

# MAY AGNES FLEMING

THE ACTRESS' DAUGHTER:  
A NOVEL

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### CHAPTER I

### CHRISTMAS EVE

"Heap on more wood! the wind is chill;  
But let it whistle as it will,  
We'll keep our Christmas merry still." – Scott.

"Lor! Lor! what a night it is any way. Since I was first born, and that's thirty-five – no, forty-five years come next June, I never heern sich win' as that there, fit to tear the roof off! Well, this is Christmas Eve, and we ginerally do hev a spell o' weather 'bout this time. Here you Fly! Fly! you little black imp you! if you don't stop that falling asleep over the fire, and stir your lazy stumps, I'll tie you up and give you such a switchin' as you never had in all your born days. Ar-r-r-r! there I vow to Sam if that derved old tabby cat hain't got her nose stuck into the apple sass! Scat! you hussy! Fly-y-y! you ugly little black ace-o'-spades! *will* you wake up afore I twist your neck for you?"

And the speaker of this spirited address – a tall, thin, pasteboard female, as erect as a ramrod and as flat as a shingle, with a hard, uncompromising face, and a hawk-like gray eye, caught hold of the drowsy little darkey nodding in the chimney-corner, and shook her as if she had been a flourishing little fruit tree in harvest time.

"P-please, Miss Jerry, 'scuse me – I didn't go for to do it," stammered Fly, with a very wide-awake and startled face. "I wasn't asleep, old Mist –"

"Oh! you wasn't asleep, old Mist – wasn't you," sneered Miss Jerusha Glory Ann Skamp, the sonorous and high-sounding title claimed by the antiquated maiden lady as her rightful property; "you wasn't asleep wasn't you? Oh, no! in course you wasn't! *You* never sleep at all, do you? Betsey Periwinkle never runs off with the meat, and the cold vittals, or drinks the milk, or pokes her nose into the apple sass, or punkin slap-jack, while you're a snoozin' in the corner, does she? Ain't you 'shamed o' yourself, you nasty little black image, to stand up there and talk to one as has been a mother to you year in and year out, like that? Ar Lor'! there ain't nothin' but ungratytood in this 'ere world. Betsey Periwinkle, you ugly brute! I see you a lookin' at the apple sass, but just let me ketch you at it agin, that's all! Oh, my stars and thingumbobs! the way I'm afflicted with that lazy little nigger and that thievin' cat, and me a poor lone woman too! If it ain't enough to make a body go and do something to themselves I should admire to know what is. Here, you Fly! jump up and fry the pancakes for supper, and put the tea to draw, and set that johnny-cake in the oven, and then set the table, and don't be lazin' around like a singed cat all the time."

And having delivered herself of these commands all in a breath, with the air of a Napoleon in petticoats, Miss Jerusha marched, with the tramp of a grenadier, out of the kitchen into the "best room," drew several yards of stocking from an apparently bottomless pocket, deposited herself gingerly in the embraces of a cushioned rocking-chair, the only sort of embrace Miss Jerusha had any faith in, and began knitting away as if the fate of nations depended on it.

And while she sits there, straight, rigid, and erect as a church steeple, let me describe her and the house itself more minutely.

A New England "best room!" Who does not know what it looks like? The shining, yellow-painted floor, whereon no sacrilegious speck of dust ever rests; the six stiff-backed, cane-seated

chairs, standing around like grim sentinels on duty, in the exact position to an inch wherein they have stood ever since they were chairs; the huge black chest of drawers that looms up dark and ominous between the two front windows, those windows themselves glittering, shining, flashing, perfect jewels of cleanliness, protected from flies and other "noxious insects" by stiff, rustling green paper blinds; the table opposite the fireplace, whereon lies, in solemn, solitary grandeur, a large family Bible, Fox's Book of Martyrs, the Pilgrim's Progress, and Robinson Crusoe.

Miss Jerusha, being frightfully sensible, as ladies of a certain age always are, looked upon all works of fiction with a steady contempt too intense for words; and therefore Robinson Crusoe had remained as unmolested on the table as he had in his sea-girt island from the day a deluded friend had presented it to her until the present hour. In fact, Miss Jerusha Skamp did not affect literature of any kind much, and looked upon reading as a downright waste of time and patience. On Sundays, it is true, she considered it a religious duty to spell through a chapter in the Bible, beginning at the first of Genesis, and marching right through, in spite of all obstacles, to the end of Revelations – a feat she had once performed in her life, and was now half way through again. The hard words and proper names in the Old Testament were a serious trial to Miss Jerusha, and, combined with the laziness of her little negro maid Fly, and the dishonest propensities of her cat Periwinkle, were the chief troubles and tribulations of her life. Miss Jerusha's opinion was that it would have been just as easy for the children of Israel to have been born John Smith or Peter Jones as Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, and a *great* deal easier for posterity. Next to the Bible, Fox's "Book of Martyrs" was a work wherein Miss Jerusha's soul delighted, and wonderful was her appreciation and approval of the ghastly pictures which embellished that saintly volume. "The Pilgrim's Progress" she passed over with silent contempt as a book "nobody could see the pint of."

Besides the best room, Miss Jerusha's cottage contained a kitchen about the size of a well grown bandbox, and overhead there were two sleeping apartments, one occupied by that ancient vestal herself, and the other used as a store-room and lumber-room generally.

Fly and Betsey Periwinkle sought their repose and shakedown before the kitchen fire, being enjoined each night before she left them by Miss Jerusha to "keep an eye on the house and things;" but as Fly generally snored from the moment the last flutter of Miss Jerusha's dress disappeared until a sound shaking from that lady awoke her next morning, and Betsey Periwinkle, after indulging in a series of short naps, amused herself with reconnoitering the premises and feloniously purloining everything she could lay her paws on that seemed to be good and eatable, it is to be supposed the admonitions were not very rigidly attended to. There was not much danger of robbers, however, for the cottage was situated nearly two miles from any other habitation, on the very outskirts of the flourishing township of Burnfield, a spot lonely and isolated enough to suit even the hermit-like taste of Miss Jerusha.

The back windows of the cottage commanded a view of the sea, spreading away and away until lost in the horizon beyond. From the front was seen the forest path lonely and silent, with the dark pine woods bounding the vision and extending away for miles. In the rear of the house was a small garden, filled in summer with vegetables of all sorts, and the product of this garden formed the principal source of Miss Jerusha's income. The old maid was not rich by any means, but with the vegetables and poultry she raised herself, the stockings she knit, the cloth she wove, the wool she dyed, the candy she made and sold to the Burnfield grocers, and the sewing she "took in" she managed to live comfortably enough and "lay up something," as she said herself, "for a rainy day" – a figure of speech which was popularly supposed to refer to times of adversity and old age.

