she only knew that they held each other's hands for a minute silently,—then one of the hands was laid upon her forehead.

"Little student—do you want to try the fresh air?"

She said yes; and without raising her eyes, ran off to get ready. In another minute she was out in the cool freshness of the December twilight.

CHAPTER IV

The walk lasted till all the afterglow had faded and all the stars come out, and till half Pattaquasset had done tea; having its own glow and starlight, and its flow of conversation to which the table talk was nothing.

Of course, Faith's first business on reaching home was to see about the tea. She and Mrs. Derrick were happily engaged together in various preparations, and Mr. Linden alone in the sitting-room, when the unwelcome sound of a knock came at the front door; and the next minute his solitude was broken in upon.

"Good evening!" said the doctor. "Three-quarters of a mile off 'I heard the clarion of the unseen midge!' so I thought it was best to come to close quarters with the enemy.—There is nothing so annoying as a distant humming in your ears. How do you do?" He had come up and laid his hand on Mr. Linden's shoulder before the latter had time to rise.

"What a perverse taste!" Mr. Linden said, laughing and springing up."All the rest of the world think a near-by humming so much worse."

"Can't distinguish at a distance," said the doctor;—"one doesn't know whether it's a midge or a dragon-fly. How is Mignonette? and Mignonette's mother?"

"They were both well the last time I saw them. In what sort of a calm flutter are you, doctor?"

"Do you think that is my character?" said the doctor, taking his favourite position on the rug.

"You go straight to the fire—like all the rest of the tribe," said Mr.Linden.

"Is it inconsistent with the character of such an extra ordinary midge, to go straight to the mark?"

"Nobody ever saw a midge do that yet, I'll venture to say."

"And you are resolved to act in character," said the doctor gravely. "You have got clean away from the point. I asked you last night to tell me what you thought of me. We are alone now —do it, Linden!"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I don't know. A man likes to talk of himself—cela s'entend —but I care enough about you, to care to know how I stand in your thoughts. If you asked me how I stand in my own, I could not tell you; and I should like to know how the just balances of your mind—I'm not talking ironically, Linden,—weigh and poise me;—what sort of alloy your mental tests make me out. No matter why!—indulge me, and let me have it. I presume it is nothing better than philosophical curiosity. I am—every man is to himself—an enigma—a mystery;—and I should like to have a sudden outside view—from optics that I have some respect for."

"I gave you the outside view last night," Mr. Linden said. But then he came and stood near the doctor and answered him simply; speaking with that grave gentleness of interest which rarely failed to give the speaker a place in people's hearts, even

when his words failed of it.

"I think much of you, in the first place,—and in the second place, I wish you would let me think more;—you stand in my thoughts as an object of very warm interest, of very earnest prayer. Measured—not by my standards, but by those which the word of God sets up, you are like your own admirably made and adjusted microscope, with all the higher powers left off. The only enigma, the only mystery is, that you yourself cannot see this."

Dr. Harrison looked at him with a grave, considerative face, drawing a little back; perhaps to do it the better.

"Do you mean to say, that *you* do such a thing as pray for *me?*"

A slight, sweet smile came with the answer—"Can you doubt it?"

"Why I might very reasonably doubt it,—though not your word. Why do you,—may I ask?"

"What can I do for a man in deadly peril, whom my arm cannot reach?" The tone was very kindly, very earnest; the eyes with their deep light looked full into the doctor's.

Dr. Harrison was silent, meeting the look and taking the depth and meaning of it, so far as fathomable by him. The two faces and figures, fine as they both were, made a strange contrast. The doctor's face was in one of its serious and good expressions; but the other had come from a region of light which this one had never entered. And even in attitude—the dignified unconsciousness of the one, was very different from the satisfied carelessness of the other.

"May I further ask," he said in a softened tone,—"why you do this for me?"

"Because I care about you."

"It's incredible!" said the doctor, his eye wavering, however. "One man care about another! Why, man, I may be the worst enemy you have in the world, for aught you know."

"That cannot hinder my being your friend."

"Do you know," said the other looking at him half curiously, —"I am ready to do such a foolish thing as to believe you? Well—be as much of a friend to me as you can; and I'll deserve it as well as I can—which maybe won't be very well. Indeed that is most likely!" He had stretched out his hand to Mr. Linden however, and clasped his warmly. He quitted it now to go forward and take that of Faith.

She came in just as usual, and met the doctor with her wonted manner; only the crimson stain on her cheek telling anything against her. She did not give him much chance to observe that; for Cindy followed her with the tea things and Faith busied herself about the table. The doctor went back to his stand and watched her.

"Mignonette has changed colour," he remarked presently. "How is that,Miss Derrick?"

"How is what, sir?"

"How come you to change the proper characteristics of mignonette? Don't you know that never shews high brilliancy?"

"I suppose I am not mignonette to-night," said Faith, returning

to the safer observation of the tea-table.

"Are you my flower, then? the Rhodora?" he said with a lowered tone, coming near her.

If Faith heard, she did not seem to hear this question. Her attention was bestowed upon the preparations for tea, till Mrs. Derrick came in to make it; and then Faith found a great deal to do in the care of the other duties of the table. It was a mystery, how she managed it; she who generally had as much leisure at meals as anybody wanted. Dr. Harrison's attention however was no longer exclusively given to her.

"Do you *always* have these muffins for tea, Mrs. Derrick?" he remarked with his second essay.

"Why no!" said Mrs. Derrick,—"we have all sorts of other things. Don't you like muffins, doctor?"

"Like them!" said the doctor. "I am thinking what a happy man Mr.Linden must be."

"Marvellously true!" said Mr. Linden. "I hope you'll go home and write a new 'Search after happiness,' ending it sentimentally in muffins."

"Not so," said the doctor. "I should only begin it in muffins —as I am doing. But my remark after all had a point;—for I was thinking of the possibility of detaching anybody from such a periodical attraction. Mrs. Derrick, I am the bearer of an humble message to you from my sister and father—who covet the honour and pleasure of your presence to-morrow evening. Sophy makes me useful, when she can. I hope you will give me a gracious

answer—for yourself and Miss Faith, and so make me useful again. It is a rare chance! I am not often good for anything."

"I don't know whether I know how to give what you call gracious answers, doctor," said Mrs. Derrick pleasantly. "I'm very much obliged to Miss Sophy, but I never go anywhere at night."

With the other two the doctor's mission was more successful; and then he disclosed the other object of his visit.

"Miss Derrick, do you remember I once threatened to bring the play ofPortia here—and introduce her to you?"

"I remember it," said Faith.

"Would it be pleasant to you that I should fulfil my threat this evening?"

"I don't know, sir," said Faith smiling,—"till I hear the play."

"Mr. Linden,—what do you think?" said the doctor, also with a smile.

"I am ready for anything—if you will let me be impolite enough to finish writing a letter while I hear the first part of your reading."

"To change the subject slightly—what do you suppose, Mr. Linden, would on the whole be the effect, on society, if the hand of Truth were in every case to be presented without a glove?" The doctor spoke gravely now.

"The effect would be that society would shake hands more cordially—I should think," said Mr. Linden; "though it is hard to say how such an extreme proposition would work."

"Do you know, it strikes me that it would work just the other way, and that hands would presently clasp nothing but daggers' hilts. But there is another question.—How will one fair hand of truth live among a crowd of steel gauntlets?"

"*What?*" Mr. Linden said, with a little bending of his brows upon the doctor. "I am wearing neither glove nor gauntlet,—what are you talking about?—And my half-finished letter is a fact and no pretence."

"I sha'n't believe you," said the doctor, "if you give my fingers such a wring as that. Well, go to your letter, and I'll take Miss Derrick to Venice—if she will let me."

Venice!—That exquisite photograph of the Bridge of Sighs, and "the palace and the prison on each hand," about which such a long, long entrancing account had been given by Mr. Linden to her—the scene and the talk rose up before Faith's imagination; she was very ready to go to Venice. Its witching scenery, its strange history, floated up, in a fascinating, strange cloud-view; she was ready for Shylock and the Rialto. Nay, for the Rialto, not for Shylock; him, or anything like him, she had never seen nor imagined. She was only sorry that Mr. Linden had to go to his letter; but there was a compensative side to that, for her shyness was somewhat less endangered. With only the doctor and Shylock to attend to, she could get along very well.

Shyness and fears however, were of very short endurance. To Venice she went,—Shylock she saw; and then she saw nothing else but Shylock, and those who were dealing with him; unless

an occasional slight glance towards the distant table where Mr. Linden sat at his writing, might be held to signify that she *had* powers of vision for somewhat else. It did not interrupt the doctor's pleasure, nor her own. Dr. Harrison had begun with at least a double motive in his mind; but man of the world as he was, he forgot his unsatisfied curiosity in the singular gratification of reading such a play to such a listener. It was so plain that Faith was in Venice! She entered with such simplicity, and also with such intelligence, into the characters and interests of the persons in the drama; she relished their words so well; she weighed in such a nice balance of her own the right and the wrong, the true and the false, of whatever rested on nature and truth for its proper judgment;—she was so perfectly and deliciously ignorant of the world and the ways of it! The fresh view that such pure eyes took of such actors and scenes, was indescribably interesting; Dr. Harrison found it the best play he had ever read in his life. He made it convenient sometimes to pause to indoctrinate Faith in characters or customs of which she had no adequate knowledge; it did not hurt her pleasure; it was all part of the play.

In the second scene, the doctor stopped to explain the terms on whichPortia had been left with her suitors.

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it was hard," said Faith smiling.

"What would you have done if you had been left so?"

"I would not have been left so."

"But you might not help yourself. Suppose it had been a

father's or a mother's command? that anybody might come up and have you, for the finding—if they could pitch upon the right box of jewelry?"

"My father or mother would never have put such a command on me," saidFaith looking amused.

"But you may *suppose* anything," said the doctor leaning forward and smiling. "*Suppose* they had?"

"Then you must suppose me different too," said Faith laughing. "Suppose me to have been like Portia; and I should have done as she did."

The doctor shook his head and looked gravely at her.

"Are you so impracticable?"

"Was she?" said Faith.

"Then you wouldn't think it right to obey Mrs. Derrick in all circumstances?"

"Not if she was Portia's mother," said Faith.

"Suppose you had been the Prince of Arragon—which casket would you have chosen?" said Mr. Linden, as he came from his table, letter in hand.

"I suppose I should have chosen as he did," said the doctor carelessly—"I really don't remember how that was. I'll tell you when I come to him. Have you done letter-writing?"

"I have done writing letters, for to-night. Have I permission to go toVenice in your train?"

"I am only a locomotive," said the doctor. "But you know, with two a train goes faster. If you had another copy of the play,

now, Linden—and we should read it as I have read Shakspeare in certain former times—take different parts—I presume the effect would excel steam-power, and be electric. Can you?"

This was agreed to, and the "effect" almost equalled the doctor's prognostications. Even Mrs. Derrick, who had somewhat carelessly held aloof from his single presentation of the play, was fascinated now, and drew near and dropped her knitting. It would have been a very rare entertainment to any that had heard it; but for once an audience of two was sufficient for the stimulus and reward of the readers. That and the actual enjoyment of the parts they were playing. Dr. Harrison read well, with cultivated and critical accuracy. His voice was good and melodious, his English enunciation excellent; his knowledge of his author thorough, as far as acquaintanceship went; and his habit of reading a dramatically practised one. But Faith, amid all her delight, had felt a want in it, as compared with the reading to which of late she had been accustomed; it did not give the soul and heart of the author—though it gave everything else. *That* is what only soul and heart can do. Not that Dr. Harrison was entirely wanting in those gifts either; they lay somewhere, perhaps, in him; but they are not the ones which in what is called "the world" come most often or readily into play; and so it falls out that one who lives there long becomes like the cork oak when it has stood long untouched in *its* world; the heart is encrusted with a monstrous thick, almost impenetrable, coating of bark. When Mr. Linden joined the reading, the pleasure was perfect;

the very contrast between the two characters and the two voices made the illusion more happy. Then Faith was in a little danger of betraying herself; for it was difficult to look at both readers with the same eyes; and if she tried to keep her eyes at home, that was more difficult still.

In the second act, Portia says to Arragon,

> "In terms of choice I am not solely led
> By nice direction of a maiden's eyes," etc.

"What do you think of that, Miss Derrick?" said the doctor pausing when his turn came. "Do you think a lady's choice ought to be so determined?"

Faith raised her eyes, and answered, "No, sir."

"By what then? You don't trust appearances?"

Faith hesitated.

"I should like to hear how Portia managed," she said, with a little heightened colour. "I never thought much about it."

"What do you think of Portia's gloves, doctor?" said Mr. Linden.

"Hum"—said the doctor. "They are a pattern!—soft as steel, harsh as kid-leather. They fit too, so exquisitely! But, if I were marrying her, I think I should request that she would give her gloves into my keeping."

"Then would your exercise of power be properly thwarted. Every time you made the demand, Portia would, like a juggler,

pull off and surrender a fresh pair of gloves, leaving ever a pair yet finer-spun upon her hands."

"I suppose she would," said the doctor comically. "Come! I won't marry her. And yet, Linden,—one might do worse. Such gloves keep off a wonderful amount of friction."

"If you happen to have fur which cannot be even *stroked* the wrong way!"

The doctor's eye glanced with fun, and Faith laughed The reading went on. And went on without much pausing, until the lines—

> "O ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
> To seal love's bonds new made, than they are wont
> To keep obliged faith unforfeited!
> ——Who riseth from a feast,
> With that keen appetite that he sits down?
> Where is the horse, that doth untread again
> His tedious measures with the unbated fire
> That he did pace them first?
> All things that are,
> Are with more spirit chased than enjoyed."

"Do you believe in that doctrine, Miss Faith?" said the doctor, with a gentle look in her direction.

"I suppose it is true of some things,"—she said after a minute's consideration.

"What a wicked truth it is, Linden!" said the doctor.

"There is 'an error i' the bill,'" said Mr. Linden.

Faith's eyes looked somewhat eagerly, the doctor's philosophically.

"Declare and shew," said the doctor. "I thought it was a universal, most deplorable, human fact; and here it is, in Shakspeare, man; which is another word for saying it is in humanity."

"It is true only of false things. The Magician's coins are next day but withered leaves—the real gold is at compound interest."

The doctor's smile was doubtful and cynical; Faith's had a touch of sunlight on it.

"Where is your 'real gold'?" said the doctor.

"Do you expect me to tell you?" said Mr. Linden laughing. "I have found a good deal in the course of my life, and the interest is regularly paid in."

"Are you talking seriously?"

"Ay truly. So may you."

"From any other man, I should throw away your words as the veriest Magician's coin; but if they are true metal—why I'll ask you to take me to see the Mint some day!"

"Let me remind you," said Mr. Linden, "that there are many things inShakspeare. What do you think of this, for a set-off?—

> 'Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out e'en to the edge of doom.

If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.'"

"There's an error proved upon *me*," said the doctor, biting his lips as he looked at Faith who had listened delightedly. "Come on! I'll stop no more. The thing is, Linden, that I am less happy than you—I never found any real gold in my life!"

"Ah you expect gold to come set with diamonds,—and that cannot always be. I don't doubt you have gold enough to start a large fortune, if you would only rub it up and make it productive."

The doctor made no answer to that, and the reading went on; Faith becoming exceedingly engrossed with the progress of the drama. She listened with an eagerness which both the readers amusedly took heed of, as the successive princes of Morocco and Arragon made their trial: the doctor avowing by the way, that he thought he should have "assumed desert" as the latter prince did, and received the fool's head for his pains. Then they came to the beautiful "casket scene." The doctor had somehow from the beginning left Portia in Mr. Linden's hands; and now gave with great truth and gracefulness the very graceful words of her successful suitor. He could put truth into these, and did, and accordingly read beautifully; well heard, for the play of Faith's varying face shewed she went along thoroughly with all the fine turns of thought and feeling; here and elsewhere. But how well and how delicately Mr. Linden gave Portia! That Dr. Harrison could not have done; the parts had fallen out happily, whether

by chance or design. Her ladylike and coy play with words—her transparent veil of delicate shifting turns of expression—contriving to say all and yet as if she would say nothing—were rendered by the reader with a grace of tone every way fit to them. Faith's eye ceased to look at anybody, and her colour flitted, as this scene went on; and when Portia's address to her fortunate wooer was reached—that very noble and dignified declaration of her woman's mind, when she certainly pulled off her gloves, wherever else she might wear them;—Faith turned her face quite away from the readers and with the cheek she could not hide sheltered by her hand—as well as her hand could—she let nobody but the fire and Mrs. Derrick see what a flush covered the other. Very incautious in Faith, but it was the best she could do. And the varied interests that immediately followed, of Antonio's danger and deliverance, gradually brought her head round again and accounted sufficiently for the colour with which her cheeks still burned. The Merchant of Venice was not the only play enacting that evening; and the temptation to break in upon the one, made the doctor, as often as he could, break off the other; though the interest of the plot for a while gave him little chance.

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

"Do you suppose, Miss Derrick," said Dr. Harrison with his look of amused pleasure,—"that is because the world is so dark?—or because the effects of the good deed reach to such a distance?"

"Both," said Faith immediately.

"You think the world is so bad?"

"I don't know much of the world," said Faith,—"but I suppose the *shining* good deeds aren't so very many."

"What makes a good deed *shining?*" said the doctor.

Faith glanced at Mr. Linden. But he did not take it up, and she was thrown back upon her own resources. She thought a bit.

"I suppose,"—she said,—"its coming from the very spirit of light."

"You must explain," said the doctor good-humouredly but smiling,—"for that puts me in absolute darkness."

"I don't know very well how to tell what I mean," said Faith colouring and looking thoughtful;—"I think I know. Things that are done for the pure love of God and truth, I think, shine; if they are ever so little things, because really there is a great light in them. I think they shine more than some of the greater things that people call very brilliant, but that are done from a lower motive."