A strong-minded, clear-headed, sharp-tongued, wide-awake, uncompromising specimen of femaledom "away down east" was Miss Jerusha. Never since the time she had first donned pantalettes, and had "swopped" her rag doll for Mary Ann Brown's china mug, could that respectable individual, the oldest inhabitant, recollect any occasion wherein Miss Jerusha had not got the best of the bargain, whatever that bargain might be. Though never remarkable at any time for her personal beauty, yet

tradition averred that her thriftiness and smartness had on one or two occasions so far captivated certain Jonathans of her district, that they had gallantly tendered their heart, hand and brand new swallow-tails. But looking upon mankind as an inferior race of animals, made more for ornament than use, Miss Jerusha had contemptuously refused them, and had marched on with grim determination through the vale of years in her single blessedness up to her present mature age of five-and-forty.

The personal appearance of the lady could hardly be called prepossessing at first sight, or at second sight either, for that matter. Unusually tall, and unusually thin, Miss Jerusha looked not unlike a female hop-pole, and her figure was not to say improved by her dress, which never could be persuaded to approach her ankles, and was so narrow that a long step seemed rather a hazardous experiment. Her hair, which was of a neutral tint between red and orange, a vague hue commonly known as "carrotty," was disfigured by no cap or other sort of headgear, but tethered into a tight knot behind, and then forcibly secured. Her face looked not unlike that of a yellow parchment image as she there sat knitting in the red firelight, rocking herself back and forward in a rheumatic old chair that kept up a horrible crechy-crawchy as she squeaked back and forth.

The night was Christmas Eve, and unusually wild and stormy, even for that season. The wind blew in terrible gusts, shrieking wildly through the bare arms of the pines, drifting the snow into great hills, and driving the piercing sleet clamorously against the windows. Miss Jerusha drew closer to the fire, with a shiver, and paused for a moment to listen to the wild winter storm.

"My gracious! what a blast o' win' that there was. Ef the old Satin ain't been let loose to-night my name's not Jerusha Skamp. Go out and bring in some more wood, Fly, and don't let Betsey Periwinkle eat the tea things while you're gone. My-y-y conscience! how it blows – getting worse and worse every minute too. If there's any ships on the river to-night the first land they make will be the bottom, or I'm no judge. And I oughter be, I *think*," said Miss Jerusha, administering a kick to Betsey Periwinkle, as that amiable quadruped began some friendly advances toward her ball of stocking yarn, "seein' I've lived here since I was born, and that's forty-five years come next June. I should not wonder now if some shiftless, good-for-nothing vagabones was to 'low themselves for to get ketched in the storm and come to me to let 'em in and keep 'em all night. Well, Miss Jerusha, don't you think you see yourself a-doing of it though! People seems to think I was made specially by Providence to 'tend onto 'em and make yarb tea for them to swaller as is sick, and look arter them as is well, whenever they get ketched in a storm, or a nightmare, or anything. Humph! I guess nobody never seen any small sand, commonly called mite stones, in *my* eyes, and never will if I can help it. What on airth keeps that there little black viper now, I wonder. *You, Fly!*"

"Yes, old Mist, here I is," answered Fly, coming blustering in like a sable goddess of the wind, loaded down with wood. "An' oh, Miss Jerry, all de ghosts as eber was is ober in dat ar inferally ole house 'long the road."

"Ghosts! ugh!" said Miss Jerusha, with a contemptuous snarl, for the worthy spinster despised "spirits from the vasty deep" as profoundly as she did mankind. "Don't make a greater fool o' yourself, you misfortunate little nat'ral you, than the Lord himself made you. Put some wood on the fire, and be off and hurry up supper."

"Miss Jerry, I 'clear I seed it own bressed self," protested Fly, with horror-stricken eyes. "I jes *did*, as plain as I see you now, an' if as how you doesn't believe me, Miss Jerry, go and look for yourself."

"Lord bless the child! what is she talking about?" said Miss Jerusha, turning around so sharply that little Fly jumped back in alarm.

"Ghosts, Miss Jerry," whimpered the poor little darkey.

"Ghosts! Fly, look here! You want me to switch you within an inch o' your life," said Miss Jerusha, laying down her knitting and compressing her lips.

"Miss Jerry, I can't help it; I jes can't. Ef you're to kill me, I *did* see 'em, too, and you can see 'em yerself ef you'll only look out ob de winder," sobbed Fly, digging her knuckles into her eyes.

Miss Jerusha, with sternly shut-up lips, glared upon the unhappy little negress for a moment in ominous silence, and then getting up, went to the window and looked out.

But the window was thickly covered with frost, and nothing was to be seen from it.

"Ef you'd only come to de door, Miss Jerry," wept Fly, taking her knuckles out of one eye, where they had been firmly imbedded.

With the tramp of an iron-shod dragon, Miss Jerusha walked to the kitchen door, opened it, and looked out.

A blinding drift of snow, a piercing blast of wind, a cutting shower of sleet, met her in the face, and for one moment forced her back.

Only for a moment, for Miss Jerusha was not one to yield to trifles, and then, shading her eyes with her hands, she strove to pierce the darkness made white by the falling snow. No ghost met her gaze, however, but something that startled her quite as much – a long line of red light streaming along the lonesome, deserted road. There was no one living save herself all along the way for two miles, and no house of any kind save the ruins of an old cottage, long since deserted, and popularly supposed to be haunted.

"Great Jemima!" exclaimed Miss Jerusha, as, after her first start of astonishment, she came in, closed and locked the door, "who can be in the old house? Somebody's bin caught in the storm, and went in there for shelter. Well, lors! I hope they won't come bothering me. If they do, I'll pack them off agin with a flea in their ear. You, Fly! ain't them pancakes fried yet? Oh, you lazy, shif'less, idle, good-for-nothing little reptyle! Ef you don't ketch particler fits afore ever you sleep this night! And I 'clare to man the kittle ain't even biled, much less the tea adrawin'! *You, Fly!*"

Fly came rushing frantically out, and dodged Miss Jerusha's uplifted hand, which came down with a stunning force on the table. With a suppressed howl of pain, the enraged spinster shook her tingling fingers, and was about to pounce bodily upon her unlucky little servitor, when, in a lull of the storm, a knock at the door arrested the descending blow.

Both mistress and maid paused and held their breath to listen.

The wind and sleet came driving in fierce gusts against the house, shaking the doors and rattling the windows; then came a lull, and then the knock was repeated, this time more loudly.

"Oh, Miss Jerry, it's a ghos'! Oh, Miss Jerry, it's a ghos'! an' 'deed a' 'deed I don't want for to go!" shrieked the terrified Fly, clinging wildly to Miss Jerusha's dress.

With a vigorous shake the spinster shook off the clinging hands of poor little Fly, and laid her sprawling on the floor. Then approaching the door, she called, loudly and threateningly:

"Who's there?"

Another knock, but no reply.

"Who's there?" repeated Miss Jerusha, sharply.

"It's only *me*– please let me in," answered a faint voice.

To Miss Jerusha it sounded like the voice of a child, but still suspicious of her visitor, she only called:

"What do you want?"

"Oh, please open the door – I'm *so* cold!" was the answer, in a faint, shivering voice that was drowned in another shriek of the storm.

Miss Jerusha was no coward; so, first arming herself with a pair of tongs, having some vague idea she might find them useful, she pulled open the door, admitting a wild drift of wind, and snow, and sleet, and, blown in with it, the small, slight figure of a child – no one else.

Miss Jerusha closed the door, folded her arms, and looked at her unexpected visitor. Little Fly, too, so far recovered from her terror as to lift her woolly head and favor the new-comer with an open mouth and eyes astare.

It was a boy of some thirteen or fourteen years of age, wretchedly clad, but so white with the drifting snow that it was impossible to tell what he wore. His face was thin, pinched, and purple with the cold, his fingers red and benumbed, his teeth chattering either with fear or cold.

As Miss Jerusha continued to stare at him in severest silence, he lifted a pair of large, dark, melancholy eyes wistfully, pleadingly, to her hard, grim face.

"Well," said the spinster, at last, drawing a deep breath, and surveying him from head to foot – "well, young man, what do *you* want, if a body may ask?"

"Please ma'am, I want you to come and see mother – she's sick," said the child, dropping his eyes under the stern gaze bent upon him.

"Oh, you do? I hain't the least doubt of it!" said Miss Jerusha, sarcastically. "Should hev bin 'sprised if you *hadn't*. I was jest a sayin' I 'spected to see somebody comin' for me to see their mother or something. Nobody could die, of course, unless I trudged through the snow and storm to see 'em off. Of course, it wouldn't do to let a particerlerly stormy night come without bringing *me* out through it, giving me the rheumatiz in all my bones and a misery in the rest o' my limbs. Oh, no, in course it wouldn't. And who may your mother happen to be, young man?" concluded Miss Jerusha, changing with startling abruptness from the intensely ironical to the most searching severity.

"Why, she's *mother*," said the boy, simply, lifting his dark, earnest eyes again to that set, rigid face; "she is in that old house over there, and she – is going to die."

His lip quivered, his eyes filled and saddened, and he drew a long, shivering breath, and swallowed very fast to keep back his tears. Brave little heart! hiding his own grief lest it might offend that sour-looking gorgon and keep her from visiting "mother."

Miss Jerusha's face did not relax a muscle as she kept her steely eyes fixed unwinkingly on that sad, downcast young face. It was a handsome face, too, in spite of its pinched, famished look; and Miss Jerusha, to use her own expression, "couldn't abide" handsome people.

"And what brings your mother to that old house that ain't fit for a well-brought-up dog to die in, let alone, a 'sponsible member o' society?" asked Miss Jerusha, sharply.

"Please, ma'am, we hadn't any place else to go."

"Oh, you hadn't! I *thought* all along that was the sort of folks you was!" sneered the old lady; "there allers is tramps about, dropping down and dying in the most unheard-of places. There, be off with you now! I make a pint o' never encouraging beggars or shif'less char-*ak*-ters. I hain't got nothin' for your mother, and I ain't a public nuss, though people seems for to think I'm paid by the corporation for seein' sick folks out of the world. There! go!"

"Oh! *please* come and see mother! indeed, *indeed* we ain't beggars, but mother was so tired and sick she could not go any farther, and now she is dying there all alone with only sis. Oh, *please* do come," and the childish voice grew sharp and wild in its pleading agony.

The heart beating within Miss Jerusha's vestal corset was touched for a moment, and then arose thoughts of vagrants, impostors, and "shif'less" characters generally, and the heart was stilled again; the voice that answered his pleading cry was high and angry.

"I won't, you little limb! Be off! It's my opinion your mother ain't no better than she ought to be, or she wouldn't come a dying round promiscuously in such a way. There! March!"

With an angry jerk, the door was pulled open, and the long, lean finger of the spinster pointed out.

Without a word he turned to go, but as he passed from the inhospitable threshold the large dark, solemn eyes were lifted to hers with a long look of unutterable reproach; then the door was closed after him with a sharp bang, and securely bolted.

"Shif'less vagabones," muttered Miss Jerusha; "ought to be whipped as long as they can stand! Well, he's gone, and he didn't get much out of me anyway."

Yes, Miss Jerusha, he has gone, but when will the haunting memory of that last look of unspeakable reproach go too? It rose like a remorseful ghost before her as she stood moodily gazing on

the red spot that glowed like an eye of flame on the top of the hot little kitchen stove – that furnished sorrowful childish face – those dark, sad, pitiful eyes – that silent reproach, far keener than any words.

Miss Jerusha strove to still the rebellious voice of conscience and persuade herself she had done exactly right, but never in all her life had she felt so dissatisfied with her own conduct before. As usual, when people are irritated with themselves, she felt doubly irritated with everybody else; so, by way of relieving her mind, she boxed Fly's ears, and kicked Betsey Periwinkle, who came purring affectionately around her, to the other end of the room. And then, with her temper no way sweetened by those little marks of endearment, she tramped back to the best room, and dropped sullenly into a comfortable seat by the fire.

But owing to some cause or another, the seat was comfortable no longer. Miss Jerusha turned and twisted, and jerked herself round into every possible position, and "pooh'd" and "pshaw'd," and listened to Fly, who, out in the kitchen, had lifted up her voice and wept, and ordered her fiercely to bring in tea and hold her tongue. And poor little ill-used Fly brought it in, dropping tears into the sugar-bowl, and cream-jug, and "apple sass," and snuffling in great mental and bodily distress. And then Miss Jerusha sat down to supper, and great and mighty was the eating thereof; but still the canker within grew sorer and sorer, and would not be forgotten. Do what she would, turn which way she might, that sorrowful, childish face would rise before her like a waking nightmare. Conscience, that "still, small voice," would persist in making itself heard, until at last Miss Jerusha turned ferociously round and told conscience to mind his own business, that "she wasn't going to be fooled by no baby-faced little vagabones." And then, resuming her work, she sat down with grim determination, and knit and knit, and still the steam within got up to a high pressure, until Miss Jerusha got into a state of mind, between remorse and conscience and the heat of the fire, threatening spontaneous combustion.

Woe to the man, woman, or child who would have presumed to cross Miss Jerusha in her present mood! Safer would it have been to

"Beard the lion in his den,  
The Douglas in his hall,"

than the young tornado pent up within the hermetically sealed lips of Miss Jerusha Glory Ann Skamp at that moment.

But all would not do. Louder and louder that clamorous voice arose, until the aged spinster bounded up in a rage, flung her knitting across the room, and, striding across to the hall, returned with an immense gray woolen mantle, a thick black silk quilted hood, a red woolen comforter, and a pair of men's strong calf-skin boots. Flinging herself into a seat, Miss Jerusha, with two or three savage pulls, jerked these on, and having by this means got rid of some of the superfluous steam, burst out into the following complimentary strain to herself:

"Jerusha Glory Ann Skamp, it's my opinion you're a nat'ral born fool, and nothin' shorter! Ain't you ashamed of yourself in your 'spectable old age o' life to go trampin' and vanderblowsin' through the streets at sich onchristian hours of the night to look arter wagrets as ought for to look arter theirselves? I'm 'shamed of you, Jerusha Skamp, and you ought to be 'shamed o' *yourself*, going on with sich reg'lar downright, ondecient conduct. Don't tell me bout that there little fellar's looks! He's an impostor like the rest, and has done you brown beautifully, Miss Jerusha, as you'll soon find out. 'A fool o' forty 'll never be wise!' To think that Jerusha Skamp should be took in by a boy's looks at your age o' life! His looks! fudge! stuff! nonsense! You're nothing but a old simpleton – that there's what you are, Miss Jerusha! Here you, Fly! you derved little black monkey you!"