"I should like"—said the doctor—"Can you remember an instance or two? of both kinds?"

Well Faith remembered an instance or two of *one* kind, which she could not instance. She sought in her memory.

"When Daniel kneeled upon his knees three times a day to pray, with his windows open, after the king's law had for bidden any one to do it on pain of death,—" said Faith.—"I think that was a shining good deed!"

"But that was a very notable instance," said the doctor.

"It was a very little thing he did," said Faith. "Only kneeled down to pray in his own room. And it has shined all the way down to us."

"And in later times," said Mr. Linden,—"when the exploring shallop of the Mayflower sought a place of settlement, and after beating about in winter storms came to anchor Friday night at Plymouth Rock;—all Saturday was lost in refitting and preparing, and yet on Sunday they would not land. Those two dozen men, with no human eye to see, with every possible need for haste!"

"That hasn't shined quite so far," said the doctor, "for it never reached me. And it don't enlighten me now! I should have landed."

"Do you know nothing of the *spirit* of Say and Seal, as well as the province?" said Mr. Linden.

"As how, against landing?"

"They rested that day '*according to the commandment*.' Having promised to obey God in all things, the seal of their obedience was unbroken."

"Well, Miss Faith," said the doctor—"Now for a counter example."

"I know so little of what has been done," said Faith. "Don't you remember some such things yourself, Dr. Harrison?—Mr. Linden?"—The voice changed and fell a little as it passed from one to the other.

"General Putnam went into the wolf's den, and pulled him

out"—said the doctor humorously,—"that's all I can think of just now, and it is not very much in point. I don't know that there was anything very bright about it except the wolf's eyes!—But here we are keeping Portia out of doors, and Miss Derrick waiting! Linden—fall to." And with comical life and dramatic zeal on the doctor's part, in a few minutes more, the play was finished.

"Mrs. Derrick," said the doctor gravely as he rose and stood before her,—"I hope you approve of plays."

Mrs. Derrick expressed her amusement and satisfaction.

"Miss Faith," he said extending his hand,—"I have to thank you for the most perfect enjoyment I have ever had of Shakspeare. I only wish to-morrow evening would roll off on such swift wheels—but it would be too much. Look where this one has rolled to!" And he shewed his watch and hurried off; that is, if Dr. Harrison could be said to do such a thing.

The rest of the party also were stirred from their quiet. Mrs Derrick went out; and Mr. Linden, coming behind Faith as she stood by the fire, gently raised her face till he could have a full view of it, and asked her how she liked being in Venice?

"Very much," she said, smiling and blushing at him,—"very much!"

"You are not the magician's coin!" he said, kissing her. "You are not even a witch. Do you know how I found that out?"

"No"—she said softly, the colour spreading over her face and her eyes falling, but raised again immediately to ask the question of him.

"A witch's charms are always dispelled whenever she tries to cross running water!"—

She laughed; an amused, bright, happy little laugh, that it was pleasant to hear.

"But what did Dr. Harrison mean,—by what he said when he thanked me?What did he thank me for?"

"He *said*—for a new enjoyment of Shakspeare."

"What did he mean?"

"Do you understand how the sweet fragrance of mignonette can give new enjoyment to a summer's day?"

She blushed exceedingly. "But, Mr. Linden, please don't talk so! And I don't want to give Dr. Harrison enjoyment in that way."

"Which part of your sentence shall I handle first?" he said with a laughing flash of the eyes,—"'Dr. Harrison'—or 'Mr. Linden'?"

"The first," said Faith laying her hand deprecatingly on his arm;—"and let the other alone!"

"How am I to 'please not to talk'?"

"So—as I don't deserve," she said raising her grave eyes to his face."I would rather have you tell me my wrong things."

He looked at her, with one of those rare smiles which belonged to her; holding her hand with a little soft motion of it to and fro upon his own.

"I am not sure that I dare promise 'to be good,'" he said,—"I am so apt to speak of things as I find them. And Mignonette you are to me—both in French and English. Faith, I know there is no glove upon your hand,—and I know there is none on mine; but I

cannot feel, nor imagine, any friction,—can you?"

She looked up and smiled. So much friction or promise of it, as there is about the blue sky's reflection in the clear deep waters of a mountain lake—so much there was in the soft depth —and reflection—of Faith's eyes at that moment. So deep,—so unruffled;—and as in the lake, so in the look that he saw, there was a mingling of earth and heaven.

CHAPTER V

Wednesday morning was cold and raw, and the sun presently put on a thick grey cloak. There were suspicions abroad that it was one made in the regions of perpetual snow, for whatever effect it might have had upon the sun, it made the earth very cold. Now and then a little frozen-up snowflake came silently down, and the wind swept fitfully round the corners of houses, and wandered up and down the chimneys. People who were out subsided into a little trot to keep themselves warm, all except the younger part of creation, who made the trot a run; and those who could, staid at home.

All of Mrs. Derrick's little family were of this latter class, after the very early morning; for as some of them were to brave the weather at night, there seemed no reason why they should also brave it by day. As speedily as might be, Mr. Linden despatched his various matters of outdoor business, of which there were always more or less on his hands, and then came back and went into the sitting-room to look for his scholar. In two minutes she came in from the other door, with the stir of business and the cold morning fresh in her cheeks. But no one would guess—no one could ever guess, from Faith's brown dress and white rufffles, that she had just been flying about in the kitchen—to use Cindy's elegant illustration—"like shelled peas"; not quite so aimlessly, however. And her smiling glance at her teacher spoke

of readiness for all sorts of other business.

The first thing she was set about was her French exercise, during the first few lines of which Mr. Linden stood by her and looked on. But then he suddenly turned away and went up stairs —returning however, presently, to take his usual seat by her side. He watched her progress silently, except for business words and instructions, till the exercise was finished and Faith had turned to him for further directions; then taking her hand he put upon its forefinger one of the prettiest things she had ever seen. It was an old-fashioned diamond ring; the stones all of a size, and of great clearness and lustre, set close upon each other all the way round; with just enough goldsmith's work to bind them together, and to form a dainty frill of filagree work above and below—looking almost like a gold line of shadow by that flashing line of light.

"It was my mother's, Faith," he said, "and she gave it to me in trust for whatever lady I should love as I love you."

Faith looked down at it with very, very grave eyes. Her head bent lower, and then suddenly laying her hands together on the table she hid her face in them; and the diamonds glittered against her temple and in contrast with the neighbouring soft hair.

One or two mute questions came there, before Mr. Linden said softly, "Faith!" She looked up with flushed face, and all of tears in her eyes *but* the tears; and her lip had its very unbent line. She looked first at him and then at the ring again. Anything more humble or more grave than her look cannot be imagined. His face was grave too, with a sort of moved gravity, that touched

both the present and the past, but he did not mean hers should be.

"Now what will you do, dear child?" he said. "For I must forewarn you that there is a language of rings which is well established in the world."

"What—do you mean?" she said, looking alternately at the ring and him.

"You know what plain gold on this finger means?" he said, touching the one he spoke of. She looked at first doubtfully, then coloured and said "yes."

"Well diamonds on *this* finger are understood to be the avant-couriers of that."

Faith had never seen diamonds; but that was not what she was thinking of, nor what brought such a deep spot of colour on her cheeks. It was pretty to see, it was so bright and so different from the flush which had been there a few minutes before. Her eyes considered the diamonds attentively.

"What shall I do?" she said after a little.

"I don't know—you must try your powers of contrivance."

"I cannot contrive. I could keep ray glove on to-night; but I could not every day. Shall I give it back to you to keep for me?"—she said looking at it lovingly. "Perhaps that will be best!—What would you like me to do?"

"Anything *but* that," he said smiling,—"I should say that would be worst. You may wear a glove, or glove-finger—what you will; but there it must stay, and keep possession for me, till the other one comes to bear it company. In fact I suppose I *could*

endure to have it seen!"

Her eyes went down to it again. Clearly the ring had a charm for Faith. And so it had, something beyond the glitter of brilliants. Of jewellers' value she knew little; the marketable worth of the thing was an enigma to her. But as a treasure of another kind it was beyond price. His mother's ring, on *her* finger —to Faith's fancy it bound and pledged her to a round of life as perfect, as bright, and as pure, as its own circlet of light-giving gems. That she might fill to him—as far as was possible —all the place that the once owner of the diamonds would have looked for and desired; and be all that *he* would look for in the person to whom the ring, so derived, had come. Faith considered it lovingly, with intent brow, and at last lifted her eyes to Mr. Linden by way of answer; without saying anything, yet with half her thoughts in her face. His face was very grave—Faith could see a little what the flashing of that ring was to him; but her look was met and answered with a fulness of warmth and tenderness which said that he had read her thoughts, and that to his mind they were already accomplished. Then he took up one of her books and opened it at the place where she was to read.

The morning, and the afternoon, went off all too fast, and the sun went down sullenly. As if to be in keeping with the expected change of work and company, the evening brought worse weather,—a keener wind—beginning to bestir itself in earnest, a thicker sky; though the ground was too snow-covered already to allow it to be very dark. With anybody but Mr. Linden,

Mrs. Derrick would hardly have let Faith go out; and even as it was, she several times hoped the weather would moderate before they came home. Faith was so well wrapped up however, both in the house and in the sleigh, that the weather gave her no discomfort; it was rather exhilarating to be so warm in spite of it; and they flew along at a good rate, having the road pretty much to themselves.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said as they approached Judge Harrison's, "I cannot spend all the evening here with you—that is, I ought not. I had a message sent me this afternoon—too late to attend to then, which I cannot leave till morning. But if I see you safe by the fire, I hope Miss Harrison will take good care of you till I get back."

"Well," said Faith,—"I wouldn't meddle with your 'oughts,'—if I could. I hope you'll take care of Jerry!"—

"What shall I do with him?"

"Don't you know?" said Faith demurely.

"I suppose I ought to drive him so fast that he'll keep warm," said Mr.Linden. "What else?"

Faith's little laugh made a contrast with the rough night. "You had better let me get out to the fire," she said joy fully,—"or *I* sha'n't keep warm."

"You sha'n't?" he said bending down by her, as they reached the door,—"your face has no idea of being cold!—I'll take care of Jerry, child—if I don't forget him in my own pleasant thoughts."

Faith threw off her cloak and furs on the hall table where some others lay, and pulled off one glove.

"Keep them both on!" Mr. Linden said softly and smiling,—"enact Portia for once. Then if you are much urged, you can gracefully yield your own prejudices so far as to take off one."

She looked at him, then amusedly pulled on her glove again; and the door was opened for them into a region of warmth and brightness; where there were all sorts of rejoicings over them and against the cold night. Mr. Linden was by force persuaded to wait till after coffee before braving it again; and the Judge and his daughter fairly involved Faith in the meshes of their kindness. A very mouse Faith was to-night, as ever wore gloves; and with a little of a mouse's watchfulness about her, fancying cat's ears at every corner. A brown mouse too; she had worn only her finest and best stuff dress. But upon the breast of that, a bunch of snowy Laurustinus, nestling among green leaves, put forth a secret claim in a way that was very beautifying. The Judge and Miss Sophy put her in a great soft velvet chair and hovered round her, both of them conscious of her being a little more dainty than usual. Sophy thought perhaps it was the Laurustinus; her father believed it intrinsic.

The coffee came, and the doctor.

"I have something better for you than Portia to-night"—he said as he dealt out sugar,—"though not something better than muffins."

"Faith, my dear child," said Miss Sophy,—"you needn't be so

ceremonious—none of us are wearing gloves."

Faith laughed and blushed and pulled off one glove.

"You are enacting Portia, are you?" said Dr. Harrison. "Even she would not have handled wigs with them. I see I have done mischief! But the harm I did you last night I will undo this evening. Ladies and Gentlemen!—I will give you, presently, the pleasure of hearing some lines written expressive of my wishes toward the unknown—but supposed—mistress of my life and affections. Any suggestions toward the bettering of them—I will hear."

"The bettering of what?" said Mrs. Somers,—"your life and affections?"

"I am aware, my dear aunt Ellen, you think the one impossible—the other improbable. I speak of bettering the wishes."

"'Unknown but supposed'"—said Mr. Linden. "'Item—She hath many nameless virtues'."

"That is not my wish," said the doctor gravely looking at him, "I think nameless virtues—deserve their obscurity!"

"What do you call your ideal?"

"Psyche,—" said the doctor, after a minute's sober consideration apparently divided between Mr. Linden's face and the subject.

"That is not so uncommon a name as Campaspe," said Mr. Linden, with a queer little gesture of brow and lips.

"Who is Campaspe?" said the doctor; while Faith looked, and Miss Essie's black eyes sparkled and danced, and everybody else

held his coffee cup in abeyance.

"Did you never hear of my Campaspe?" said Mr. Linden, glancing up from under his brows.

"We will exchange civilities," said the doctor. "I should be very happy to hear of her."

Laughing a little, his own cup sending its persuasive steam unheeded, his own face on the sparkling order—though the eyes looked demurely down,—Mr. Linden went on to answer.

> "'Cupid and my Campaspe played
> At cards for kisses; Cupid payed;
> He stakes his quiver, bow and arrows,
> His mother's doves, and teame of sparrows;
> Loses them too; then down he throws
> The coral of his lippe, the rose
> Growing on's cheek, (but none knows how)
> With these, the crystal of his browe,
> And then the dimple of his chinne;
> All these did my Campaspe winne.
> At last he set her both his eyes,—
> She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
> O Love! has she done this to thee?
> What shall, alas! become of me!'"

There was a general little breeze of laughter and applause. The doctor had glanced at Faith;—her colour was certainly raised; but then the old Judge had just bent down to ask her "if she had ever heard of Campaspe before?" The doctor did not hear but

he guessed at the whisper, and saw Faith's laugh and shake of the head.

"Is that a true bill, Linden?"

"Very true,—" said Mr. Linden, trying his coffee. "But it is not yet known what will become of me."

"What has become of Campaspe?"

"She is using her eyes."

"Are they *those* eyes, Mr. Linden?" said Miss Essie coming nearer and using her own.

"What was the colour of Cupid's?"

"Blue, certainly!"

"Miss Derrick!"—said the doctor,—"let us have your opinion."

Faith gave him at least a frank view of her own, all blushing and laughing as she was, and answered readily,—"As to the colour of Cupid's eyes?—I have never seen him, sir."

The doctor was obliged to laugh himself, and the chorus became general, at something in the combination of Faith and her words. But Faith's confusion thereupon mastered her so completely, that perhaps to shield her the doctor requested silence and attention and began to read; of a lady who, he said he was certain, had borrowed of nobody—not even of Cupid.—

> "'Whoe'er she be,
> That not impossible she,
> That shall command my heart and me.'"

"I believe she *is* impossible, to begin with," said Miss Essie. "You will never let any woman command you, Dr. Harrison."

"You don't know me, Miss Essie," said the doctor, with a curiously grave face, for him.

"He means—

'Who shall command my heart—*not* me.'"

said Mr. Linden.

"If she can command my heart—what of me is left to rebel?" said the doctor.

"Sophy," said Mrs. Somers, "how long has Julius been all heart?"

"Ever since my aunt Ellen has been *all* eyes and ears. Mr. Somers, which portion of your mental nature owns the supremacy of your wife? may I inquire, in the course of this investigation?"

"Ha!" said Mr. Somers blandly, thus called upon—"I own her supremacy, sir—ha—in all proper things!"

"Ha! Very proper!" said the doctor.

"That is all any good woman wants," said the old Judge benignly. "I take it, that is all she wants."

"Then you must say which are the proper things, father!" said MissSophy laughing.

"You'll have to ask every man separately, Sophy," said Mrs. Somers,—"they all have their own ideas about proper things. Mr. Somers thinks milk porridge is the limit."

"Mr. Stoutenburgh," said the doctor, "haven't you owned

yourself commanded, ever since your heart gave up its lock and key?"

"Yes indeed," said the Squire earnestly,—"I am so bound up in slavery that I have even forgotten the wish to be free! All my wife's things are proper!"

"O hush!" his wife said laughing, but with a little quick bright witness in her eyes, that was pretty to see. Dr. Harrison smiled.

"You see, Miss Derrick!" he said with a little bow to her, —"there is witness on all sides;—and now I will go on with my *not impossible* she."—

He got through several verses, not without several interruptions, till he came to the exquisite words following;—

"'I wish her beauty,
That owes not all his duty
To gaudy tire or glistring shoetye.

'Something more than
Taffeta or tissue can,
Or rampant feather, or rich fan.

'More than the spoil
Of shop, or silk-worm's toil,
Or a bought blush, or a set smile.'"

While Miss Essie exclaimed, Miss Harrison stole a look at Faith; who was looking up at the doctor, listening, with a very

simple face of amusement. Her thoughts were indeed better ballasted than to sway to such a breeze if she had felt it. But the real extreme beauty of the image and of the delineation was what she felt; she made no application of them. The doctor came to this verse.

> "'A well-tamed heart,
> For whose more noble smart
> Love may be long choosing a dart.'—

What does that mean, Linden?—isn't that an error in the description?"

"Poetical license," said Mr. Linden smiling. "Psyche will give you trouble enough, wings and all,—there is no fear you will find her 'tamed'."

"How is Campaspe in that respect?"

"She has never given me much trouble yet," said Mr. Linden.

"What I object to is the 'long choosing'," said the doctor. "Miss deStaff—do you think a good heart should be very hard to win?"

"Certainly!—the harder the better," replied the lady. "That's the only way to bring down your pride. The harder she is, the more likely you are to think she's a diamond."

"Mrs. Stoutenburgh!"—

"What has been the texture of yours all these years, doctor?"

"He thinks that when he has dined the rest of the world should follow suit—like the Khan of Tartary," said Mrs. Somers.

"Miss Derrick!" said the doctor—"I hope for some gentleness

from you. Do you think such a heart as we have been talking of, should be very difficult to move?"