Thus pathetically adjured, Fly, in a very limp state of mind and body, caused probably by the showers of tears so lately shed, appeared in the door-way, her eyes full of tears and her mouth full of corn-cake.

"Here, you Fly, I'm going out, and you and Betsey Periwinkle has got for to sit up for me. Give Betsey her supper, and see that you don't fall asleep and set the house afire."

"Yes'm," said Fly, in a nearly inaudible voice, as she returned to her supper.

Then Miss Jerusha, putting a small flask of currant wine in her pocket, wrapped her thick, warm mantle around her, and her hood closely over her face, and resolutely stepped out into the wild, angry storm.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ACTRESS – LITTLE GEORGIA

"Death is the crown of life."

"She was a strange and willful sprite  
As ever startled human sight."

The road to the old house was as familiar to Miss Jerusha as a road could well be to any one, yet she found it extremely difficult to make her way to it to-night. The piercing sleet dashed into her very eyes, blinding her, as she floundered on, and the raw, cutting wind penetrated even the warm folds of her thick woolen mantle. Now and then she would have to stop and catch hold of a tree, to brace her body against the fierce, cutting blasts, and then, with bent head and closed eyes, plunge on through the huge snow-heaps and thick drifts.

She had not fully realized the violence of the storm until now, and she thought, with a sharp pang of remorse, of the slight, delicate child she had turned from her door to brave its pitiless fury.

"Poor little feller! *poor* little feller!" thought Miss Jerusha, piteously. "Lor', what a nasty old dragon I am, to be sure! Should admire to know where I'll go to, if I keep on like this. Yar-r! you thought you did it, didn't you? Just see what it is to be mistaken."

This last apostrophe was addressed to a sudden blast of wind that nearly upset her; but, by grasping the trunk of a tree, she saved herself, and now, with a contemptuous snarl at its foiled power, she plunged and sank, and rose and floundered on through the wild December storm, until she approached the old ruined cottage, from the window of which streamed the light.

The window was still sound, and Miss Jerusha, cautiously approaching it, began prudently to reconnoiter before going any farther.

Desolate indeed was the scene that met her eye. The room was totally without furniture, the plastering had in many places fallen off and lay in drifts all along the floor. A great heap of brush was piled up in the chimney-corner, and close by it crouched a small, dark figure feeding the slender flame that burned on the hearth. Opposite lay extended the thin, emaciated form of a woman, wrapped in a shawl, almost her only covering. As the firelight fell on her face, Miss Jerusha started to see how frightfully ghastly it was, with such hollow cheeks, sunken eyes, and projecting bones. So absorbed was she in gazing on that skeleton face, that she did not observe the little figure crouching over the fire start up, gaze on her a moment, and then approach the window, until, suddenly turning round, she beheld a small, dark, elfish face, with wild, glittering eyes, gleaming through masses of uncombed elf locks, pressed close to the window, with its goblin gaze fixed full upon her.

Miss Jerusha was not nervous nor superstitious, but at the sudden vision of that face from elf-land she uttered a shriek that might have awakened the dead, and shrank back in dismay from the window.

While she still stood, horror-struck, the door opened, and a high, shrill voice called:

"Now, then, whoever you are, come in if you want to!"

It was the voice of a mortal child, and Miss Jerusha was re-assured. Thoroughly ashamed of herself, and provoked at having betrayed so much fear, she approached the open door, passed in, and it was closed after her.

"So I scared you, did I? Well, it serves you right, you know, for staring in people's windows," said the shrill little voice; and Miss Jerusha, looking down, saw the same small, thin, dark face, with its great, wild, glittering black eyes, long, tangled masses of coal-black hair, high, broad brow, and a slight lithe figure.

It was a strange, unique face for a child, full of slumbering power, pride, passion, strength, and invincible daring; but Miss Jerusha did not see this, and looking down only beheld an odd-looking, rather ugly child, of twelve or thirteen, or so, with what she regarded as an impudent, precocious gaze, disagreeable and unnatural in one so young.

"Little gal, don't be sassy," said Miss Jerusha, sharply: "you ought to hev more respect for your elders, and not stand there and give them such empidence. Pretty broughten you must hev got, I know – a sassy little limb."

The latter part of this address was delivered in a muttered soliloquy, as she pushed the hood back from her face and shook the snow off her cloak. The "little limb," totally unheeding the reprimand, still stood peering up in her face, scanning its iron lineaments with an amusing mixture of curiosity and impudence.

As Miss Jerusha again turned round and encountered the piercing stare of those great, dark, bright eyes fixed so unwinkingly on her face, she felt, for the first time in her life, perhaps, restless and uneasy under the infliction.

"My conscience! little gal, don't stare so! I 'clare to gracious I never see sich a child! I don't know what she looks like," said Miss Jerusha.

The latter sentence was not intended for the child's ears, but it reached those sharp little organs nevertheless, and, still keeping her needle-like gaze fixed on the wrinkled face of the spinster, she said:

"Well, if you don't, I know what *you* look like, anyway – I do!"

"And what do I look like?" said Miss Jerusha, in rising anger, having a presentiment something impudent was coming.

"Why just exactly like one of the witches in Macbeth."

Now, our worthy maiden lady had never heard of the "Noble Thane," but she had a pretty strong idea of what witches riding on broomsticks were like, and here this little black goblin girl had the audacity to compare her to one of them. For one awful moment Miss Jerusha glared upon the daring little sinner in impotent rage, while her fingers fairly ached to seize her and pound her within an inch of her life. Her face must have expressed her amiable desire, for the elf sprang back, and throwing herself into a stage attitude, uttered some words in a tragic voice, quite overpowering, coming from so small a body.

The noise awoke the sleeper near the fire. She turned restlessly, opened her eyes, and called:

"Georgia!"

"Here, mamma; here I am," said the elf, springing up and bending over her. "Do you want anything?"

"No, dear. I thought I heard you talking. Hasn't Warren come yet?"

"No, mamma."

"Then who were you talking to a moment ago? Is there any one here?"

"Yes, mamma, the funniest looking old woman – here, *you!*" said the elf, beckoning to Miss Jerusha.

Mechanically that lady obeyed the peremptory summons, too completely stunned and shocked by this unheard-of effrontery to fully realize for a moment that her ears had not deceived her.

She approached and bent over the sufferer. Two hollow eyes were raised to her face, and feeling herself in the awful presence of death, all Miss Jerusha's indignation faded away, and she said, in a softened voice:

"I am sorry to see you in this wretched place. Can I do anything for you?"

"Who are you?" said the woman, transfixing her with a gaze quite as uncompromising as her little daughter's had been.

"My name is Jerusha Skamp. I saw a light in this here cottage, and came over to see who was here. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing for me – I am dying," said the woman, in a husky, hollow voice. "Nothing for me; nothing for me."

"Oh, mamma! oh, mamma!" screamed the child, passionately. "Oh, not dying! Oh, mamma!"

"Oh, Georgia, hush!" said the woman, turning restlessly. "Don't shriek so, child; I cannot bear it."

But Georgia, who seemed to have no sort of self-control, or any other sort of control, still continued to scream her wild, passionate cry, "Oh, not dying! oh, mamma!" until Miss Jerusha, losing all patience, caught her arm in a vise-like grip, and, giving her a furious shake, said, in a deep, stern whisper:

"You little limb! Do you want to kill your mother? Hold your tongue, afore I shake the life out of you!"

The words had the effect of stilling the little tempest before her, who crouched into the corner and buried her face in her hands.

"Poor Georgia! poor little thing! what will become of her when I am gone?" said the sufferer, while a spasm of intense pain shot across her haggard face.

"The Lord will provide," said Miss Jerusha, rolling up the whites, or, more properly speaking, the yellows of her eyes. "Don't take on about that. Tell me how you came to be here! But first let me give you a drink. You look as if you needed something to keep life in you. Wait a minute."

Miss Jerusha's hawk-like eye went roving round the room until it alighted on a little tin cup. Seizing this, she filled it with the currant wine she had brought, and held it to the sick woman's lips.

Eagerly she drank, and then Miss Jerusha folded the shawl more closely around her, and, sitting down on the floor, drew her head upon her lap, and, with a touch that was almost tender, smoothed back the heavy locks of her dark hair.

"Now, then," she said, "tell me all about it."

"You are very kind," said the sick woman, looking up gratefully. "I feared I should die all alone here. I sent my little boy to the nearest house in search of help, but he has not yet returned."

"Ah! you're a widder, I suppose?" said Miss Jerusha, trying to keep down a pang of remorse and dread, as she thought of the child she had so cruelly turned out into the bitter storm.

"Yes, I have been a widow for the last seven years. My name is Alice Randall Darrell."

"And hain't you got no friends nor nothin', Mrs. Darrell, when you come to this old place, not fit for pigs, let alone human Christians?"

"No; no friends – not one friend in all this wide world," said the dying woman, in a tone so utterly despairing that Miss Jerusha's hand fell soothingly and pityingly on her forehead.

"Sho, now, sho! I want ter know," said Miss Jerusha, quite unconscious that she was making rhyme, a species of literature she had the profoundest contempt for. "That's *too* bad, 'clare if it ain't! Are they all dead?"

"I do not know – they are all dead to me."

"Why, what on airth hed you done to them?" said Miss Jerusha, in surprise.

"I married against my father's consent."

"Ah! that *was* bad; but then he needn't hev made a fuss. He didn't ask *your* consent when he got married, I s'pose. Didn't like the young man you kept company with, eh?"

"No; he hated him. My father was rich, and I ran off with a poor actor."

"A play-actor! Why, you must hev bin crazy!"

"Oh, I was – I was! I was a child, and did not know what I was doing. I thought my life with him would have been all light, and music, and glitter, and dazzle, such as I saw on the stage; but I soon found out the difference."

"Spect you did. Law, law! what fools there is in this 'ere world!" said Miss Jerusha, in a moralizing tone.

"My father disowned me." ("And sarved you right, too!" put in Miss Jerusha *sotto voce*.) "My family cast me off. I joined the company to which my husband belonged, and did the tragedy business with him; and so for eight years we wandered about from city to city, from town to town, always poor and needy, for Arthur drank and gambled, and as fast as we earned money it was spent."

"And *you're* a play-acter, too!" cried Miss Jerusha recoiling in horror.

Miss Jerusha, trained in the land of "steady habits," had, from her earliest infancy, been taught to look upon theaters as only a little less horribly wicked than the place unmentionable to ears polite, and upon all "play-actors" as the immediate children and agents of the father of evil himself. She had never until now had the misfortune to come in contact with one personally, having only heard of them as we hear of goblins, warlocks, demons, and other "children of night." What wonder, then, that at this sudden, awful revelation she started back and almost hurled the frail form from her in loathing and horror. But a fierce clutch was laid on her shoulder – she almost fancied for an instant it was Satan himself come for his child – until, looking up, she saw the fiercely blazing eyes and witch-like face of little Georgia gleaming upon it.

"You ugly, wicked old woman!" she passionately burst out with, "if you dare to hurt my mamma, I'll – I'll *kill* you!"

And so dark, and fierce, and elfish did she look at that moment, that Miss Jerusha fairly quailed before the small, unearthly looking sprite.

"I'm not a-going to tetch your ma. Get out o' this, and leave me go!" said Miss Jerusha, shaking off with some difficulty the human burr who clung to her with the tenacity of a crab, and glared upon her with her shining black eyes.

"Georgia, love, go and sit down. Oh, you wild, stormy, savage child, what *ever* will become of you when I am gone? Do, pray, excuse her," said the woman, faintly, lifting her eyes pleadingly to Miss Jerusha's angry face; "she has had no one to control her, or subdue her wild, willful temper, and has grown up a crazy, mad-headed, half-tamed thing. If you have children of your own, you will know how to make allowance for her."

"I have no children of my own, and I thank goodness that I haven't!" said Miss Jerusha, shortly; "a set of plagues, the whole of 'em! Ef that there little gal was mine, I'd spank her while I could stand, and see ef *that* wouldn't take some of the nonsense out of her."

The last words did not reach the invalid's ear, and the little tempest-in-a-teapot retreated again to her corner, scowling darkly on Miss Jerusha, whom she evidently suspected of some sinister designs on her mother, which it was her duty to frustrate.

"Is she a play-acter, too?" said Miss Jerusha, after a sullen pause.

"Who? Georgia? Oh, yes; she plays juvenile parts, and dances and sings, and was a great favorite with the public. She has a splendid voice, and dances beautifully, and whenever she appeared she used to receive thunders of applause. Georgia will make a star actress if she ever goes on the stage again," said the woman, with more animation than she had yet shown.

"And do you want your darter to grow up a wicked good-for-nothing hussy of a play-acter?" said Miss Jerusha, sternly. "Mrs. Darrell, you ought for to be ashamed of yourself. Ef she was mine, I would sooner see her starve decently first."

The dying woman turned away with a groan.

"She won't starve here, though," said Miss Jerusha, feeling called upon to administer a little consolation; "there's trustees and selectmen, and one thing and another to look arter poor folks and orphans. She'll be took care of. And now, how did it happen you came here?"

"I came with the company to which I belong, and we stopped at a town about fifty miles from here. Georgia, as you can see, has a dreadful temper – poor little fiery, passionate thing – and the manager of the theater, being an insolent, overbearing man, was always finding fault with her, and scolding about something, whereupon Georgia would fly into one of her fits of passion, and a dreadful scene would ensue. I strove to keep them apart as much as I could, but they often met, as a matter of

course, and never parted without a furious quarrel. He did not wish to part with her, for I – and it is with little vanity, alas! I say it – was his best actress, and Georgia's name in the bills never failed to draw a crowded house. I used to talk to Georgia, and implore her to restrain her fierce temper, and she would promise; but when next she would meet him, poor child, and listen to his insulting words, all would be forgotten, and Georgia would stamp and scold, and call him all manner of names, and sometimes go so far as to refuse appearing at all, and *that* last act of disobedience never failed to put him fairly beside himself with rage. I foresaw how it would end, but I could do nothing with her. Poor little thing! Nature cursed her with that fierce, passionate temper, and she could not help it."