Faith's blush was exquisite. Real speech was hard to command. She knew all eyes were waiting upon her; and she could not reason out and comfort herself with the truth—that to them her blush might mean several things as well as one. The answer came in that delicate voice of hers which timidity had shaken.

"I think—it depends on what there is to move it."

"What do you call sufficient force?" said Mrs. Somers.

"I?"—said Faith.—

"Yes, you," replied the parson's wife with a look not unkindly amused."What sort and degree of power should move 'such a heart'?—to quoteJulius."

Faith's blush was painful again, and it was only the sheer necessity of the case that enabled her to rally. But her answer was clear. "Something better than itself, Mrs. Somers."

"I should like to know what that is!" said Mrs. Somers.

Mr. Linden's involuntary "And so should I"—was in a different tone, but rather drew eyes upon himself than Faith.

"It's of no consequence to you!" said the doctor, with a funny, mock serious tone of admonition.

Mr. Linden bowed, acquiescingly.—"Psychology is an interesting study"—he added, in qualification. "But let me return your warning, doctor—you have a formidable rival."

"Qui donc?"

"Cupid carried off Psyche some time ago—do you suppose you can get her back?" And with a laughing sign of adieu, Mr. Linden went away.

Luckily for Faith, she was not acquainted with the heathen mythology; and was also guiltless of any thought of connexion between herself and the doctor's ideal. So her very free, unsuspicious face and laughter quite reassured him.

"Mr. Linden is an odd sort of person," said Miss Essie philosophically. "I have studied him a good deal, and I can't quite make him out. He's a very interesting man! But I think he is deeper than he seems."

"He's deeper than the salt mines of Salzburg then!" said the doctor.

"Why?" said Miss Essie curiously.

The doctor answered gravely that "there were beautiful things there";—and went on with his reading. And Faith listened now with unwavering attention, till he came to—

> "'Sydnean showers
> Of soft discourse, whose powers
> Can crown old winter's head with flowers.'"

Faith's mind took a leap. And it hardly came back again. The reading was followed by a very lively round game of talk; but it was not *such* talk; and Faith's thoughts wandered away and watched round that circlet of brightness that was covered by her glove; scattered rays from which led them variously,—home,

to her Sunday school, to Pequot,—and to heaven; coming back again and again to the diamonds and to the image that was in the centre of them. No wonder her grave sweet face was remarked as being even graver and sweeter than usual; and the doctor at last devoted himself to breaking up its quiet. He took her into the library to finish the Rhododendrons—ostensibly—but in reality to get rid of the stiff circle in the other room. The circle followed; but no longer stiff; under the influence of the cold weather and the big fires and good prompting, their spirits got up at last to the pitch of acting charades. Miss Harrison brought down her stores of old and new finery; and with much zeal and success charades and tableaux went on for some length of time; to the extreme amusement of Faith, who had never seen any before. They did not divert her from watching for the sound of Mr. Linden's return; but it came not, and Miss Essie expected and hoped aloud in vain. The hour did come, and passed, at which such gatherings in Pattaquasset were wont to break up. That was not very late to be sure. The Stoutenburghs, and the De Staffs, and finally Mr. and Mrs. Somers, went off in turn; and Faith was left alone to wait; for she had refused all offers of being set down by her various friends.

It happened that Mr. Linden had been, by no harmful accident but simply by the untowardness of things, delayed beyond his time; and then having a good distance to drive, it was some while after the last visiters had departed when he once more reined up Jerry at the door. No servant came to take him, and Mr.

Linden applied himself to the bell-handle. But there seemed a spell upon the house—or else the inmates were asleep—for ring as he would, no one came.

To fasten Jerry and let himself in were the next steps—neither of which took long. But in the drawing-room, to which he had been ushered in the beginning of the evening, there was now no one. The lights and the fires and the empty chairs were there; that was all. Mr. Linden knew the house well enough to know where next to look; he crossed the hall to a room at the other side, which was the one most commonly used by the family, and from which a passage led to the library. No one was here, and the room was in a strange state of confusion. Before he had well time to remark upon it, Faith came in from the passage bearing a heavy marble bust in her arms. The colour sprang to her cheeks; she set down Prince Talleyrand quickly and came towards Mr. Linden, saying, "There's fire in the library."

"My dear child!" he said softly, "what is the matter? What are you about?"

"Why there is fire in the library—it's all on fire, or soon will be," she said hurriedly, "and we are bringing the things out. The fire can't get in here—its a fireproof building only the inside will all burn up. The servants are carrying water to the roof of the house, lest that should catch. I am so glad to see you!"—

And Miss Sophy and the doctor came in, carrying one a picture, the other an armful of books. Faith ran back through the passage. But before she could set her foot inside the library, Mr.

Linden's hand was on her shoulder, and he stepped before her and took the survey of the room in one glance.

Its condition was sufficiently unpromising. The fire had kindled in a heap of combustible trumpery brought there for the tableaux. It had got far beyond management before any one discovered it; and now was making fast work in that corner of the room and creeping with no slow progress along the cornices of the bookshelves. Short time evidently there was for the family to remove their treasures from its destructive sweep. One corner of the room was in a light blaze; one or two lamps mockingly joined their light to the glare; the smoke was curling in grey wreaths and clouds over and around almost everything. Here an exquisite bust of Proserpine looked forlornly through it; and there a noble painting of Alston's shewed in richer lights than ever before, its harmony of colouring. The servants were, as Faith had said, engaged in endeavouring to keep the roof of the house from catching; only one old black retainer of the family, too infirm for that service, was helping them in the labour of rescuing books and treasures of art from the tire, which must take its way within the library. The wall it could not pass, that being, as Faith had also said, proof against it.

"Stay where you are," Mr. Linden said, "and I will hand things to you"—adding under his breath, "if you love me, Faith!" And passing into the room he snatched Proserpine from her smoky berth and gave her to the old servant, handing Faith a light picture.

"Don't let your sister come in here, Harrison," he said, springing up the steps to the upper shelves of the bookcase nearest the fire—"and don't let everybody do everything,—keep half in the passage and half here."

"Yes, Sophy," said the doctor, "that is much better—don't you come in here, nor Miss Faith. And don't work too hard," he said gently to the latter as she came back after bestowing the picture. "I won't ask you not to work at all, for I know it would be of no use."

"Just work like monkeys," Mr. Linden said from his high post, which was a rather invisible one. "Reuben!—I am glad of your help."

"Reuben!" exclaimed Faith joyously. "How good that is. Give me those books, Reuben."—

And after that the work went on steadily, with few words. It was too smoky an atmosphere to speak much in; and the utmost exertions on the part of every one of the workers left no strength nor time for it. "Like monkeys" they worked—the gentlemen handing things out of the smoke to the willing fingers and light feet that made quick disposition of them. Quick it had need to be, for the fire was not waiting for them. And in an incredibly short time—incredible save to those who have seen the experiment tried,—books and engravings were emptied from shelf after shelf—compartment after compartment—and lodged within the house. Not a spare inch of space—not a spare second of time, it seemed, was gone over; and the treasures of the library

were in quick process of shifting from one place to another. It was rather a weary part Faith had to play, to stop short at the doorway and see the struggle with smoke and fire that was going on inside; and an anxious eye and trembling heart followed the movements of one of the workers there whenever she returned to her post of waiting. She would rather have been amid the smoke and the fire too, than to stand off looking on; but she did what she was desired—and more than she was desired; for she said not a word, like a wise child. Only did her work with no delay and came back again. Two excellent workers were the doctor and Mr. Linden; Reuben was a capital seconder; and no better runners than the two ladies need have been found; while the old Judge and his old serving man did what they could. There was every appearance that their efforts would be successful; the fire was to be sure, greatly increased and fast spreading, but so also the precious things that it endangered were already in great measure secured. Probably very little would have been lost to be regretted, if the workers had not suffered a slight interruption.

Mr. Linden was in the middle of the room unlocking the drawers of the library table, which was too large to be removed. Old Nero, the black man, had taken one of the lamps which yet remained burning, a large heavy one, to carry away. He was just opposite the table, when a stone bust of some weight, which had stood above the bookcases, detached by the failure of its supports, came down along with some spars of the burning wood and fell against a rich screen just on the other side of Nero. The

screen was thrown over on him; he struggled an instant to right himself and it, holding his lamp off at an awful angle towards Mr. Linden; then, nobody could tell how it was, Nero had saved himself and struggled out from the falling screen and burning wood, and Faith and the lamp lay under it, just at Mr. Linden's feet. Yet hardly under it—so instantly was it thrown off. The lamp was not broken, which was a wonder; but Faith was stunned, and the burning wood had touched her brow and singed a lock of hair.

In such a time of confusion all sorts of things come and go, unseen but by the immediate actors. Dr. Harrison and Reuben were intent upon a heavy picture; the Judge and his daughter were in the other room. And Faith was lifted up and borne swiftly along to the drawing-room sofa, and there was cold water already on her brow, before the others reached her. She was only a little stunned and had opened her eyes when they came up. They came round her, all the gang of workers, like a swarm of bees, and with as many questions and inquiries. Faith smiled at them all, and begged they would go back and finish what they were doing.

"I'll stay here a little while," she said; "my fall didn't hurt me a bit, to speak of. Do go! don't anybody wait for me."

There seemed nothing else to be done; she would own to wanting nothing; and her urgency at length prevailed with them, however reluctantly, to leave her and go back to the library. But Mr. Linden stood still as the others moved off.

"Where are you hurt?" he said in a low voice.

"I suppose the fall bruised me a little bit. It didn't do me any real harm. Don't wait here for me."

"Where?" Mr. Linden said.

"Where it bruised me? A little on my head—and elbow—and side; altogether nothing!"

He sat down by her, passing his hand softly over the scorched hair; then said, "Let me see your arm."

"Oh no!—that's not necessary. I said I was bruised, but it isn't much."

"Faith, you have not told me the whole."

Her eye shrank from his instantly, and her colour flitted from red to pale.

"There is nothing more I need tell you. They will all be back here—or some of them—if you stay. I'll tell you anything you please to morrow," she added with a smile. But he only repeated, "Tell me now—I have a right to know."

Her lip took its childish look, but her eye met him now. "Don't look so!"—she said, "as if there was any reason for it. I think some of the fluid from that lamp ran down on my arm—and it smarts. Don't stay here to look grave about me!—it isn't necessary."

He bent his head and gave her one answer to all that—then sprang up and went for Dr. Harrison. Faith tried to hinder him, in vain.

There was little now to detain anybody in the library, he found, and a good deal to drive everybody out of it. The fire had seemed

to take advantage of its unwatched opportunity and had put it pretty well out of any one's power to rescue much more from its rapacity. Reuben and Dr. Harrison were carrying out the drawers of the table, which Mr. Linden had been unlocking; and the doctor dropped the one he held the instant he caught the sense of Mr. Linden's words. He went through the other way, summoning his sister.

Faith was lying very quietly and smiled at them, but her colour went and came with odd suddenness. She would not after all let the doctor touch her; but rising from the sofa said she would go up stairs and let Sophy see what was wanting. The three went up, and Mr. Linden was left alone.

He stood still for a moment where they left him, resting his face upon his hand, but then he went back to the burning room; and stationing himself at the doorway, bade all the rest keep back, and those that could to bring him water. Reuben sprang to this work as he had done to the other; some of the servants had come down by this time; and Mr. Linden stood there, dashing the water about the doorway and into the room, upon the floor, the great table, and such of the bookcases as he could come near. The effect was soon evident. The blazing bits of carved moulding as they fell to the floor, went out instead of getting help to burn; and the heavier shelves and wainscot which being of hard wood burned slowly, began to give out steam as well as smoke. The door and doorway were now perfectly safe—the fire hardly could spread into the passage, a danger which had been imminent when

Mr. Linden came, but which the family seemed to have forgotten; secure in their fireproof walls, they forgot the un-fireproof floor, nor seemed to remember how far along the passage the cinders might drift. When there was really nothing more for him to do, and he had given the servants very special instructions as to the watch they should keep, then and not till then did Mr. Linden return to the parlour; the glow of his severe exercise fading away.

He found the Judge there, who engaged him in not too welcome conversation; but there was no help for it. He must hear and answer the old gentleman's thanks for his great services that night—praises of his conduct and of Faith's conduct; speculations and questions concerning the evening's disaster. After a time that seemed tedious, though it was not really very long, Miss Harrison came down.

"She'll be better directly," she said. "Do sit down, Mr. Linden! —I have ordered some refreshments—you must want them, I should think; and you'll have to wait a little while, for Faith says she will go home with you; though I am sure she ought not, and Julius says she must not stir."

Mr. Linden bowed slightly—answering in the most commonplace way that he was in no hurry and in no need of refreshments; and probably he felt also in no need of rest—for he remained standing.

"How is she, dear? how is she?" said the Judge. "Is she much hurt?"

"Just *now*," said Miss Harrison, "she is in such pain that she

cannot move—but we have put something on that will take away the pain, Julius says, in fifteen minutes; and she will be quite well this time to-morrow, he says."

"But is she much hurt?" Judge Harrison repeated with a very concerned face.

"She'll be well to-morrow, father; but she was dreadfully burned—her arm and shoulder—I thought she would have fainted upstairs—but I don't know whether people *can* faint when they are in such pain. I don't see how she can bear her dress to go home, but she says she will; Mrs. Derrick would be frightened. Mr. Linden, they say every body does what you tell them—I wish you'd persuade Faith to stay with me to-night! She won't hear me."

"How soon can I see her?"—The voice made Miss Harrison look—but her eyes said her ears had made a mistake.

"Why she said she would come down stairs presently—as soon as the pain went off enough to let her do anything—and she wanted me to tell you so; but I am sure it's very wrong. Do, Mr. Linden, take something!"—(the servant had brought in a tray of meats and wine)—"While you're waiting, you may as well rest yourself. How shall we ever thank you for what you've done to-night!"

Miss Harrison spoke under some degree of agitation, but both she and her father failed in no kind or grateful shew of feeling towards their guest.

"How did it happen, Mr. Linden?" she said when she had done

in this kind all she could.

He said he had not seen the accident—only its results.

"I can't imagine how Faith got there," said Miss Harrison. "She saw the screen coming over on Nero, I suppose, and thought she could save the lamp—she made one spring from the doorway, he says, to where he stood. And in putting up her hand to the lamp, I suppose that horrid fluid ran down her arm and on her shoulder—when Nero put out the lamp he must have loosened the fastening; it went all over her shoulder. But she'll be well to-morrow night, Julius says."

"Who's with her now, my dear?" said the Judge.

"O Julius is with her—he said he'd stay with her till I came back—she wanted Mr. Linden to know she would go home with him. Now, Mr. Linden, won't you send her word back that you'll take care of Mrs. Derrick if she'll stay?"

"I will go up and see her, Miss Harrison."

That was anticipated however, by the entrance of the doctor; who told his sister Miss Derrick wanted her help, then came gravely to the table, poured out a glass of wine and drank it. His father asked questions, which he answered briefly. Miss Derrick felt better—she was going to get up and come down stairs.

"But ought she to be suffered to go out to-night, Julius?—such a night?"

"Certainly not!"

The Judge argued the objections to her going. The doctor made no answer. He walked up and down the room, and Mr.

Linden stood still. Ten or fifteen minutes passed; and then the door opened softly and Faith, all dressed, cloaked, and furred, came in with her hood, followed by her friend. Miss Sophy looked very ill satisfied. Faith's face was pale enough, but as serenely happy as release from pain can leave a face that has no care behind. A white embodiment of purity and gentleness she looked. The doctor was at her side instantly, asking questions. Mr. Linden did not interrupt him,—he had met her almost before the doctor, and taken her hand with a quietness through which Faith could perceive the stir of feelings that might have swept those of all the others out into the snow. But he held her hand silently until other people had done their questions—then simply asked if she was quite sure she was fit to ride home? Then, with that passing of the barrier, look and voice did change a little.

"I mean to go,"—she said without looking at him,—"if you'll please to take me."

"She ought not,—I am sure she ought not!" exclaimed Miss Harrison in much vexation. "She is just able to stand."

"You know," Mr. Linden said,—not at all as if he was urging her, but merely making a statement he thought best to make; "I could even bring your mother here, in a very short time, if you wished it."

"O I don't wish it. I can go home very well now."

He gave her his arm without more words. Miss Harrison and the Judge followed regretfully to the door; the doctor to the sleigh.

"Are you well wrapped up?" he asked.

"I have got all my own and all Sophy's furs," said Faith in a glad tone of voice.

"Take care of yourself," he said;—"and Mr. Linden, you must take care of her—which is more to the purpose. If I had it to do, this ride would not be taken. Linden—I'll thank you another time."

They drove off. But as soon as they were a few steps from the house, Mr. Linden put his arm about Faith and held her so that she could lean against him and rest; giving her complete support, and muffling up the furs about her lightly and effectually, till it was hardly possible for the cold air to win through; and so drove her home. Not with many words,—with only a whispered question now and then, whether she was cold, or wanted any change of posture. The wind had lulled, and it was much milder, and the snow was beginning to fall softly and fast; Faith could feel the snow crystals on his face whenever it touched hers. Mr. Linden would have perhaps chosen to drive gently, as being easier for her, but the thick air made it needful. Once only he asked any other question.—

"Faith—is my care of you in fault, that it lets you come home?"

"No, I think not," she said;—"you hold me just so nicely as it is possible to be! and this snow-storm is beautiful." Which answer, though she might not know it, testified to her need of precisely the care he was giving her.

"Are you suffering much now, dear child?"

"Not at all. I am only enjoying. I like being out in such a storm as this.—Only I am afraid mother is troubled."

"No—I sent Reuben down some time ago, to answer her questions if she was up, and to have a good fire ready for you."

"O that's good!" she said. And then rested, in how luxurious a rest! after exertion, and after anxiety, and after pain; so cared for and guarded. She could almost have gone to sleep to the tinkle of Jerry's bells; only that her spirit was too wide awake for that and the pleasure of the time too good to be lost. She had not all the pleasure to herself—Faith could feel that, every time Mr. Linden spoke or touched her; but what a different atmosphere his mind was in, from her quiet rest! Pain had quitted her, but not him, though the kinds were different. Truly he would have borne any amount of physical pain himself, to cancel that which she had suffered,—there were some minutes of the ride when he would have borne it, only to lose the thought of that. But Faith knew nothing of it all, except as she could feel once or twice a deep breath that was checked and hushed, and turned into some sweet low-spoken word to her; and her rest was very deep. So deep, that the stopping of the sleigh at last, was an interruption.

The moment Jerry's bells rang their little summons at the door, the door itself opened, and from the glimmering light Reuben ran out to take the reins.

"Is Mrs. Derrick up?" Mr. Linden asked, when the first inquiry aboutFaith had been answered.

"I don't know, sir. I told her you wore afraid Miss Faith would take cold without a fire in her room—and she let me take up wood and make it; and then she said she wasn't sleepy, and she'd take care it didn't go out. I haven't seen her since."

"Thank you, Reuben—now hold Jerry for me,—I shall keep you here to-night," Mr. Linden said as he stepped out. And laying his hand upon the furs and wrappers, he said softly,—"Little Esquimaux—do you think you can walk to the house?"

"O yes!—certainly."

A little bit of a laugh answered her—the first she had heard since Campaspe; and then she was softly lifted up, and borne into the house over the new-fallen snow as lightly as if she had been a snowflake herself. The snow might lay its white feathers upon her hood, but Faith felt as if she were in a cradle instead of a snow-storm. She was placed in the easy chair before the sitting-room fire, and her hood and furs quickly taken off. "How do you feel?" Mr. Linden asked her.

She looked like one of the flakes of snow herself, for simplicity and colour; but there was a smile in her eyes and lips that had come from a climate where roses blow.

"I feel nicely.—Only a little bruised and battered feeling, which isn't unpleasant."

"Will you have anything?—a cup of tea?—that might do you good."

Faith looked dubious at the cup of tea; but then rose up and said it would disturb her mother, and she would just go and sleep.

"It won't disturb her a bit,"—Mr. Linden said, reseating her,—"sit still—I'll send Reuben up to see."

He left her there a very few minutes, apparently attending to more than one thing, for he came back through the eating-room door; bringing word to Faith that her fire and room were in nice order, and her mother fast asleep there in the rocking-chair to keep guard; and that she should have a cup of tea in no time. And with a smile at her, he went back into the eating-room, and brought thence her cup and plate, and requested to be told just how the tea should be made to please her, and whether he might invade the dairy for cream.

"If I could put this cloak over my shoulders, I would get some myself. Will you put it on for me? please.—Is there fire in the kitchen? I'll go and make the tea."

"Is there nothing else you would like to do?" he said standing before her,—"you shall not stir! Do you think I don't know cream when I see it?"—and he went off again, coming back this time in company with Reuben and the tea-kettle, but the former did not stay. Then with appeals to her for directions the tea was made and poured out, and toast made and laid on her plate; but she was not allowed to raise a finger, except now to handle her cup.

"It's very good!" said Faith,—"but—don't you remember you once told me two cups of cocoa were better than one?"

It is to be noted in passing, that all Faith's *nameless* addresses were made with a certain gentle, modulated accent, which invariably implied in its half timid respect the "Mr. Linden"

which she rarely forgot now she was not to say.

"Dear child! I do indeed," he said, as if the remembrance wore a bright one. "But I remember too that my opinion was negatived. Faith, I used to wish then that I could wait upon you—but I would rather have you wait upon me, after all!"

Faith utterly disallowed the tone of these last words, and urged her request in great earnest. He laughed at her a little—but brought the cup and drank the tea,—certainly more to please her than himself; watching her the while, to see if the refreshment were telling upon her cheeks. She was very little satisfied with his performance.

"Now I'll go and wake up mother," she said at last rising. "Don't think of this evening again but to be glad of everything that has happened. I am."

"I fear, I fear," he said looking at her, "that your gladness and my sorrow meet on common ground. Child, what shall I do with you?"—but what he did with her then was to put her in that same cradle and carry her softly upstairs, to the very door of her room.

CHAPTER VI

The same soft snow-storm was coming down when Faith opened her eyes next morning; the air looked like a white sheet; but in her room a bright fire was blazing, reddening the white walls, and by her side sat Mrs. Derrick watching her. Very gentle and tender were the hands that helped her dress, and then Mrs. Derrick said she would go down and see to breakfast for a little while.

"Wasn't it good your room was warm last night?" she said, strokingFaith's hair.

Faith's eyes acknowledged that.

"And wasn't it good you were asleep!" she said laughing and kissingMrs. Derrick. "Mother!—I was so glad!"

"That's the funny part of it," said Mrs. Derrick. "Reuben's just about as queer in his way as Mr. Linden. The only thing I thought from the way he gave the message, was that somebody cared a good deal about his new possession—which I suppose is true," she added smiling; "and so I just went to sleep."

Mrs. Derrick went down; and Faith knelt on the rug before the fire and bent her heart and head over her bible. In great happiness;—in great endeavour that her happiness should stand well based on its true foundations and not shift from them to any other. In sober endeavour to lay hold, and feel that she had hold, of the happiness that cannot be taken away; to make sure that her

feet were on a rock, before she stooped to take the sweetness of the flowers around her. And to judge by her face, she had felt the rock and the flowers both, before she left her room.

The moment she opened her door and went out into the hall, Mr. Linden opened his,—or rather it was already open, and he came out, meeting her at the head of the stairs. And after his first greeting, he held her still and looked at her for a moment —a little anxiously and intently. "My poor, pale little child!" he said—"you are nothing but a snowdrop this morning!"

"Well that is a very good thing to be," said Faith brightly. But the *colour* resemblance he had destroyed.

She was lifted and carried down just as she had been carried up last night, and into the sitting-room again; for breakfast was prepared there this morning, and the sofa wheeled round to the side of the fire all ready for her. How bright the room looked!—its red curtains within and its white curtains without, and everything so noiseless and sweet and in order. Even the coffeepot was there by this time, and Mrs. Derrick arranged the cups and looked at Faith on the sofa, with eyes that lost no gladness when they went from her to the person who stood at her side. Faith's eyes fell, and for a moment she was very sober. It was only for a moment.

"What a beautiful storm!" she said. "I am glad it snows. I am going to do a great deal of work to-day."

Mr. Linden looked at her. "Wouldn't you just as lieve be talked to sleep?"

She smiled. "You—couldn't—do that, Mr. Linden."

"Mr. Linden can do more than you think—and will," he said with a little comic raising of the eyebrows.

For a while after breakfast Faith sat alone, except as her mother came in and out to see that she wanted nothing,—alone in the soft snowy stillness, till Mr. Linden came in from the postoffice and sat down by her, laying against her cheek a soft little bunch of rosebuds and violets.

"Faith," he said, "you have been looking sober—what is the reason?"

"I haven't been looking *too* sober, have I? I didn't know I was looking sober at all."

She was looking quaint, and lovely; in the plain wrapper she had put on and the soft thoughtful air and mien, in contrast with which the diamonds jumped and flashed with every motion of her hand. A study book lay in her lap.

"How did all that happen last night?" said Mr. Linden abruptly.

"Why!"—said Faith colouring and looking down at her ring —"I was standing in the doorway and Nero was coming out with that great lamp; and when he got opposite the screen something fell on it, I believe, from the burning bookcases, and it was thrown over against him—I thought the lamp and he would all go over together—and I jumped;—and in putting up my hand to the lamp I suppose, for I don't remember, the fluid must have run down my arm and on my shoulder—I don't know how it got on fire,

but it must have been from some of the burning wood that fell. The next I knew, you were carrying me to the drawing-room—I have a recollection of that."

He listened with very grave eyes.

"Were you trying to take the lamp from Nero?"

"O no. I thought it was going to fall over."

"What harm would it have done the floor?"

The tinge of colour on Faith's cheek deepened considerably, and her eyes lifted not themselves from the diamonds. She was not ready to speak.

"I did not think of the floor"—

"Of what then?"

She waited again. "I was afraid some harm would be done,"—

"Did you prevent it?"

"I don't know"—she said rather faintly.

Gently her head was drawn down till it rested on his shoulder.

"Faith," he said in his own low sweet tones, "I stretched a little silken thread across the doorway to keep you out—did you make of that a clue to find your way in?"

She did not answer—nor stir.

There were no more questions asked—no more words said; Mr. Linden was as silent as she and almost as still. Once or twice his lips touched her forehead, not just as they had ever done it before, Faith thought; but some little time had passed, when he suddenly took up the book which lay in her lap and began the lesson at which it lay open; reading and explaining in a very

gentle, steady voice, a little moved from its usual clearness. Still his arm did not release her. Faith listened, with a semidivided mind, for some time; there was something in this state of things that she wished to mend. It came at last, when there was a pause in the lesson.

"I am glad of all that happened last night," she said, "except the pain to you and mother. There is nothing to be sorry for. You shouldn't be sorry."

"Why not, little naughty child?—and why are you glad?"

"Because—it was good for me,"—she said, not very readily nor explicitly.

"In what way?"

"It was good for me,"—she repeated;—"it put me in mind of some things."

"Of what, dear child?"

It was a question evidently Faith would rather not have answered. She spoke with some difficulty.

"That there are such things in the world as pain—and trouble. It is best not to forget it."

Mr. Linden understood and felt; but he only answered, "It will be the business of my life to make you forget it. Now don't you think you ought to put up this book, and rest or sleep?"

"I dare say *you* ought," said Faith,—"and I wish you would. *I* want to work."

He gave her a laugh, by way of reply, and then gave her work as she desired; watching carefully against her tiring herself in any

way, and making the lessons more of talk on his part and less of study on hers. They were none the less good for that, nor any the less pleasant. Till there came a knock at the front door; and then with a little sigh Faith leaned back against the sofa, as if lessons were done.

"There is Dr. Harrison."

"And I shall have to be on my good behaviour," Mr. Linden said, quitting the sofa. "But I suppose he will not stay all the rest of the day." And as Cindy was slow in her movements, he went and opened the door; Faith the while fitting on a glove finger.

"First in one element, and then in another—" Mr. Linden said, as the doctor came in from a sort of simoon of snow.

"This one for me!" said Dr. Harrison shaking herself;—"but I should say you must be out of your element to-day."

"Wherefore, if you please?" said Mr. Linden, as he endeavoured to get the doctor out of his.

"Unless you live in a variety! I thought you were in your element last night." And the doctor went forward into the sitting-room. The first move was to take a seat by Faith and attend to her; and his address and his inquiries, with the manner of them, were perfect in their kind. Interested, concerned, tender, grateful, to the utmost limit of what might have been in the circumstances testified by anybody, with equal grace and skill they were limited there. Of special individual interest he allowed no testimony to escape him—none at least that was unequivocal. And Faith gave him answers to all he said, till he touched her gloved finger and

inquired if the fire had been at work there too. Faith rather hastily drew it under cover and said no.

"What is the matter with it?"

"There is nothing bad the matter with it," said Faith, very imprudently letting her cheeks get rosy. The doctor looked at her —told her he could cure her finger if she would let him; and then rose up and assumed his position before the fire, looking down at Mr. Linden.

"There isn't much of a midge about you, after all," he said.

"I suppose in the matter of wings we are about on a par. What is the extent of the damage?"

"It is nothing worth speaking of—I think now," said the doctor. "But we are under an extent of obligation to you, my dear fellow,—which sits on me as lightly as obligation so generously imposed should;—and yet I should be doubly grateful if you could shew me some way in which I could—for a moment—reverse the terms on which we stand towards each other."

"I don't think of any generous imposition just now," said Mr. Linden smiling. "How are your father and sister?—I was afraid they would suffer from the fright, if nothing else."

"Strong nerves!" said the doctor shrugging his shoulders. "We all eat our breakfast this morning, and wanted the chops done as much as usual. Sophy *did* suffer, though; but it was because Miss Faith would do nothing but get hurt in the house and wouldn't stay to be made well."

"I am sure I did something more than *that*," said Faith, to

whom the doctor had looked.

"You don't deserve any thanks!" he said sitting down again beside her;—"but there is somebody else that does, and I wish you would give me a hint how to pay them. That young fellow who says he is no friend of yours—he helped us bravely last night. What can I do to please him?"

"Mr. Linden can tell best," said Faith looking to him. The doctor turned in the same direction.

"Thank you!" Mr. Linden said, and the words were warmly spoken, yet not immediately followed up. "Thank you very much, doctor!" he repeated thoughtfully—"I am not sure that Reuben wants anything just now,—next summer, perhaps, he may want books."

"I see *you* are his friend?"

"Yes—if you give the word its full length and breadth."

"What is that?" said Dr. Harrison. "Don't go off to 'Nought and All.'"

"I suppose in this case I may say, a mutual bond of trust, affection, and active good wishes."

"There's something in that fellow, I judge?"

"You judge right."

"A fisherman's son, I think you said. Well—I share the 'active good wishes,' at least, if I can't assume the 'affection'—so think about my question, Linden, and I'll promise to back your thoughts. What do you do with yourself such a day? I was overcome with ennui—till I got out into the elements."

"Ennui is not one of my friends," said Mr. Linden smiling —"not even an acquaintance. In fact I never even set a chair for him, as the woman in Elia set a chair for the poor relation, saying, 'perhaps he will step in to-day.' I have been busy, doctor—what shall I do to amuse you? will you have a foreign newspaper?"

The doctor looked dubious; then took the newspaper and turned it over, but not as if he had got rid of his ennui.

"This smoke in the house will drive us out of Pattaquasset a little sooner than we expected."

"Not this winter?"

"Yes. *That's* nothing new—but we shall go a few days earlier than we meant. I wish you were going too."

"When to return?" said Mr. Linden. "I mean you—not myself."

"I?—I am a wandering comet," said the doctor. "I have astonished Pattaquasset so long, it is time for me to flare up in some other place. I don't know, Linden. Somebody must be here occasionally, to overlook the refitting of the inside of that library —perhaps that agreeable duty will fall on me. But Linden,"— said the doctor dropping the newspaper and turning half round on his chair, speaking gracefully and comically,—"*you* astonish Pattaquasset as much as I do; and to tell you the truth you astonish me sometimes a little. This is no place for you. Wouldn't you prefer a tutorship at Quilipeak, or a professor's chair in one of the city colleges? You may step into either berth presently, and at your pleasure,—I know. I do not speak without knowledge."

There was a stir of feeling in Mr. Linden's face—there was even an unwonted tinge of colour, but the firm-set lips gave no indication as to whence it came; and he presently looked up, answering the doctor in tones as graceful and more simple than his own.

"Thank you, doctor, once more! But I have full employment, and am—or am not—ambitious,—whichever way you choose to render it. Not to speak of the pleasure of astonishing Pattaquasset," he added, with a smile breaking out,—"I could not hope to do that for Quilipeak."

"Please know," said the doctor, both frankly and with much respect in his manner, "that I have been so presumptuous as to concern my mind about this for some time—for which you will punish me as you think I deserve. How to be so much further presumptuous as to speak to you about it, was my trouble;—and I ventured at last," he said smiling, "upon my own certain possession of certain points of that 'friend' character which you were giving just now to Reuben Taylor—or to yourself, in his regard."

"I am sure you have them!—But about Reuben,—though I know reward is the last thing he thought of or would wish,—yet I, his friend, choose to answer for him, that if you choose to give him any of the books that he will need in college, they will be well bestowed."

"In college!" said the doctor. "Diable! Where is he going?"

"Probably to Quilipeak."

"You said, to college, man. I mean, what is college the road to, in the youngster's mind?"

"I am not sure that I have a right to tell you," said Mr. Linden, —"it is in his mind a road to greater usefulness—so much I may say."

"He'll never be more useful than he was last night. However, I'm willing to help him try.—What is Mignonette going to do with herself this afternoon?"—said the doctor throwing aside his newspaper and standing before her.

"I don't know," said Faith. "Sit here and work, I suppose."

"I'll tell you what she ought to do," the doctor went on impressively. "She ought to do what the flowers do when the sun goes down,—shut up her sweetness to herself, see and be seen by nobody, and cease to be conscious of her own existence."

Faith laughed, in a way that gave doubtful promise of following the directions. The doctor stood looking down at her, took her hand and gallantly kissed it, and finally took himself off.

"There is a good little trial of my patience!" Mr. Linden said. "I don't know but it is well he is going away, for I might forget myself some time, and bid him hands off."

At which Faith looked thoughtful.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said, gently raising her face, "would you like to live at Quilipeak?"

The answer to that was a great rush of colour, and a casting down of eyes and face too as soon as it was permitted.

"Well?" he said smiling—though she felt some other thread in

the voice. "What did you think of the words that passed between the doctor and me? Would you like to have me agree to his proposal?"

"You would do what is best," she said with a good deal of effort. "I couldn't wish anything else."—

He answered her mutely at first, with a deep mingling of gravity and affection, as if she were very, very precious.

"My dear little child!" he said, "if anything on earth could make me do it, it would be you!—and yet I cannot."

She looked up inquiringly; but except by that look, she asked nothing.

"You strengthen my hands more than you weaken them," he said. "I am so sure that you would feel with me!—I know it so well! I have a long story to tell you, dear Faith,—some time, not now," he added, with a sort of shadow coming over his face. "Will you let me choose my own time? I know it is asking a good deal."

"It would be asking a great deal more of me to choose any other," Faith said with a sunny smile. "I like that time best."

He passed his hand softly once or twice across her forehead, giving her a bright, grateful look, though a little bit of a sigh came with it too,—then drew her arm within his and led her slowly up and down the room.