"Humph!" muttered Miss Jerusha; "couldn't help it! That's all very fine; but I know one thing, ef *I* had anything to do with her, I'd take the fierceness out of her, or know for why – a ugly tempered, savage little limb!"

"One night," continued the sick woman, "Georgia had been dancing, and when she left the stage the whole house shook with the thunders of applause. They shouted and shouted for her to reappear, but I was sick that night, and Georgia was in a hurry to get home, and would not go. The manager ordered her in no very gentle tone to go back, and Georgia flatly and peremptorily refused. Then a dreadful scene ensued. He caught her by the arms, and dragged her to her feet, as if he would force her out, and when she resisted he struck her a blow that sent her reeling across the room.

"Aha! that was good for you, my lady!" said Miss Jerusha, with a grim chuckle, as she glanced at the little dancing girl.

"It was the first time any one had ever struck her," said Mrs. Darrell, in a sinking voice, "and a very fury seemed to seize her. A large black bottle lay on a shelf near, and with a perfect *shriek* of passion she seized it and hurled it with all her strength at his head."

"My gracious!" ejaculated the horrified Miss Jerusha.

"It struck him on the forehead, and laid it open with a frightful gash. He attempted to spring upon her, but some of the men interposed, and Georgia was forced off by the rest. Her brother Warren was there, and, almost terrified to death, he brought her home with him, and that very night we were told our services were no longer needed, and, what was more, Mr. B., the manager, refused to pay us what he owed us, and even threatened to begin an action against us for assault and battery, and I don't know what besides. I knew him to be an unprincipled, vindictive man, and the threat terrified me nearly to death, terrified me so much that, with my two children, I fled the next morning from the town where we were stopping, fled away with only one idea – that of escaping from his power. I had a little money remaining, but it was soon spent, and I was so weak and ill that but for my poor children I felt at times as if I could gladly have lain down and died.

"Coming from Burnfield to-night, we were overtaken by this storm, and must have perished had not Warren discovered this old hut. The exposure of this furious storm completed what sorrow and suffering had long ago begun, and I felt I was dying. It was terrible to think of leaving poor little Warren and Georgia all alone without one single friend in the world, and at last I sent Warren out to the nearest house in the hope that some hospitable person might come who would procure some sort of employment for them that would keep them at least from starving. *You* came, thank Heaven! but my poor Warren has not returned. Oh! I fear, I *fear* he has perished in this storm," cried the dying woman, wringing her pale fingers.

"Oh, I guess not," said Miss Jerusha, more startled than she chose to appear; "most likely he's gone some place else and stayed there to get warm; but you, *you*, what are we to do for you? It doesn't seem Christian like nor proper no ways to leave you to die here in this miserable old shed."

"Dear, kind friend, never mind me," said the invalid, gratefully; "my short span of life is nearly run, and oh! what does it matter whether for the few brief moments yet remaining where they are spent. But my children, my poor, poor children! Oh, madam, you have a kind heart, I know you have," – (Miss Jerusha gave a skeptical "humph!") – "do, *do*, for Heaven's sake, try if some charitable person will not take them and give them their food and clothing. Not so much for Warren do I fear, for he

is quiet and sensible, very wise indeed for his age; but for the wild, stormy Georgia. Oh, madam, do something for her, and my dying thanks will be yours!"

"Well, there, don't take on! I'll see what can be done," said Miss Jerusha, fidgeting, and glancing askance at the wild eyed, tempestuous little spirit, "and though you don't seem to mind it much, still it don't seem right nor decent for you to die here like I don't know what," (Miss Jerusha's favorite simile), "so I'll jest step over to Deacon Brown's and get him to look arter you, and maybe he will hev an eye to the children, too."

"But you will be exposed to the storm," feebly remonstrated the dying woman.

"Bah! who keers for the storm?" said Miss Jerusha, glancing out of the window with a look of grim defiance. "Besides, its clarin' off, and Deacon Brown's ain't more than two miles from here. There, keep up your sperrits, and I'll be back in an hour or two with the deacon."

So saying, Miss Jerusha, who once she considered it her *duty* to do anything, would have gone through fire and flood to do it, stepped resolutely out to brave once more the cold, wintry blast.

The storm had abated considerably, but it was still piercingly cold, and Miss Jerusha's fingers and toes tingled as she walked rapidly over the hard, frosty ground. It had ceased snowing, and a pale, watery moon, appearing at intervals from behind a cloud, cast a faint, sickly light over the way. The high, leafless trees sent long black, ominous shadows across the road, and Miss Jerusha cast apprehensive glances on either side as she walked.

Not the fear of ghosts, nor the fear of robbers troubled the stout-hearted spinster; but the dread of seeing a slight, boyish form, stark and frozen, across her path. In mingled dread and remorse, she thought of what she had done and only the hope of finding him in the old cottage on her return could dispel for an instant her haunting fear.

Deacon Brown's was reached at last, and great was the surprise of that orthodox pillar of the church at beholding his un-looked-for visitor. In very few words Miss Jerusha gave him to understand the object of her visit, and, rather ruefully, the good man rose to harness up his old gray mare and start with Miss Jerusha on this charitable errand.

A quick run over the hard, frozen ground brought them to the cottage, and, fastening his mare to a tree, the deacon followed Miss Jerusha into the old house.

And there a pitiful sight met his eyes. The fire had gone out, and the room was scarcely warmer than the freezing atmosphere without. Mother and child lay clasped in each other's arms, still and motionless. With a stifled ejaculation, Miss Jerusha approached and bent over them. The child was asleep, and the mother was *dead!*

## CHAPTER III

### A YOUNG TORNADO

"She is active, stirring, all fire;  
Cannot rest, cannot tire;  
To a stone she had given life."

It was a bright, breezy May morning, just cool enough to render a fire pleasant and a brisk walk delightful. The sunshine came streaming down through the green, spreading boughs of the odorous pine trees, gilding their glistening leaves, and tinting with hues of gold the sparkling windows of Miss Jerusha's little cottage.

It was yet early morning, and the sun had just arisen, yet Miss Jerusha, brisk, resolute, and energetic, marched through the house, "up stairs, and down stairs, and in my lady's chamber," sweeping, dusting, scouring, scrubbing and scolding, all in a breath: for, reader, this was Monday, and that good lady was just commencing her spring "house-cleaning."

And Miss Jerusha's house-cleaning was something which required to be seen to be appreciated. Not that there was the slightest necessity for that frantic and distracting process which all good housekeepers consider it a matter of conscience to make their household suffer once or twice a year, for never since Miss Jerusha had come to the years of discretion had a single speck of dirt been visible to the naked eye inside of those spotless walls. But it was with Miss Jerusha the eleventh commandment and the fortieth article of the Episcopal creed, to go through a vigorous and uncompromising scouring down and scrubbing up every spring and fall, to the great mental agony and bodily torture of the unhappy little handmaiden, Fly, and her venerable cat, Betsey Periwinkle. Since the middle of April Miss Jerusha had shown signs of the coming epidemic, which on this eventful morning broke out in full force.