But after dinner, and after one or two more lessons—under careful guardianship, Faith was persuaded to lay herself on the sofa and rest, and listen,—first to various bits of reading, then to

talk about some of her photographic pictures; the talk diverging right and left, into all sorts of paths, fictional, historic, sacred and profane. Then the light faded—the out-of-door light, still amid falling snow; and the firelight shone brighter and brighter; and Mrs. Derrick stopped listening, and went to the dining-room sofa for a nap. Then Mr. Linden, who had been sitting at Faith's side, changed his place so as to face her.

"How do you feel to-night?" he asked.

"Perfectly well—and as nicely as possible. Just enough remains of last night to make it pleasant to lie still."

"You are a real little sunbeam! Do you know I want you to go off with me on a shining expedition?"

"On *what* sort of expedition?" said Faith laughing.

"A shining one—I want to carry your bright face into all the darkest places I can find."

There was an alternation of amusement and a grave expression in her face for a minute, one and the other flitting by turns; but then she said quietly, "When, Mr. Linden?"

"What shall I do with you?" he said,—"shall I call you Miss Derrick?"

"No indeed!" she said colouring. "I don't often forget myself."

"No, I shall not do that, for it would punish myself too much, but I shall do something else—which will not punish me at all, and may perhaps make you remember. What do you suppose it will be?"

"I don't know"—she said flushing all over.

"Nothing worse than this"—he said, bending his face to hers. "Faith! I did not mean to frighten you so! I'll tell you where I want to take you.—You know Monday is the first of January, and I want to go with you to those houses in the neighbourhood where the wheels of the new year drag a little, and try to give them a pleasant start. Would you like it?"

"O!"—she said, springing forward with a delighted exclamation.—"Tell me, just what you mean. To which houses?"

"I mean that if you are well, we will have a long, long sleigh ride, and leave as many little pieces of comfort and pleasure by the way as we can. The houses, dear, will be more than you think —I must make out a list."

Faith clapped her hands.

"O delicious! That is the best thing we could possibly do with Monday! and there are two days yet this week—I shall have plenty of chance, mother and I, to make everything. O what sorts of things shall we take? and what are some of the houses? There is Mrs. Dow, where we went that night,"—she said, her voice falling,—"and Sally Lowndes—what places are you thinking off?"

"I think we might give Reuben at least a visit, if nothing else, —and there are a good many such houses down about those points, and far on along the shore. I was thinking most of them —though there are some nearer by. But my Mignonette must not tire herself,—I did not mean to bring anything but pleasure upon her hands."

"You can't! in this way," said Faith in delighted eagerness. "Who keeps house in Reuben's home? he has no mother."

"No—I suppose I may say that he keeps house,—for his father is away a great deal, and Reuben always seems to be doing what there is to do. As to things—you will want some for well people, and some for sick,—at some houses the mere necessary bread and meat, and at others any of those little extras which people who spend all their money for bread and meat can never get. But little child," Mr. Linden said smiling, "if I let you prepare, you must let me send home."

"What?" said she. "I thought you said we would both take them together?"

He laughed—taking her hand and holding it in both his.

"And so we will!—I meant, send home here, to prepare."

"Oh!—Well," said Faith, "but we have a great deal now, you know; and I can send Mr. Skip to get more. But one thing I know—we will take Reuben a roast turkey!"

I wonder if she could tell, in the firelight, with what eyes he watched her and listened to her! Probably not, for his back was towards the fire, and the changing light and shade on his face was a little concealed. But the light had the mastery.

"Faith," he said, "I shall send you home some sugar-plums—upon express condition that you are not to eat them up; being quite sweet enough already."

His face was so hid that probably Faith thought her own was hid too, and did not know how clearly its moved timid changes

were seen. She leaned forward, and touching one hand lightly to his shoulder, said,

"What do you mean to make me,—Endecott?"

It was a thing to hear, the soft fall and hesitancy of Faith's voice at the last word. Yet they hardly told of the struggle it had cost. How the word thrilled him she did not know,—the persons living from whom he ever had that name were now so few, that there was a strange mingling with the exquisite pleasure of hearing it from her lips,—a mingling of past grief and of present healing. He changed his place instantly; and taking possession of her, gave her the most gentle, tender, and silent thanks. Perhaps too much touched to speak—perhaps feeling sure that if he spoke at all it would be in just such words as she had so gently reproved. The answer at last was only a bright, "I told you I could not promise—and I will not now!"

She pushed her head round a little so that she could give a quick glance into his face, in which lay her answer. Her words, when she spoke, made something of a transition, which however was proved by the voice to be a transition in words only.

"Wouldn't a bag of potatoes be a good thing for us to take?"

"Certainly!—and we must take some books, and some orders for wood. And you must have a basket of trifles to delight all the children we meet."

"That's easy! And books, will you take? that's delicious! that's better than anything, for those who can enjoy them. Do you think any of them want bibles?"

"We will take some, at a venture—I never like to go anywhere without that supply. And then we shall both have to use our wits to find out just what is wanted in a particular place,—the people that tell you most have often the least to tell. And above all, Faith, we shall want plenty of sympathy and kind words and patience, —they are more called for than anything else. Do you think you can conjure up a sufficient supply?"

"It is something I know so little about!" said Faith. "I have never had very much chance. When I went to see Mrs. Custers I didn't in the least know how to speak to her. But these people where we are going all know *you*, I suppose?"—she said with another and not a little wistful look up into his face.

"Most of them—more or less. What of it?"

"That makes it easy," she said quietly. "But I suppose it would be just the same if you didn't know them! About the sick people, —Endecott—if you can tell us *how* they are sick, mother and I between us can make out what things to prepare for them."

"Did you think I was in earnest, dear Faith, when I asked about your sympathy?" Mr. Linden said, drawing her closer.

"No.—I think I have the sympathy, but I don't so well know how to shew it. Then loaves of bread, I suppose, wouldn't come amiss?—And above all, meat. Where else do you think a roast turkey ought to go?"

"To one particular far-off house on the shore that is brim full of little children—and nothing else!"

"We'll take them a big one," said Faith smiling,—"and I

suppose it is no matter how many cakes! You'll have to make a very particular list, with some notion of what would be best at each place; because in some houses they wouldn't bear what in others they would be very glad of. Wouldn't that be good? So that we might be sure to have the right thing everywhere—*one* right thing, at any rate. The other things might take their chance."

"Yes, I will do that. But you know the first thing is, that you should get well, and the next that you should *not* get tired,—and these must be secured, if nobody ever has anything."

Faith's laugh was joyous.

"To-morrow I mean to make cakes and pies," she said,—"and the next day I will bake bread and roast turkeys and boil beef! And you have no idea what a quantity of each will be wanted! I think I never saw anybody so good at talking people to sleep!—that didn't want to go. Now what is that?" For the knocker of the front door sounded loudly again.

"It is something to send people away—that don't want to go!" Mr. Linden said, as he put her back in her old position on the cushions, and moved his chair to a respectful distance therefrom. But nothing worse came in this time than a note, well enveloped and sealed, which was for Mr. Linden. It ran after this fashion.—

"*In the snow—yet and the chair not only set for Ennui, but ennui in the chair!*
"This 28th Dec. 18

"DEAR LINDEN,

You see my condition. I am desperate for want of

something to do—*so* I send you this. Enclosed you will please find—if you haven't dropped it on the floor!—$25, for the bibliothecal and collegiate expenses of 'Miss Derrick's friend.' If you should hereafter know him to be in further want of the same kind of material aid and comfort—please convey intelligence of the same to myself or father. He–i. e-. said 'friend'—saved to *us* last night far more than the value of this.

I am sorry I have no more to say! for your image—what else could it be?—has for the moment frightened Ennui into the shadow—but he will come back again as soon as I have sealed this. By which you will know when you read the (then) present condition of

Your friend most truly

JULIUS HARRISON.

In Pattaquasset, is it?"

Mr. Linden read the note by firelight and standing—then came and sat down by Faith and put it in her hands. By firelight Faith read it hastily, and looked up with eyes of great delight. "Oh!" she said,—"isn't that good!" Then she looked down at the note soberly again.

"Well, little child? what?" he said smiling. "Yes, I am very glad. What are you doubting about?"

"I am not doubting about anything," she said giving him the note,—"only thinking of this strange man."

"Is he very strange?" Mr. Linden said. But he did not pursue the subject, going back instead to the one they had been upon, to

give her the information she had asked for about the sick people they were likely to meet in their rounds; passing gradually from that to other matters, thence into silence. And Faith followed him, step by step,—only when he was quite silent, she was—asleep!

CHAPTER VII

The next two days were busy ones, all round; for though Faith was carefully watched, by both her guardians, yet she was really well and strong enough again to be allowed to do a good deal; especially with those intervals of rest and study which Mr. Linden managed for her. His work, between these intervals, took him often out of doors, and various were the tokens of that work which came home—greatly to Faith's interest and amusement. They were curiously indicative, too, both of the varied wants of the poor people in the neighbourhood, and of his knowledge on the subject. From a little pair of shoes which was to accompany one roast turkey, to the particular sort of new fishing net which was to go with the other, it really seemed as if every sort of thing was wanted somewhere,—simple things, and easy to get, and not costing much,—but priceless to people who had no money at all. Faith was appointed receiver general, and her hands were full of amusement as well as business. And those two things were the most of all that Mr. Linden suffered to come upon them, —whatever his own means might be, it was no part of his plan to trench upon Mrs. Derrick's; though she on her part entered heart and hands into the work, with almost as much delight as Faith herself, and would have given the two carte-blanche to take anything she had in the house. Faith didn't ask *him* what she should take there, nor let him know much about it till Monday.

By this time, what with direct and indirect modes of getting at the knowledge, Faith had become tolerably well acquainted with the class or classes of wants that were to be ministered to. Many were the ovenfuls that were baked that Friday and Saturday! great service did the great pot that was used for boiling great joints! nice and comforting were the broths and more delicate things provided, with infinite care, for some four or five sick or infirm people. But Faith's delight was the things Mr. Linden sent home; every fresh arrival of which sent her to the kitchen with a new accession of zeal, sympathy, and exultation,—sympathy with him and the poor people; exultation in the work—most of all in him! Great was the marvelling of Cindy and Mr. Skip at these days' proceedings.

So passed Friday and Saturday; and Sunday brought a lull. Faith thought so, and felt so. Her roast turkeys and chickens were reposing in spicy readiness; her boiled meats and bakeries were all accomplished and in waiting; and dismissing all but a little joyful background thought of them, Faith gave her whole heart and mind to the full Sabbath rest, to the full Sabbath rising; and looked, in her deep happiness, as if she were—what she was—enjoying the one and striving after the other. But the ways by which we are to find the good we must seek, are by no means always those of our own choosing.

It was a clear, cold, still, winter's day. Cold enough by the thermometer; but so still that the walking to church was pleasant. They had come home from the afternoon service—Faith had not

taken off her things—when she was called into the kitchen to receive a message. The next minute she was in the sitting-room and stood by the side of Mr. Linden's chair.

"Mrs. Custers is dying—and has sent for me."

"For you, dear child?—Well—Are you able to go?"

"Oh yes."

He looked at her in silence, as if he were making up his own mind on the subject, then rose up and gently seating her on the sofa, told her to rest there till he was ready; but before he came back again Mrs. Derrick came to Faith's side with a smoking cup of chicken broth and a biscuit.

"You've got to eat it, pretty child," she said fondly,—"we're both agreed upon that point."

Which point mandate Faith did not try to dispute.

The town clock had struck four, all counted, when Jerry dashed off from the door with the little sleigh behind him. No other sleigh-bells were abroad, and his rang out noisily and alone over the great waste of stillness as soon as they were quit of the village. The air happily was very still and the cold had not increased; but low, low the sun was, and sent his slant beams coolly over the snow-white fields, glinting from fences and rocks and bare thickets with a gleam that threatened he would not look at them long. The hour was one of extreme beauty,—fair and still, with a steady strength in its stillness that made the beauty somewhat imposing. There was none of the yielding character of summer there; but a power that was doing its work and would do

it straight through. "He giveth forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold?"—thought Faith.

The sleighing was excellent; the roads in perfect condition.

"How long is it since you were here?" Mr. Linden said as the house came in sight, shewn only by its twinkling panes of glass.

"Not since before I went to Pequot—not since a day or two after that ride we took with Dr. Harrison, when you rode 'Stranger' the first time."

"How was she then?"

"Not much different from what she had been before—she didn't say much—she seemed to like to listen to me, or to see me, or both. That was all I could be sure of."

"Try not to let her spend her strength in examining the past state of her mind. Bid her lay hold of the promise now. A present hold will answer all her questions—and is all the oldest Christian can rest in."

"I wish you could speak to her instead of me," said Faith. "Perhaps she will let you."

"It is not you nor I, my child.—Fix your heart upon Christ, and let him speak,—fix your eyes upon him, and let his light shine."

"I know it. O I do!—" she said, looking up at him with an humble, moved face.

He lifted her out of the sleigh and led her up to the house, where they were presently admitted; into an outer room first, where Faith could lay off her furs.

"She's some brighter to-night," the woman in attendance said,

in answer to Mr. Linden's questions. "I guess she'll be real glad to see you"—this was addressed to Faith.

Faith left Mr. Linden there, and went into the sick chamber alone; where she was always received as if she had brought an olive branch, or a palm branch, or both of them, in her hand. The spirit of both, no doubt, was in her; the gentle face looked the promise of both peace and victory, as only humility can look it.

Mrs. Custers on her part looked—as the other had said—glad; if so bright a word could be applied to a face that had lost all its own light, and where no reflected light as yet shone. Yet she was quieter than when Faith had first seen her, whether from mental relief or physical prostration, and was most eager for all Faith's words,—listening for the most part in silence, but with eyes that never said "enough." As some poor exhausted traveller takes the water which he has at last reached in the desert, nor knows yet whether its bright drops can avail to save his life, but lays him down by the fountain—there to live or die. And Faith, feeling that her hand was ministering those drops of life, lost every other thought,—except to wish for a hand that could do it better. Once she ventured a proposition.

"I have a friend here, Mrs. Custers, who can tell you about all these things much better than I can. Will you let him? May I ask him to come in and see you?"

"Better?" she said slowly—"I don't believe it. Who is he? your brother?"

"No—I haven't any brother. But that don't matter. He's

somebody that is a great deal better than I am. May I let him come in? He's here," said Faith very quietly, along with her flushing cheek.

There was a poor little faint smile for a moment upon the sick woman's lips while Faith spoke, but it passed and she answered in the same tone—"I'll see him—to please you—before you go. I just want the words now—and I like you best."

Faith troubled her no more with unnecessary suggestions, and gave her "the words." Gave them with the fragrance of her own love about them, which certainly is the surest human vehicle for the love above human that is in them. As on that first occasion, Faith placed herself on the side of the bed; and holding one of Mrs. Custers' hands in her own, bending her soft quiet face towards the listening eyes and ears, she gave her one by one, like crumbs of life-giving food, the words of promise, of encouragement, of invitation, of example. No answer cheered or helped her; no token of pleasure or even of assent met her; only those fixed listening eyes bade her go on, and told that whether for life and refreshment or no, the words were eagerly taken in, each after the other, as she said them. There was something in the strong sympathy of the speaker—in her own feeling and joy of the truths she told—that might give them double power and life to the ears of another. Faith reported the words of her Master with such triumphant prizing of them and such leaning on their strength; she gave his invitations in such tones of affection; she told over the instances of others' prevailing faith with such an

evident, clear, satisfying share in the same;—the living words this time lost nothing of their power by a dead utterance. Of her own words Faith ventured few; now and then the simplest addition to some thing she had repeated, to make it more plain, or to carry it further home; such words as she could not keep back; such words, very much, as she would have spoken to Johnny Fax; not very unlike what Johnny Fax might have spoken to her. But there was not a little physical exhaustion about all this after a while, and Faith found she must have some help to her memory. She went into the other room.

"I want a bible," she said looking round for it—"Is there one here?"

Yes there was one, but it was Mr. Linden's. That was quickly given her.

"I forgot it at the moment you went in," he said, "and then I did not like to disturb you. My dear Faith!—" and he held her hand and looked at her a little wistfully. She brought her other hand upon his, and looked down and looked up wistfully too; like one with a heart full.

"Can I help you? can I take your place?"

"She won't let you," said Faith shaking her head. "She says she will see you by and by—but she must take her own time for it."

And Faith went back to her ministrations. Of all bibles, she would have had that one in her hand then! And yet its companionship bowed down her heart with a sense of weakness;—but that was the very position for the next move; a spring

beyond weakness to the only real and sufficient ground of strength.

The afternoon merged into the evening. A tallow candle had been brought by the attendant into the room in which Mr. Linden was waiting; and its dim smoky light would have made a dismal place of it if he had had no other to go by. He could sometimes hear the low tones of a word or two in the other room; more often the tones were so low that they failed to reach him. When this state of things had lasted a long time—as it seemed—there came an interruption in the form of quick steps on the snow; then the door was pushed open, and Dr. Harrison appeared.

"You here!" was his astonished salutation. "What upon earth has brought you?"

"I came to bring some one else."

"*She* isn't here?" said the doctor. "You don't mean that?"

His emphatic pronouns were a little smile-provoking, in spite of the grave thoughts upon which they intruded—or rather perhaps because of them; but if Mr. Linden's face felt that temptation, it was only for a moment,—he answered quietly,

"If you mean Miss Faith, she has been here a long time."

The doctor knew that! if she came when she was called. *He* had stopped to eat his dinner.

"I mean her, of course," he said with his tone a little subdued. "I shouldn't think her mother would have let her come—such a night!—" Which meant very plainly that Dr. Harrison would not have let her.—"Is she in there with the woman now?"

"Yes."

The doctor went with grave aspect to the door of communication between the two rooms and softly opened it and went in; so softly, that Faith, engaged in her reading, did not hear anything; the sick woman's eyes were the first that perceived him. Hers rested on him a moment—then came back to Faith, and then again met the doctor's; but not just as they had been wont. And her first words bore out his impression.

"You may come in," she said, slowly and distinctly,—"I'm not afraid of you to-night."

He came forward, looked at her, touched her hand, kindly; and then without a word turned to Faith.

Faith did not dare ask a question, but her eyes put it silently.

"She don't want anything," said he meaningly. "Not from me. She may have anything she fancies to have."

Faith's eyes went back to the other face. That the doctor's words had been understood there too, was evident from the little flitting colour, and the sick woman lay still with closed eyes, clasping Faith's hand as if she were holding herself back from drifting out on "that great and unknown sea." But she roused herself and spoke hurriedly. "Won't somebody pray for me?"

Faith bent over until her lips almost touched the sufferer's cheek and her warm breath floated in the words, "I'll bring somebody—" then loosing her hold, she sprang from the bed and out into the other room. But when she had clasped Mr. Linden's hand, Faith bent down her head upon it, unable to speak. The

strength it could, his hand gave her—and his voice.

"What, my dear child?"

Then Faith looked up. "She wants you to pray for her." And without waiting for the unnecessary answer, she led Mr. Linden to the door of the room, there dropped his hand and went in before him. Dr. Harrison was standing by the bedpost, and looked wordlessly upon the two as they entered.

Mrs. Custers scanned the stranger's face as he came to wards her, with an anxious, eager look, as if she wanted to know whether he could do anything for her; the look changing to one of satisfaction. But to his low-spoken question as he took her hand, she gave an answer that was almost startling in its slow earnestness.

"Pray that I may believe—and that *he* may—and that God would bless her forever!"

How was such a request to be met! then and there!—for a moment Mr. Linden's eyes fell. But then he knelt by her side, and met it most literally,—in tones very low and clear and distinct, in words that might have been angels' plumage for their soft bearing upward of the sufferer's thoughts. Faith could feel a slight trembling once or twice of the hand that held hers, but the bitterness of its grasp had relaxed. Dr. Harrison was behind her; whether he stood or knelt she did not know; but *he* knew that when the other two rose to their feet, one of them was exceedingly pale; and his move, made on the instant, was to get her a glass of water. Faith only tasted it and gave it him back,

and mounted to her former place on the bed. And for a little all was still, until Mr. Linden spoke again in the same clear, guiding tones.

"'My God, within thy hand
My helpless soul I trust!
Thy love shall ever stand—
Thy promise must!—'"

Then Mrs. Custers opened her eyes; and her first look was at Dr. Harrison. But whether the relaxed mental tension let the bodily weakness appear, or whether the tide was at that point where it ebbs most rapidly, her words were spoken with some trouble—yet spoken as if both to make amends and give information.

"You meant to be very kind—" she said—"and you have—But *now* I want to believe—even if it isn't any use."

Her eyes passed from him—rested for a minute on Mr. Linden—then came to Faith, and never wavered again. "Read"—was all she said.

With unnerved lip and quivering breath Faith began again her sweet utterance of some of those sweetest things. For a moment she longed to ask the other two listeners to go away and leave her alone; but reasons, different and strong, kept her mouth from speaking the wish; and then, once dismissed, it was forgotten. Her voice steadied and grew clear presently; its low, distinct words were not interrupted by so much as a breath in any part

of the room. They steadied her; Faith rested on them and clung to them as she went along, with a sense of failing energy which needed a stay somewhere. But her words did not shew it, except perhaps that they came more slowly and deliberately. Mr. Linden had drawn back a little out of sight. Dr. Harrison kept his stand by the bedpost, leaning against it; and whatever that reading was to him, he was as motionless as that whereon he leaned.

Till some little length of time had passed in this way, and then he came to Faith's side and laid his hand on her open book.

"She does not hear you," he said softly.

Faith looked at him startled, and then bent forward over the woman whose face was turned a little from her.

"She is sleeping"—she said looking up again.

"She will not hear you any more," said the doctor.

"She breathes, regularly,—"

"Yes—so she will for perhaps some hours. But she will not waken again,—probably."

"Are you sure?" Faith said with another look at the calm face before her.

"Very sure!"—

Was it true? Faith looked still at the unconscious form,—then her bible fell from her hands and her head wearily sunk into them. The strain was over—broken short. She had done all she could,—and the everlasting answer was sealed up from her. Those heavy eyelids would not unclose again to give it; those parted lips through which the slow breath went and came, would

never tell her. It seemed to Faith that her heart lay on the very ground with the burden of all that weight resting upon it.

She was not suffered to sit so long.

"May I take you away?"—Mr. Linden said,—"you must not stay any longer."

"Do you think it is no use?" said Faith looking up at him wearily.

"It is of no use," said Dr. Harrison. He had come near, and took her hand, looking at her with a moved face in which there was something very like tender reproach. But he only brought her hand gravely to his lips again and turned away. Mr. Linden's words were very low-spoken. "I think the doctor is right.—But let me take you home, and then I will come back and stay till morning if you like—or till there comes a change. *You* must not stay."

"I don't like to go,"—said Faith without moving. "She may want me again."

"There may be no change all night," said the doctor;—"and when it comes it will not probably be a conscious change. If she awakes at all, it will be to die. You could do nothing more."

Faith saw that Mr. Linden thought so, and she gave it up; with a lingering unwillingness got off the bed and wrapped her furs round her. Mr. Linden put her into the sleigh, keeping Jerry back to let the doctor precede them; and when he was fairly in front, Faith was doubly wrapped up—as she had been the night of the fire, and could take the refreshment of the cool air, and rest. Very

wearily, for a while, mind and body both dropped. Faith was as still as if she had been asleep; but her eyes were gazing out upon the snow, following the distant speck of the doctor's sleigh, or looking up to the eternal changeless lights that keep watch over this little world and mock its changes. Yet not so! but that bear their quiet witness that there is something which is not "passing away;"—yea, that there is something which "endureth forever."

"He calleth them all by their names; for that he is strong in power, not one faileth." That was in Faith's mind along with other words—"The Lord knoweth them that are his." Her mind was in a passive state; things floated in and floated out. It was some time before Mr. Linden said anything—he let her be as silent and still as she would; but at last he bent over her and spoke.

"My Mignonette"—and the thought was not sweeter than the words—"are you asleep?"

"No—" she said in one of those etherial answering tones which curiously say a great many things.

"Are you resting?"

"Yes. I am rested."

"You must try not to bear the burden of your work after it is done. Now lay it off—and leave your poor friend in the hands where I trust she has left herself. Her senses are not closed to his voice."

"I do"—she said with a grateful look. "I know it is not my work—nor anybody's."

He drew the furs up about her silently, arranging and adjusting

them so as to keep off the wind which had risen a little.

"We are not very far from home now,—we have come fast."

And as Jerry did not relax his pace, the little distance was soon travelled over. How fair the lights in their own windows looked then!—with their speech of blessing and comfort.

They all came together round the fire first, and then round the tea-table; Faith being specially watched over and waited on by both the others. Mrs. Derrick's half developed fear at their long stay, had given place to a sort of moved, untalkative mood when she heard the explanation, but a mood which relieved itself by trying every possible and impossible thing for Faith's refreshment. Every possible thing except refreshing talk—and that Mr. Linden gave her. Talk which without jarring in the least upon the evening's work, yet led her thoughts a little off from the painful part of it. Talk of the Christian's work—of the Christian's privilege,—of "Heaven and the way thither,"—of the gilding of the cross, of the glory of the crown. Faith heard and joined in it, but there was a point of pressure yet at her heart; and when they left the table and went into the other room, a slight thing gave indication where it lay. Faith took a little bench by Mrs. Derrick's side, drew her mother's arms round her close, and laid her head down on her lap.

How softly, how tenderly, did Mrs. Derrick answer the caress, as if she read it perfectly!—touching Faith's hands and brow and cheeks with fingers that were even trembling. And at last —whether her child's mute pleading was too much for her,—

whether the pain which had never left her heart since the day of Faith's overturn had by degrees done its work,—she bent down her lips to Faith's cheek and whispered—"Yes, pretty child—I mean to try."

And so the door opened, and Cindy and Mr. Skip came in for prayers.Faith hid her face, but otherwise did not stir.

How sweet the service was to them all that night!—yes, to them all; there was not one who could help feeling its influence. And yet it was very simple, and not very long,—Mr. Linden read first a few Bible passages, and then Wesley's hymn of the New Year,—with its bugle note of action,—and then to prayer, for which, by that time, every heart was ready.

"Come let us anew our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year,
And never stand still till the Master appear.
His adorable will let us gladly fulfil,
And our talents improve,
By the patience of hope and the labours of love.

"Our life is a dream; our time, as a stream,
Glides swiftly away,
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay.
The arrow is flown—the moment is gone;
The millennial year
Rushes on to our view, and eternity's here.

"O that each, in the day of his coming, may say,

I have fought my way through;
I have finished the work thou didst give me to do.
O that each from his Lord may receive the glad word,
Well and faithfully done!
Enter into my joy, and sit down on my throne."

CHAPTER VIII

The first morning of the new year turned out as bright as could be desired for the great sleigh-riding expedition; the very day for it. And in the very mood for it were the people who were to go. Not but somewhat of last night's gravity hung about Faith's bright face; the one did no hurt to the other; for the best brightness is always sure to be grave, and the best gravity is almost sure to be bright, on some side. However there was nothing *contemplative* about the character of things this morning; there was too much action afoot. Such an army of meats and drinks, with all sorts of odd ends and varieties, from the shoes to the fishing-net, and such an array of apples and sugarplums!—to marshal and order them all in proper companies and ranks, wanted a general! But Faith was by no means a bad general, and up to the act of stowing the sleigh, at which point the things were made over to Mr. Linden and Mr. Skip, her part was well done. And Mr. Linden found in the course of *his* part of the business that Mrs. Derrick and Faith had followed a lead of their own.

There had been a pretty packing and tying up and labelling at the table, before the sleigh-packing began,—Faith's busy little fingers went in and out with great dexterity; and either Mr. Linden thought it was pleasant to her—or knew it was pleasant to him, to have them so engaged; for though he stood by and talked to her, and laughed at her, he let the said little fingers have

their way; except when they touched some harsh bit of string, or rough bit of paper, or unmanageable package, and then his own interfered. It was a bright packing up—without a shadow, at least that could be called such. But once or twice, when with some quick movement of Faith's hand the diamonds flashed forth their weird light suddenly,—she did see that Mr. Linden's eyes went down, and that his mouth took a set which if not of pain, was at least sad. It never lasted long—and the next look was always one of most full pleasure at her. But the second time, Faith's heart could hardly bear it. She guessed at the why and the what; but words were too gross a medium to convey from spirit to spirit the touch that love could give and pain bear. She watched her chance; and when one of Mr. Linden's hands was for a moment resting on a package that the other was busied in arranging, suddenly laying the jewelled hand on his, Faith's lips kept it company.

"Faith!" he said. And then as if he saw it all, he did not say another word, only held her for a minute in a very, very close embrace. But then he whispered,

"Faith—you must give me that in another way."

Faith appeared to have exhausted her ammunition, for she only answered by hiding her face.

"Faith"—Mr. Linden repeated.

She looked up slowly, blushing all over; and her very doubtful face seemed to negative the whole proceeding. But then an irrepressible little laugh began to play.

"I wouldn't do it," she said unsteadily,—"at least, I don't

know that I would—if I hadn't wished so very much to give you something to-day;—and I have nothing else!—"

And nerving herself desperately, Faith laid one hand on Mr. Linden's shoulder and slightly raising herself on her toes, did bestow on his lips as dainty a kiss as ever Santa Claus brought in his box of New Year curiosities. But she was overcome with confusion the moment she had done it, and would have rushed off if that had been possible.

"Let me go"—she said hastily—"let me go!"—

In answer to which, she was held as securely fast as she ever had been in her life. Covering and hiding all of her face that she could, Faith renewed her request, in a comical tone of humility —as if she didn't deserve it.

"I never felt less inclined to let you go!"

"There is all that work to be done," said Faith, by way of possibly useful suggestion.

"Mignonette, will you remember your new lesson?"

She whispered softly, "No.—It was only Santa Claus."

"Not Campaspe?"

"No—Certainly not!"

"You remember," said Mr. Linden, "that when—'Cupid and Campaspe played at cards for kisses, *Cupid paid*.'—I was unavoidably reminded of that. But you may go on with your work,—you know what happens when lessons are learned imperfectly." And liberty for her work she had; no more.

"Child," said her mother coming in, "are you ready for your

lunch?"

"Why no, mother," said Faith with a little laugh,—"of course not! but I can take it as I go on. There's a good deal of 'sorting' to do yet. I hope the sleigh is big."

"Take it as you go on, indeed!" said Mrs. Derrick. "You've got to stop and eat, child,—you can't live till night with nothing but other folk's dinners."

Faith however declared she could not *stop* to eat; and she contrived to carry on both the rival occupations together; and even to make right sure that no one else should attempt to live upon anything more etherial than sandwiches and pumpkin pie. She drank her coffee in the intervals of tying packages and writing labels, and ran about with a sandwich in one hand and a basket in the other; filling Mr. Linden's cup and putting tempting platefuls in his way. But he was as busy as she,—spending much of his time at the barn, where Squire Stoutenburgh's pretty little box sleigh was in process of filling with cloaks, buffalo robes, and commodities! At last everything was in, and Mr. Linden came to announce that fact to Faith,—furs and hood were donned, and the sleigh was off with its whole load.

Bright, bright the snow was, and blue the shadows, and fair the white expanse of hill and meadow, all crisp and sparkling. Everybody was out—which was not wonderful; but so well had Mr. Linden disposed and covered up his packages, that all anybody could see was that he and Faith were taking a sleigh-ride,—which was not wonderful either. And before long they

left the more frequented roads, and turned down the lane that led to the dwelling of Sally Lowndes. How different it looked now, from that summer evening when Faith had gone there alone. What a colouring then lay on all the ground that was now white with sunlight and blue with shade! And also, what a difference in the mental colouring. But Jerry, travelling faster than her feet had done, soon brought them to the house. Mr. Linden buckled the tie, and helped Faith to emerge from the buffalo robes; the winter wind blowing fresh from the sea, and sweeping over the down till Jerry shook his blanket in disapproval.

"Now my little counsellor," said Mr. Linden, "what does your wisdom say should go in here—besides this basket of substantiate? I think you know more of these people than I do?"—And the surf in its cold monotony, said—"Anything warm!"

"Mother has put in a shawl for Sally," said Faith, getting out the package;—(it was one that Mrs. Derrick found she could do without,)—"and a little paper of tea,—tea is Sally's greatest delight,—here it is!"

Sally's abode was in nothing different from the run of poor houses in the country; unpainted of course, outside and inside; a rag carpet on the floor, a gay patchwork coverlet on the bed. Sally herself was in the rocking-chair before a little wood fire. But there was not the look of even poor comfort which may sometimes be seen; want, that told of lack of means and that also went deeper, was visible in everything.

"I've come to wish you a happy new year, Sally," said Faith brightly.

"Laws! I wonder where it's to come from!" said Sally. "If *wishin'* I would fetch it—I've wished it to myself till I'm tired. Happy new years don't come to all folks. Aint that—How do you do, sir!—aint it the gentleman Jenny told of? that fell down at Mr. Simlins' door?"

"And got up again?" said Mr. Linden. "Yes, I presume I am the very person Jenny told of. I remember that Jenny was very kind to me, too. Where is she?"

"O she's to Mr. Simlinses all along! she's got a good place; she knows when she's comfortable. She don't think of me stayin' here all alone."

"But aren't you comfortable, Sally?" said Faith.

"I should like to know how I would be! Folks that *is* comfortable thinks all the world is like them! If they didn't they'd help."

"Well what is the first thing that would help to make you comfortable?" said Mr. Linden.

Sally looked at him, up and down.

"I'd like to see a speck o' somebody's face now and then. I mope and mope, till I wish I'd die to get rid of it! You see, sir, I aint as I used to was; and my family aint numerous now. There's no one lives in this house over my head but me and a girl what stays by me to do chores. Aint that a life for a spider?"

Faith had been stealthily unfolding the shawl and now

put it round Sally's shoulders. "Will *that* help to make you comfortable?" she said gently.

"Laws!" said Sally—"aint that smart! That's good as far as it goes.Where did that come from?"

"Mother sent it to you, for New Year."

"It's real becoming of her!" said Sally in a mollified tone, feeling of the shawl. "Well I won't say this New Years haint brought me something."

"It brings you too much cold air at present," Mr. Linden said. "Do you know that window lets in about as much cold as it keeps out?"

"Well I reckon I do," said Sally. "I've nothin' to do all day but sit here and realize onto it. There aint no such a thing as buildin' a fire in the chimney that'll keep out the cold from that winter."

"I should think not!—the way is to attack the window itself," he said, looking at it as if he were studying the attack.

"We've brought you something else here, Sally, to help keep out the cold," said Faith. "May I put the things in your closet—so as to carry home my basket?"

"Yes, if you like. What have you got there, Faith?" said Miss Lowndes looking into the closet after her.

"There's a piece of beef, Sally, of mother's own curing—all ready cooked—so you'll have nothing to do but cook your potatoes—and mother thought you'd like a few of our potatoes, they're good this year. Then here is a little paper of tea she sent you, and I've brought you one of my own pumpkin pies—so you

must say it is good, Sally."

"Well I'm beat!" said Sally. "Haint you got something else?"

She was like to be beat on all hands; for Mr. Linden who had been examining the window while Faith emptied her basket, now went out and presently brought back hammer and nails and strips of lath, that made Faith wonder whether he had brought a tool-chest along. But the noise of his hammer was much more cheerful than the rattling of the window, and when it had done its work outside as well as in, the wind might whistle for admission in vain. He came in and stood by the fire for a moment then, before they set off, and asked Faith softly what else was wanted? And Faith whispered in answer—

"'The Dairyman's Daughter?' but you must give it."

"Can't you get some comfort in reading your Bible, Sally?" said Faith while Mr. Linden went out to the sleigh with his hammer and nails.