Any stranger, on looking in at that usually immaculate cottage, might have fancied a hurricane had passed through it in the night, or that the chairs, and tables, and pots, and pans, being of a facetious disposition, had taken it into their heads to get on a spree the night before, and pitch themselves in all sorts of frantic attitudes through the house. For the principal rule in Miss Jerusha's "house-cleaning" was first, with a great deal of pains and trouble, to fling chairs, and stools, and pails, and brooms in a miscellaneous heap through each room, to disembowel closets whose contents for the last six months had been a sealed mystery to human eyes, to take down and violently tear asunder unoffending bedsteads, and with a stout stick inflict a severe and apparently unmerited castigation on harmless mattresses and feather beds. This done, Miss Jerusha, who had immense faith in the hot water system, commenced with a steaming tub of that liquid at the topmost rafter of the cottage, and never drew breath until every crevice and cranny down to the lowest plank on the cellar floor had undergone a severe application of first wetting and then drying.

Awful beyond measure was Miss Jerusha on these occasions – enough to strike terror into the heart of every shiftless mortal on this terrestrial globe, could he only have seen her. With her sleeves rolled up over her elbows, her mouth shut up, *screwed* up with grim determination of conquering or dying in the attempt, with an eye like a hawk for every invisible speck of dust, and the firm, determined tramp of the leader of a forlorn hope, Miss Jerusha marched through that blessed little cottage, a broom in one hand and a scrubbing-brush in the other, a sight to see, not to hear of.

And then, having brushed, and scrubbed, and scoured, and polished everything, from the "best room" down to the fur coat of Betsey Periwinkle, until it fairly shone, all that could offend the sight was poked back into the mysterious closets again, another revolution swept through every room,

returning things to their places, and the whole household was triumphantly restored to its former state of distressing cleanliness. And thus ended Miss Jerusha's house-cleaning.

"Them there three beds shill all hev to come down this morning," said Miss Jerusha, folding her arms, and regarding them grimly, "and every one of them blessed bedposts hev got to be scalded right out. You, Fly! is that there fire a-burning?"

"Yes, miss," answered Fly, who was tearing distractedly in and out after wood and water, and as nearly fulfilling the impossibility of being in two places at once as it was possible for a mere mortal to do.

"And is that biler of hot water a-bilin'?"

"Yes, miss."

"And did you tell Georgey to go down to Bunfield for some yaller soap?"

"Please, Miss Jerry, I couldn't find her."

"Couldn't find her, hey? What's the reason you couldn't find her?" said Miss Jerusha, in a high key.

"'Case she'd been and gone away some whars. Please, ole miss, dar ain't nebber no sayin' whar anybody can find dat ar young gal," replied Fly, beginning to whimper in anticipation of getting her ears boxed for not performing an impossibility.

"Gone away! arter being told to stay at home and help with the house-cleaning! Oh, the little shif'less villain. I 'clare ef I hadn't a good mind to give her the best switchin' ever she got next time I ketch holt of her. Told me this morning she wasn't going to be a dish-washing old maid like me! a sassy, impident little monster! Old, indeed! I vow to gracious only for she dodged I'd hev twisted her neck for her! Old! hump! a pretty thing to be called at my time o' life! Old, indeed! A nasty, ungrateful little imp!"

While she spoke, the outer gate was slammed violently to; a slight little figure ran swiftly up the walk, and burst like a whirlwind into the sacred precincts of the best room – a small, light, airy figure, dressed in black, with crimson cheeks, and dancing, sparkling, flashing black eyes, fairly blazing with life and health, and freedom, and high spirits – a swift, blinding, dark, bright vision, so quick and impetuous in every motion as to startle you – a "thing all life and light," a little tropical butterfly, with the hidden sting of a wasp, impressing the beholder with the idea of a barrel of gunpowder, a pop-gun, a firecracker, or anything else, very harmless and quiet-looking, but ready to explode and go off with a bang at any moment.

It was Georgia – our little Georgia; and how she came to be an inmate of Miss Jerusha's cottage it requires us to go back a little to tell.

On that very Christmas Eve, when with Deacon Drown she discovered the sleeping child and the ruined cottage, she was for a moment at a loss what to do. She knew the girl had fallen asleep, unconscious of the dread presence, and she had seen enough of her to be aware of the frantic and passionate scene that must ensue when she awoke and discovered her loss. She bent over her, and finding her sleeping heavily, she lifted her gently in her arms, and in a few whispered words desired the deacon not to remove the corpse, but to drive her home first with the orphan.

Wrapping the half-frozen child in her warm cloak, she had taken her seat, and was driven to the cottage without arousing her from her heavy slumber, and safely deposited her in Fly's little bed, to the great astonishment, not to say indignation, of that small, black individual, at finding her couch thus taken summary possession of.

It was late next morning when the little dancing girl awoke, and then she sprang up and gazed around her with an air of complete bewilderment. Her first glance fell on Miss Jerusha, who was bustling around, helping Fly to get breakfast, and the sight of that yellow, rigid frontispiece seemed to recall her to a realization of what had passed the preceding night.

She sprang up, shook back her thick, disordered black hair, and exclaimed:

"Who brought me here?"

"I did, honey," said Miss Jerusha, speaking as gently as *she* knew how, which is not saying much.

"Where is mamma?"

"Oh, she's – how did you sleep last night?" said Miss Jerusha, actually quailing inwardly in anticipation of the coming scene; for, with her strong nerves and plain, practical view of things in general, the good old lady had a masculine horror of scenes.

"Where is my mamma?" said the child, sharply, fixing her piercing black eyes on Miss Jerusha's face.

"Oh, she's – well, she ain't here."

"Where is she, then? You ugly old thing, what have you done to my mamma?"

"Ugly old thing! Oh, dear bless me! *there's* a way to speak to her elders!" said the deeply shocked Miss Jerusha.

"*Where's my mamma?*" exclaimed the child, with a fierce stamp of the foot.

"Little gal, look here! that ain't no way to talk to – "

"Where's my mamma?" fairly shrieked the little girl, as she sprang forward and clutched Miss Jerusha's arm so fiercely as to extort from her a cry of pain.

"Ah-a-a-a-a! Oh-h-h-h! you little crab-fish, if you ain't pinched my arm black and blue! Your mamma's dead, and it's a pity you ain't along with her," said Miss Jerusha, in her anger and pain, giving the girl a push that sent her reeling against the wall.

"Dead!"

The word fell like a blow on the child, stunning her into quiet. Her mamma dead! She could not realize – she could not comprehend it.

She stood as if frozen, her hand uplifted as it had been when she heard it, her lips apart, her eyes wide open and staring. Dead! She stood still, stunned, bewildered.

Miss Jerusha was absolutely terrified. She had expected tears, cries, passionate grief, but not this ominous stillness. That fixed, rigid, unnatural look chilled her blood. She went over and shook the child in her alarm.

"Little girl! Georgey! don't look so —*don't!* It ain't right, you know!"