"Laws!" said Sally—"what's the use! I haint got the heart to take the trouble to read, half the time."

"If you read one half the time, and pray too, Sally, you'll soon get heart for the other half."

"It's easy talkin'"—was Sally's encouraging view of the case.

"It's a great deal easier doing," said Faith. "If you try it, Sally, it'll make you so glad you'll never say you want comfort again."

"Well you've brought me a heap to-day anyhow," said Sally. "Just look at that winder! I declare!—I 'spect I'll make out to eat my dinner to-day without scolding."

Mr. Linden came back with the tract, but kept it in his hand for a minute.

"Do you know, Sally, how a house is built upon the bare ground?" he said. "The mason lays down one stone, and then another on that; and if he cannot have his choice of stones he takes just what come to hand—little and big, putting in plenty of mortar to bind all together. Now that's the way you must build up a happy year for yourself,—and in that way every one can." The words were spoken very brightly, without a touch of faultfinding.

"Well"—said Sally rocking herself back and forth in the rocking-chair—"I 'spect you know how."—Which might have been meant as a compliment, or as an excuse.

"I think you do," said Mr. Linden smiling; "and I am going to leave you a true story of how it was really done by somebody else. Will you read it?"

"Yes"—said Sally continuing to rock. "I'll do any thing you ask me to—after that winder. You've given me a good start—anyways. I'd as lieves hear you talk as most things."

There was not time for much more talk then, however. Mr. Linden and Faith went away, leaving the little book on the table. But when Sally went to take a nearer view of its words of golden example, there lay on it the first real little gold piece Sally had ever possessed.

"That was a good beginning," said Faith in a sort of quiet glee, after she had got into the sleigh again. "I knew, before, we were like a butcher and baker setting off on their travels; but I

had no idea there was a carpenter stowed away anywhere!" And her laugh broke forth upon the air of those wild downs, as Jerry turned his head about.

"I must be something, you know," said Mr. Linden,—"and I don't choose to be the butcher—and certainly am not the baker."

They turned into the village again, and then down towards the shore; getting brilliant glimpses of the Sound now and then, and a pretty keen breeze. But the sun was strong in its modifying power, and bright and happy spirits did the rest. One little pause the sleigh made at the house where Faith had had her decisive interview with Squire Deacon, but they did not get out there; only gave a selection of comforts into the hands of one of the household, and jingled on their way shorewards. Not turning down to the bathing region, but taking a road that ran parallel with the Sound.

"Do you remember our first walk down here, Faith?" said Mr.Linden,—"when you said you had shewed me the shore?"

"Well I did," said Faith smiling,—"I shewed you what I knew; but you shewed me what I had never known before."

"I'm sure you shewed me some things I had never known before," he said laughing a little. "Do you know where we are going now?"—they had left the beaten road, and entered a by-way where only footsteps marked the snow, and no sleigh before their own had broken ground. It seemed to be a sort of coast-way,—leading right off towards the dashing Sound and its low points and inlets. The shore was marked with ice as well as foam;

the water looked dark and cold, with the white gulls soaring and dipping, and the white line of Long Island in the distance.

"No, I don't know. Where are we going? O how beautiful! O how beautiful!" Faith exclaimed. "Hasn't every time its own pleasure! Where are we going, Endecott?"

"To see one who Dr. Harrison 'fancies' may have 'something in him.'Whatever made the doctor take such a dislike to Reuben?"

Faith did not answer, and instead looked forward with a sort of contemplative gravity upon her brow. Her cheeks were already so brilliant with riding in the fresh air that a little rise of colour could hardly have been noticed.

"Do you know?"

Faith presently replied that she supposed it was a dislike taken up without any sort of real ground.

"Well to tell you the truth, my little Mignonette," said Mr. Linden, "the doctor's twenty-five dollars gives me some trouble in that connexion. Reuben will take favours gladly from anybody that likes him, but towards people who do not (they are very few, indeed) he is as proud as if he had the Bank of England at his back. *I* might send him a dinner every day if I chose; but if Reuben were starving, his conscience would have a struggle with him before he would take bread from Dr. Harrison."

Faith listened very seriously and her conclusion was a very earnest "Oh, I am sorry!—But then," she went on thoughtfully, —"I don't know that Dr. Harrison *dislikes* Reuben.—He don't understand him, how should he?—and I know they have never

seemed to get on well together.—"

"I chose to answer for him the other day," said Mr. Linden —"and I shall not let him refuse; but I have questioned whether I would tell him anything about the money till he is ready for the books. Then if he should meet the doctor, and the doctor should ask him!—"

Faith was silent a bit.

"But Reuben will do what you tell him," she said. "And besides, Reuben was doing everything he could for Dr. Harrison the other night—he can't refuse to let Dr. Harrison do something for him. I don't think he ought."

"He had no thought of reward. Still, he would not refuse, if he supposed any part of the 'doing' was out of care for him,—and you know I cannot tell him that I think it is. But I shall talk to him about it. Not to-day: I will not run the risk of spoiling his pleasure at the sight of us. There—do you see that little beaver-like hut on the next point?—that is where he lives."

Faith looked at it with curious interest. That little brown spot amidst the waste of snow and waters—that was where the fisherman's boy lived; and there he was preparing himself for college. And for what beside?

"Will Reuben or his father be hurt at all at anything we have brought them?" she said then.

"No, they will take it all simply for what it is,—a New Year's gift. And Reuben would not dream of being hurt by anything we could do,—he is as humble as he is proud. We are like enough

to find him alone."

And so they found him. With an absorbed ignoring of sleigh-bells and curiosity—perhaps because the former rarely came for him,—Reuben had sat still at his work until his visiters knocked at the low door. But then he came with a step and face ready to find Mr. Linden—though not Faith; and his first flush of pleasure deepened with surprise and even a little embarrassment as he ushered her in. There was no false pride about it, but "Miss Faith" was looked upon by all the boys as a dainty thing; and Reuben placed a chair for her by the drift-wood fire, with as much feeling of the unfitness of surrounding circumstances, as if she had been the Queen. Something in the hand that was laid on his shoulder brushed that away; and then Reuben looked and spoke as usual.

Surrounding circumstances were not so bad, after all. Faith had noticed how carefully and neatly the snow was cleared from the door and down to the water's edge, and everything within bore the same tokens. The room was very tiny, the floor bare —but very clean; the blazing drift-wood the only adornment. Yet not so: for on an old sea chest which graced one side of the room, lay Reuben's work which they had interrupted. An open book, with one or two others beside it; and by them all, with mesh and netting-kneedle and twine, lay an old net which Reuben had been repairing. The drift-wood had stone supporters,—the winter wind swept in a sort of grasping way round the little hut; and the dashing of the Sound waters, and the sharp war of the floating ice, broke the stillness. But they were very glad eyes

that Reuben lifted to Mr. Linden's face and a very glad alacrity brought forward a little box for Faith to rest her feet.

"Don't you mean to sit down, Mr. Linden?" he said.

"To be sure I do. But I haven't wished you a happy New Year yet." And the lips that Reuben most reverenced in the world, left their greeting on his forehead. It was well the boy found something to do—with the fire, and Faith's box, and Mr. Linden's chair! But then he stood silent and quiet as before.

"Don't *you* mean to sit down, Reuben?" said Faith.

Reuben smiled,—not as if he cared about a seat; but he brought forward another little box, not even the first cousin of Faith's, and sat down as she desired.

"Didn't you find it very cold, Miss Faith?" he said, as if he could not get used to seeing her there. "Are you getting warm now?"

Faith said she hadn't been cold; and would fast enough have entered into conversation with Reuben, but she thought he would rather hear words from other lips, and was sure that other lips could give them better.

"And have you got quite well, ma'm?" said Reuben.

"Don't I look well?" she said smiling at him. "What are you doing over there, Reuben?—making a net?"

"O I was mending it, Miss Faith."

"I can't afford to have you at that work just now," said Mr. Linden,—"you know we begin school again to-morrow. You must tell your father from me, Reuben, that he must please to

use his new one for the present, and let you mend up that at your leisure. Will you?"

Reuben flushed—looking up and then down as he said, "Yes, sir,"—and then very softly, "O Mr. Linden, you needn't have done that!"

"Of course I need not—people never need please themselves, I suppose. But you know, Reuben, there is a great deal of Santa Glaus work going on at this time of year, and Miss Faith and I have had some of it put in our hands. I won't answer for what she'll do with you!—but you must try and bear it manfully."

Reuben laughed a little—half in sympathy with the bright words and smile, half as if the spirit of the time had laid hold of him.

"You know, Mr. Linden," said Faith laughing, but appealingly too,—"that Reuben will get worse handling from you than he will from me!—so let him have the worst first."

"I'll bring in your basket," was all he said,—and the basket came in accordingly; Reuben feeling too bewildered to even offer his services.

Faith found herself in a corner. She jumped up and placed herself in front of the basket so as to hide it. "Wait!"—she said. "Reuben, how much of a housekeeper are you?"

"I don't know, Miss Faith,—I don't believe I ever was tried."

"Do you know how to make mince pies, for instance?"

But Reuben shook his head, with a low-spoken, "No, Miss Faith,"—a little as if she were somehow transparent, and he was

viewing the basket behind her.

"Never mind my questions," said Faith, "but tell me. Could you stuff a turkey, do you think, if you tried?"

"I suppose I could—somehow," Reuben said, colouring and laughing. "I never tried, Miss Faith."

"Then you couldn't!" said Faith, her laugh rolling round the little room, as softly as the curls of smoke went up the chimney. "You needn't think you could! But Reuben, since you can't, don't you think you would let me do it once for you?"

Reuben's words were not ready in answer. But a bashful look at Faith's face—and her hands,—one that reminded her of the clam-roasting,—was followed by a grateful, low-spoken—"I don't think you ought to do anything for *me*, Miss Faith."

"I have had so much pleasure in it, Reuben, you'll have to forgive me;"—Faith answered, withdrawing from the basket.

"You must look into that at your leisure, Reuben," Mr. Linden said, as he watched the play of feeling in the boy's face. "Miss Faith is in no hurry for her basket."

Reuben heard him silently, and as silently lifted the basket from where it stood and set it carefully on the table. But then he came close up to Faith and stood by her side. "You are *very* good, Miss Faith!" he said. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Reuben!" said Faith colouring—"you mustn't thank me at all. I've just had the pleasure of doing—but it is Mr. Linden that has brought the basket here, and me too."

"And he must take you away," Mr. Linden said. "Reuben, you

may thank Miss Faith just as much as you please. If I had nothing else to do, I should invite my self here to dinner, but as it is I must be off. Are you ready?" he said to Faith, while in silence Reuben knelt down to put on again the moccasins which she had thrown off, and then she followed Mr. Linden. Reuben followed too,—partly to help their arrangements, partly at Mr. Linden's bidding to bring back the net. But when there was added thereto a little package which could only mean books, Reuben's cup of gravity, at least, was full; and *words* of good-bye he had none.

And for a few minutes after they drove away Faith too was silent with great pleasure. She hardly knew, though she felt, how bright the sun was on the snow, and how genial his midday winter beams; and with how crisp a gleam the light broke on ice points and crests of foam and glanced from the snow-banks. The riches of many days seemed crowded into the few hours of that morning. Were they not on a "shining" expedition! Had they not been leaving sunbeams of gladness in house after house, that would shine on, nobody knew how long! Faith was too glad for a little while not to feel very sober; those sunbeams came from so high a source, and were wrought in with others that so wrapped her own life about. So she looked at Jerry's ears and said nothing.

"Faith," Mr. Linden said suddenly, "I wish I could tell you what it is to me to be going these rounds with you!"

Faith shewed a quick, touched little smile. "I've been thinking just now,—what it means."

"I should like to have the explanation of those last three

words."

"What it means?"—and the slight play of her lips did not at all hinder the deep, deep strength of her thought from being manifest.—"It means, all you have taught me and led me to!—"

"You don't intend to lead me to a very clear understanding," he said playfully, and yet with a tone that half acknowledged her meaning. "Do you ever remember what you have taught me?—They say one should at the end of the year, reckon up all the blessings it has brought,—but I know not where to begin, nor how to recount them. This year!—it has been like the shield in the old fable,—it seemed to me of iron to look forward to—so cold and dark,—and it has been all gold!"

"Did it look so?" she said with quick eyes of sympathy.

"Yes, little Sunbeam, it looked so; and there were enough earthly reasons why it should. But unbelief has had a rebuke for once;—if I know myself, I am ready now to go forward without a question!"

Over what Hill Difficulty did that future road lie?—He did not explain, and the next words came with a different tone,—one that almost put the other out of Faith's head. "My little Sunbeam, do you keep warm?"

"Yes"—she said with a somewhat wistful look that came from a sunbeam determined upon doing its very best of shining, for him. But she was silent again for a minute. "There are plenty of sunbeams abroad to-day, Endecott," she said then with rare sweetness of tone, that touched but did not press upon his tone

of a few minutes ago.

"Dear Faith," he said looking at her, and answering the wistfulness and the smile and the voice all in one,—"do you know I can never find words that just suit me for you?—And do you know that I think there was never such a New Year's day heard of?—it is all sunshine! Just look how the light is breaking out there upon the ice, and touching the waves, and shining through that one little cloud,—and guess how I feel it in my heart. Do you know how much work of this sort, and of every sort, you and I shall have to do together, little child, if we live?"

It was a look of beauty that answered,—so full in its happiness, so blushing and shy; but Faith's words were as simple as they were earnest.

"I wish it. There can't be too much."

Their course now became rather irregular; crossing about from one spot to another, and through a part of the country where Faith had never been. Here was a sort of shore population,—people living upon rocks and sand rent free, or almost that; and supporting themselves otherwise as best they might. A scattered, loose-built hamlet, perching along the icy shore, and with its wild winds to rock the children to sleep, and the music of the waves for a lullaby. But the children throve with such nursing, if one might judge by the numbers that tumbled in the snow and clustered on the doorsteps; and the amusement they afforded Faith was not small. The houses were too many here to have time for a *visit* to each,—a pause at the door, and the leaving of some little

token of kindness, was all that could be attempted; and the tokens were various. Faith's loaves of bread, and her pieces of meat, or papers from the stock of tea and sugar with which she had been furnished, or a bowl of broth jelly for some sick person,—a pair of woollen stockings, perhaps, or a flannel jacket, for some rheumatic old man or woman,—or a bible,—or a combination of different things where the need demanded. But Faith's special fun was with the children.

When they first entered the hamlet, Mr. Linden brought forward and set at her feet one basket of trifling juvenile treasures, and another filled more substantially with apples and cakes and sugarplums; and then as all the children were out of doors, he drove slowly and let her delight as many of them as she chose. What pleasure it was!—those little cold hands, so unwonted to cakes and that could hardly hold apples,—how eagerly, how shyly, they were stretched out!—with what flourishes of bare feet or old shoes the young ones scampered away, or stood gazing after Jerry's little dust-cloud of snow;—ever after to remember and tell of this day, as one wherein a beautiful lady dressed up like a pussy cat, gave them an apple, or a stick of candy, or a picture book! Faith was in a debate between smiles and tears by the time they were through the hamlet and dashing out again on the open snow, for Mr. Linden had left all that part of the business to her; though the children all seemed to know him—and he them—by heart.

And good note Faith took of that, and laid up the lesson. She

had been a very good Santa Claus the while, and had acted the part of a sunbeam indifferent well; being just about so bright and so soft in all her dealings with those same little cold hands and quick spirits; giving them their apples and candy with a good envelope of gentle words and laughter. Seeing that she had it to do, she went into the game thoroughly. But once she made a private protest.

"Do you know, Endecott, these things would taste a great deal sweeter if your hand gave them?"

"I know nothing of the sort! Sweeter?—look at that urchin deep in peppermint candy,—could anything enhance the spice or the sweetness of that?"

"Yes," said Faith shaking her head—"and look at that little girl before him, who took the apple and looked at you all the while!"

"She has an eye for contrast," he said laughing, "and is probably wondering why all people can't look alike!"

Faith did not secretly blame her, but she left that subject.

It was to the furthest point of their round that they went now, —another fisherman's house—far, far off, on the shore. A little larger than Reuben's, but not so neatly kept; as indeed how could it be? with so many children,—or how could the house hold them, in those times of weather when they condescended to stay in! They were in pretty good order, to do their mother justice, and she in great delight at the sight of her visiters. There was no room for silence here—or at least no silence in the room, for Mrs. Ling was never at a loss for words. And there was no need

of much circumlocution in presenting the turkey,—nothing but pleasure could come of it, let it enter on which foot it would; and the train of potatoes, and tea, and bread, and other things, fairly made Mrs. Ling's eyes shine,—though she talked away as fast as ever. The children were in spirits too great to be got rid of in any ordinary way, especially the youngest walking Ling; whose turn having not yet come for a pair of shoes from his father's pocket, was now to be fitted out of Mr. Linden's sleigh. And the shoes did fit—and little Japhet marked his sense of the obligation by at once requesting Faith to tie them. Which Faith did in a state of delight too great for words.

"Now what do you feel like?" she said, when Japhet was fairly shod and she still stooping at his feet.

"I feel like a king!" said Japhet promptly,—which had been the height of his unrepublican ambition for some time.

"Dear sakes!" said his mother, who had heard the child's request too late to interfere,—"I hope you'll not mind him, ma'am,—he oughter know better, but he don't. And poor things, when they gets pleased—it aint often, you see, ma'am, so I can't be hard upon 'em. Do you feel warm?—we do make out to keep warm, most times."

"I am quite warm, thank you; but I should think you'd feel the wind down here. Japhet,"—said Faith, who had brought in her basket of varieties and whose quiet eyes were fairly in a dance with fun and delight,—"which do you think kings like best—cookies or candy?"

To which Japhet with equal promptness replied,

"Candy—and cookies."

"Don't!"—his mother said again,—but the basket of varieties looked almost as wonderful to her eyes as to those of the children, who now gathered round as near as they dare come, while Mrs. Ling cautiously peeped over their heads.

"I see you feel like a king!" said Faith filling both Japhet's hands.—"There! now I hope you don't feel like Alexander."

"Alexander haint got nothin'!" said Japhet, looking towards his eldest brother.

Which did not overset Faith's gravity, because by this time she had none to speak of. Alexander's delight was found to be in red apples, and he thought a little common top a treasure such as neither Diogenes nor the real Alexander knew of between them! One little girl was made happy with a wonderful picture-book in which there were a dog, a cat, and a lion with a great mane just ready to eat a man up, with the stories thereto pertaining; and a neat little slate seemed a most desirable acquisition to the bright eyes of an older girl. They were all more satisfied than the conqueror of the world by the time Faith rose from the basket; and then she offered her tribute of gingerbread to Mrs. Ling. The little girl with the slate, once released from the spell of the basket, went up to Mr. Linden (who had stood looking on) and said,—"She's awake now, if you please, sir,"—and he turned and went into the next room, leaving Mrs. Ling to entertain Faith as best she might. For which Mrs. Ling was most ready.

"Ma always does want to see him"—she said. "You see, ma'am, she can't never get up now, so it's a play to hear somebody talk. And ma likes him special. Mr. Somers he's been kind too—and Mrs.—he come down when ma was first took, and since; but someways she don't just see into him much. I don' know but it's along of his bein' better than other folks—but after all, a person wants to have even good things talked to 'em so's they can understand. Now Mr. Linden,—my Mary there 'll listen to him for an hour, and never lose a word." And Mary's bright little eyes answered that readily, while Mrs. Ling's went back to the basket.

"I can't believe!" she said. "You don't know what you've done, ma'am! Why there aint one o' them children as ever see a real live turkey cooked, in their existence."

"You don't know what pleasure I had in doing it for them, Mrs. Ling.Mr. Linden told me there was a houseful of children."

"Well so there is!" said Mrs. Ling looking round the room,—"and it's no wonder he thinks so, for they tease him most out of his life sometimes when he's here,—or would if he wam't as good-natured as the day's long. But there aint one too many, after all said and done, for I've got nothing else,—so if it warn't for them I should be poorly off." With which reverse statement of the case, Mrs. Ling complacently smoothed down four or five heads, and tied as many aprons.

"Ma," said little Mary, "will Mr. Linden sing for us to-day?"

"I dare say—if you ask him pretty," said her mother. "No, I guess he's busy and won't be bothered."

"He never *is* bothered," said Mary persistently, while two or three of the others recovering from their apples and shyness, ventured up to Faith again and began to stroke her furs.

"What does he sing for you, Jenny?" said Faith, taking the little picture-book girl on her lap, and glad to put her own face down in a somewhat sheltered position.

"O he sings hymns—" said Jenny, gazing abstractedly at the lion and the cat by turns,—"and other things too, sometimes."

"Hymns are very interesting. And beautiful—don't you think so?" saidMary drawing nearer.

"Yes, indeed I do," said Faith stretching out her hand and pulling the little girl up to her. "What ones do you like best, Mary?"

But Mary's answer stayed, for Mr. Linden came back at that moment, and skilfully making his way up to Faith without running over any of the little throng, he told her he was ready. And Faith, though secretly wishing for the song as much as any of the children, set Jenny on the floor and rose up; while Mr. Linden laughingly shewed her "an excellent way of investing ten cents," by giving the children each one. Meanwhile Mrs. Ling had been emptying the basket. There was the cold turkey in the full splendour of its rich brown coat—a good large turkey too; but lest there should not be enough of it to go round to so many mouths, Mrs. Derrick and Faith had added a nice piece, ready boiled, of salt pork. Then there were potatoes, and some of Faith's bread,—and a paper of tea and another of sugar; and

there was arrowroot, made and unmade, for the sick woman, with some broth jelly. It was one of those houses where a good deal was wanted, and the supply had been generous in proportion. Mrs. Ling was at her wits' end to dispose of it all; and the children watched her in a gale of excitement, till the last thing was carried off, and Mrs. Ling began to shake out the napkins and fold them up. But then they came round Mr. Linden with their petition, urging it with such humble pertinacity, that he was fain at last to comply. It was only a child's Christmas hymn, set to a simple, bright, quick tune, which at first kept some of the smallest feet in a greater state of unrest than the older children thought at all respectful.

"O little children, sing!
Jesus, your Lord and King
For you a child became:
On that bright Christmas day
He in a manger lay,
Who hath the one Almighty name!

"Come children, love him now,
Before the Saviour bow,
Give him each little heart.
His spotless nature see,—
Then like him spotless be,
And choose his service for your part.

"The joy of loving him

Shall never fade nor dim,—
While worldly joys fly fast:—
Jesus to see and love,
First here and then above,
Such joy shall ever, ever last.

"I'll give myself away
On this new Christmas day,—
He gave his life for me!
Jesus, my heart is thine,
O make it humbly shine
With ever-living love to thee!

"O Jesus, our Great Friend,
Our Saviour, without end
Thy praises we will bring!
Glory to God's high throne!
Peace now on earth is known,
And we for joy may ever sing!"

"There"—Mr. Linden said, breaking the hush into which the children had subsided, and gently disengaging himself from them,—"now I have given you something to think of, and you must do it, and let me go." And he and Faith were presently on their way; Faith feeling that she had "something to think of" too.

The sun was westing fast as they turned, but now their way lay towards home, via sundry other places. The long sunbeams were passing lovely as they lay upon the snow, and the fantastic

shadows of Jerry and the sleigh and all it held, were in odd harmony and contrast. The poverty-stricken house to which the two had walked that memorable night, had been already visited and passed, and several others with sick or poor inhabitants. Then Mr. Linden turned off down one of the scarce broken by-roads, and stopped before a little lonely brown house with an old buttonwood tree in front.

"There is a blanket to go in here, Faith," he said as he took her out, "and also my hammer!—for there is always something to do."

"Always something to do at this house?"

"Yes," he answered laughingly,—"so you must hold in check your aversion to carpenters."

"If you'll please have a charity for the butcher and baker, and tell me what I shall take in here? for my part."

"O we'll go in and find out,—these good people are never just suited unless they have the ordering of everything. They'll tell us what they want fast enough, but if we guessed at it beforehand, they would maybe find out that those were just the things they did *not* want. Only my hammer—I'm sure of that."

The "good people" in question, were an old man and his wife, living in one little room and with very little furniture. Very deaf the old man was, and both of them dimsighted, so that the old bible on the shelf was only a thing to look at,—if indeed it had ever been anything more, which some people doubted. This was one of the first things Mr. Linden took hold of after the kind

greetings were passed, and he gave it to Faith; telling her that old Mr. Roscom always expected his visitors to read to him, and that if she would do that, he would mend Mrs. Roscom's spinning-wheel—which he saw was ready for him.

Faith threw back her hood and her furs, and took a seat close by the old man; and the first thing he heard was her sweet voice asking him where she should read, or if he liked to hear any part in particular.

"No," he said, "he liked to have it surprise him."

Faith pondered how she should best surprise him, but she had not much time to spare and no chance to ask counsel. So she read as her heart prompted her,—first the fifth chapter of II. Corinthians—with its joyful Christian profession and invitation to others; then she read the account of Jesus' healing the impotent man and bidding him "sin no more"; and then she turned over to the Psalms and gave Mr. Roscom the beautiful 103d psalm of thanksgiving,—which after those other two passages seemed particularly beautiful. This was work that Faith loved, and she read so.

How softly the hammer worked while she read, she might have noticed if her mind had not been full; but though she had no word from that quarter, Mr. Roscom's opinion was clear.

"That's good," he said,—"and strong;—and I'm obleeged to ye."

And then, the wheel being near done, there was a little skilful talk gone into; in the course of which Faith and Mr.

Linden learned, that the old couple were "real tired of salt meat, some days"—and that rye bread "warnt thought wholesome by itself"—and that "if their tea should give out they didn't know what they *should* do!"—and that "times when the old man was a little poorly, nothing on airth would serve him but a roasted potato!" All of which was said just for the pleasure of talking to sympathizing faces,—without the least idea of what was at the door. The blanket was too old a want to be spoken of, but Faith needed only to look at the bed. And then she looked at Mr. Linden, in delighted watch to see what his next move would be; in the intervals of her chat with Mr. Roscom, which was very lively.

Mr. Linden had finished his work, and stood balancing his hammer and listening to the catalogue of wants with a smile both grave and bright.

"Are these just the things you wish for?" he said. "Well—'your Father knoweth that ye have need of them,'—and he has sent them by our hands to-day; so you see that you may trust him for the future."

He laid his hand on Faith's shoulder as an invitation to her to follow, and went out to the sleigh. She was at the side of it as soon as he, and in it the next minute, stopping to give him only with the eye one warm speech of sympathy and joy.

"You haven't put up a basket specially for these people, of course," she said,—"so we shall have to take the things from everywhere. There's a beautiful chicken in that basket, Endecott —I know; that's the largest one we have left; and bread—there

aren't but two loaves here!—shall we give them both? Or do we want one somewhere else?"

"I think we may give them both. And Faith—don't you think a roasted apple might alternate usefully with the potato?"

Faith dived into the receptacle for apples and brought out a good quantity of the right kind. Potatoes were not in very large supply, but tea and sugar were—blessed things!—unfailing.

"And here is a pumpkin pie!" said Faith—"I am sure they'll like that—and as many cookies and cruller as you like. And what else, Endecott?—O here's a pair of those big socks mother knit—wouldn't they be good here?"

"Very good, dear child!—and this blanket must go—and some tracts,—that will furnish more reading. You run in with those, Faith—these other things are too heavy for you."

"I've strength enough to carry a blanket," said Faith laughing.

"Well, run off with that too, then," said Mr. Linden, "only if your strength gives out by the way, please to fall on the blanket."

Faith managed to reach the house safely and with a bright face deposited the blanket on a chair. "I got leave to bring this in to you, Mrs. Roscom," she said. "I suppose you know what Mr. Linden means you to do with it."

Perhaps they had seen no two people in the course of the day more thoroughly pleased than these two. The sources of pleasure were not many in that house, and the expectation of pleasure not strong; and the need of comforts had not died out with the supply; and old and alone as they were, the looking forward to

possible cold and hunger was a trial. It was easy to see how that blanket warmed the room and promised a mild winter, and how the socks be came liniment,—and it seemed doubtful whether the old man would ever be sick enough for roast potatoes, with the potatoes really in the house. So with other things,—they took a childish pleasure even in the cakes and pie, and an order for wood was a real relief. And what a dinner they were already eating in imagination!

Mr. Linden had put Faith in the sleigh, with the last sunset rays playing about her; and he stood wrapping her up in all sorts of ways, and the old man and the old woman stood in the door to see. Then in a voice which he supposed to be a whisper, Mr. Roscom said,—

"Be she his wife?"

"He didn't say—and I don' know *what* he said," screamed Mrs. Roscom.

"Wal—she's handsome enough for it—and so's he," said the old man contemplatively. "I hope he'll get one as good!"

Very merrily Mr. Linden laughed as they drove away.

"I hope I shall!" he said. "Faith, what do you think of that? And which of us has the compliment?"

But Faith was engaged in pulling her furs and buffalo robes round her, and did not appear to consider compliments even a matter of moonshine; much less of sunshine. Her first words were to remark upon the exceeding beauty of the last touch the sunlight was giving to certain snowy heights and white cumuli

floating above them; a touch so fair and calm as if heaven were setting its own seal on this bright day.

"Is your heart in the clouds?" Mr. Linden said, bending down to look at her with his laughing eyes. "How can you abstract your thoughts so suddenly from all sublunary affairs! Do you want any more wrapping up?"

A little flashing glance of most naive appeal, and Faith's eyes went down absolutely.

"You may as well laugh!" he said. "One cannot get through the world without occasionally hearing frightful suggestions."

Faith did laugh, and gave him another *good* little look, about which the only remarkable thing was that it was afraid to stay.

"What were your cloudy remarks just now?" said Mr. Linden.

"I wanted you to look at the beautiful light on them and those far-off ridges of hill—it is not gone yet."

"Yes, they are very beautiful. But I believe I am not in a meditative mood to-day,—or else the rival colours distract me. Faith, I mean to put you in the witness-box again."

"In the witness-box?"—she said with a mental jump to Neanticut, and a look to suit.

"Yes—but we are not on the banks of Kildeer river, and need not be afraid," he said with a smile. "Faith—what ever made you take such an aversion to Phil Davids?"

"I don't dislike him,"—she said softly.

"I did not mean to doubt your forgiving disposition! But what did he do to displease you?"

Did Mr. Linden know? or did he *not* know! Faith looked up to see. He was just disentangling one of the lines from Jerry's tail, but met her look with great composure.

"It's an old thing,"—said Faith. "It's not worth bringing up."

"But since I have brought it—won't you indulge me?"

The red on Faith's cheeks grew brilliant. "It isn't anything you would like,—if I told it to you.—Won't you let me let it alone?"

"I should like to hear you tell it."

"He made one or two rude speeches"—said Faith in very great doubt and confusion;—"that was all."

"*That* I knew before."

"Did you?" said Faith looking at him. "How did you know it, Endecott?"

There was a curious gentle, almost tender, modulation of tone in this last sentence, which covered a good deal of possible ground. Mr. Linden drew up one of her mufflers which had fallen off a little, giving her as he did so a silent though laughing answer, as comprehensive as her question.

"You are just the dearest and most precious little child in the whole world!" he said. "But why are you afraid to tell me *now?*—and why did Phil's insinuation cause you such dismay?"

Faith's confusion would have been, as her rosy flush was, extreme,—if something in Mr. Linden's manner had not met that and rebuked it, healing the wound almost before it was made. Between the two Faith struggled for a standing-ground of equanimity,—but words, though she struggled for them too, in

her reason or imagination she could not find.

"I want an answer to one of these questions,"—Mr. Linden said, in a playful sort of tone. "Dr. Harrison used to ask me if you lived upon roses—but do you think I can?"

Faith made an effort. "What do you want me to say?"

"What was it in Phil's words that troubled you so much?"

The crimson rush came back overwhelmingly. "Oh Endy—please don't ask me!"

"Not quite fair,"—he said smiling. "I'm sure I am willing to tell *you* anything. Though indeed I do not suppose you need much telling. But Faith—is *that* the system of tactics by which you intend always to have your own way? I shall have to be philosophical to any point!"

"That speech is so very zigzag," said Faith, "that I cannot follow it.How are you going to be philosophical, Mr. Linden?"

"Not by forgetting to exact your forfeit, Miss Derrick."

"That isn't fair," said Faith laughing. "I didn't for get!—I shouldn't think you had gone all day without eating anything!—and yet you must be starving."

"For what? little provider."

"For something to eat, I should think."

"Does that mean that you are suffering?—because if that be the case, I will refresh you (cautiously) with sugar-plums! A very superfluous thing, to be sure, but the most suitable I can think of."

Faith's laugh came clear now. "No indeed. Suffering! I never

eat so many dinners in one day in my life. But I am hungry though, I believe. How many more places are we going to? I don't care how many," she said earnestly. "I like to be hungry."

"Well, keep up your spirits,—the next turn will bring us out of the woods, and a three-minute stay at one or two doors will end our work for this time. Meanwhile, do you want to hear a little bit of good poetry—on an entirely new subject?"

"Oh yes! if you please."

Demurely enough it was given.—

"'Her true beauty leaves behind
Apprehensions in my mind
Of more sweetness, than all art
Or inventions can impart.
Thoughts too deep to be expressed,
And too strong to be repressed.'"

She gave him a wistful look as he finished the lines; and then sat among her furs, as quiet again as a mouse.

"Do you like them, Mignonette?"

"Yes—very much."

"Would you like to tell me then why the hearing of them makes you sober?"

"Yes—if you wish"; she said gently. "I know—a little—I believe,—what you think of me; but what I seem to your eyes on the outside—and much more!—I want to be really, really—in the sight of the eye that tries the heart—and I am not now, Endy."

"My dear child—" he said,—and was silent a minute, speeding smoothly along through the starlight; then went on.

"Yes, dear Faith,—that is what I wish for you—and for myself. That is where we will most earnestly try to help each other." And presently, as eye and thoughts were caught and held by the wonderful constellation above in the clear sky, yet not drawn away from what they had been talking of, Mr. Linden said, —

"'Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion,—that bringeth the shadow of death upon the day, and turneth the night into morning!'" And so, in the thought of that, they went home; Orion looking down upon them, and they leaving bits of brightness by the way at the two or three houses which yet remained. The box sleigh got home at last emptied of all its load but the two travellers.

Mrs. Derrick and supper were ready for them, and had been a good while; and by this time Mr. Linden and Faith were ready for supper. And much as Mrs. Derrick had to hear, she had something to tell. How Judge Harrison had come to make a visit and say good-bye, and how he had put in her hands another twenty-five dollars to be added to those his son had already bestowed on Reuben. Squire Stoutenburgh too had been there; but his errand was to declare that Jerry could never be received again into his service, but must henceforth remain in Mrs. Derrick's stable and possession. Altogether, the day even at home had been an exciting one.

A little time after supper Faith went into the sitting-room. Mr. Linden was there alone. Faith came up to the back of his chair, laid a hand on his shoulder, and bent her head into speaking neighbourhood. It may be remarked, that though Faith no longer said "Mr. Linden," yet that one other word of his name was *never* spoken just like her other words. There was always a little lowering or alteration of tone, a slight pause before—or after it, which set and marked it as bordered round with all the regards which by any phrase could be made known.

"Endecott"—she said very softly,—"do you know what you have been doing to-day?"

"Comprehensively speaking—I have been enjoying myself," he said with a bright smile at her.

"You have been giving me a lesson all the while, that I felt through and through."

"Through and through?" he repeated. "Come round here, little bird—you need not perch on the back of my chair. What are you singing about?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.