She turned her eyes slowly to Miss Jerusha's face, her lips parted, and one word slowly dropped out:

"Mamma!"

"Honey, your ma's dead, and gone to heaven – I *hope*," said Miss Jerusha, who felt that common politeness required her to say so, although she had her doubts on the subject. "You mustn't take on about it, you – Oh, gracious! the child's gone stark, staring mad!"

Her words had broken the spell. Little Georgia realized it all at last. With a shriek, – a wild, terrific shriek, that Miss Jerusha never forgot – she threw up her arms and fell prostrate on the ground.

And there she lay and *shrieked*. She did not faint. Miss Jerusha, with her hands clasped over her bruised and wounded ear-drums, wished from the bottom of her heart she *would*; but Georgia was of too sanguine a temperament to faint. Shriek after shriek, sharp, prolonged, and shrill, broke from her lips as she lay on her face on the floor, her hands clasped over her head.

Miss Jerusha and Fly, nearly frantic with the ear-splitting torture, strove to raise her up, but the little fury seemed endowed with supernatural strength, and screamed and struggled, and *bit* at them like a mad thing, until they were glad enough to go off and leave her alone. And there she lay and screamed for a full hour, until even *her* lungs of brass gave way, and shrieks absolutely refused to come.

Then a new spirit seemed to enter the child. She leaped to her feet as if those members were furnished with steel springs, and made for the door. Fortunately, Miss Jerusha had locked it, somehow anticipating some such movement, and in that quarter she was foiled. She seized the lock and shook the door furiously, stamping with impotent passion at finding it resist all her efforts.

"Open the door!" she screamed, with a stamp, turning upon Miss Jerusha a pair of eyes that glowed like those of a young tigress.

The old lady actually shrank under the burning light of that dark, passionate glance, but composedly sat still and knit away.

"Open the door!" shrieked the mad child, shaking it so fiercely that Miss Jerusha fairly expected to see the lock come off before her eyes.

But the lock resisted her efforts. Delirious with her frantic rage, the wild girl dashed her head against it with a shriek of foiled passion – dashed it against it again and again, until it was all cut and bleeding; and then she flew at the horrified Miss Jerusha like a very fury, sinking her long nails in her face and tearing off the skin, like a maniac as she was.

That at last aroused all Miss Jerusha's wiry strength, and, grasping the child's wrists in a vise-like grip, she held her fast while she struggled to free herself in vain, for the fictitious strength given her by her storm of passion had exhausted itself by its very violence, and every effort now to free herself grew fainter and fainter, until at last she swayed to and fro, tottered, and would have fallen had not Miss Jerusha held her fast.

Lifting her in her arms, Miss Jerusha bore her upstairs and laid her in her own bed. And then over-charged nature gave way, and, burying her face in the pillow, Georgia burst into a passionate flood of tears, sobbing convulsively. Long she wept, until the fountains of her tears were dry, and then, worn out by her own violence, she fell into a dreamless sleep.

"Well, my sakes alive!" said Miss Jerusha, drawing a long breath and getting up, "of all the children ever I seen I never saw any like that there little limb. 'Clare to gracious! there's something bad inside that young gal – that's my opinion. Sich eyes, like blazin' coals of fire! My conscience! I really don't feel safe with her in the house."

But Georgia awoke calm and utterly exhausted, and thus passed away the first violence of her grief, which like a blaze of straw, burned up fiercely for a moment and then went out in black ashes. Still grave and unsmiling the little girl went about, with no life in her face save what burned in her great wild eyes.

Her mother was buried, and so Miss Jerusha with some inward fear and trembling ventured to tell her at last; but the child heard it quietly enough. She need not have feared, for it was morally and physically impossible for the little girl to ever get up another passion-gust like the last.

One source of secret and serious anxiety to Miss Jerusha was the fate of the little boy, Warren Darrell. Since that night when she had turned him from the door, nothing had ever been heard of him; no one had seen him, no traces of him could be found, and one and all came to the conclusion that he must have perished in the storm that night. Miss Jerusha too, had to adopt the same belief at last, and in that moment she felt as though she had been guilty of a murder. No one knew he had come to the cottage, and she had her own reason for keeping it a secret, and for politely informing Fly she would twist her neck for her if she ever mentioned it; and in dread of that disagreeable operation, Fly consented to hold her tongue.

Feeling as if she ought to do something to atone for the guilt of which her conscience, so often referred to by herself, accused her, Miss Jerusha resolved, by way of the severest penance she could think of, to adopt Georgia. Several of the "selectmen" offered to take the child and send her to the workhouse, but Miss Jerusha curtly refused in terms much shorter than sweet, and snappishly requested them to go and mind their own affairs and she would mind little Georgia Darrell.

And so, from that day the little dancer became an inmate of the lonely sea-side cot. For the first few weeks she was preternaturally grave and still – "in the dumps" Miss Jerusha called it; then this passed away – like all the grief of childhood, ever light and short-lived – and *then* Miss Jerusha began to realize the trouble and tribulations in store for her, and the life of worry and vexation of spirit the restless elf would lead her.

In the first place, Miss Georgia emphatically and decidedly "put her foot down," and gave her *guardianess* (if such a word is admissible) to understand, in the plainest possible English, that she had not the remotest or faintest idea of doing one single hand's turn of work.

"I never had to work," said the young lady, drawing herself up, "and I ain't a-going to begin now for anybody. I don't believe in work at all, and I don't think it proper, no way."

In vain Miss Jerusha expostulated; her little ladyship heard her with the most provoking indifference. Then the old lady began to scold, whereupon Georgia flew into one of her "tantrums," as Miss Jerusha called them, and, springing to her feet, exclaimed:

"I *won't*, then, not if I die for it! I've always done just whatever I liked, and I'm going to keep on doing it – I just *am*! And I ain't going to be an old pot-wiper for anybody – I just *ain't*, old taffy candy!"

And then the sprite bounced out, banging the door after her until the house shook, leaving Miss Jerusha to stand transfixed with horror and indignation at this last "most unkindest cut of all," which referred to the candy Miss Jerusha was in the habit of making and selling in Burnfield.

And thus the wild, fearless child kept the old lady in a constant series of tremors and palpitations by the dangers she ran into headlong. Not a tree in the forest she would not climb like a squirrel, and often the dry frozen branches breaking with her, she would find it impossible to get down again, and have to remain there until Miss Jerusha would get a ladder and take her down. And on these occasions, while the old lady scolded and ranted down below, the young lady up in her lofty perch would be in convulsions of laughter at her look of terror and dismay. Not a rock on the beach, slippery and icy as they were, she had not clambered innumerable times, to the manifest danger of breaking her neck.

It was well for her she could climb and cling to them like a cat, or she would most assuredly have been killed; as it was, she tumbled off two or three times, thereby raising more bumps on her head than Nature ever placed there. Then she made a point of visiting Burnfield every day, and making herself acquainted generally with the inhabitants of that little "one-horse town," astonishing the natives to such a degree by the facility with which she stood on her head, or made a hoop of herself by catching her feet in her hands and rolling over and over, that some of them had serious doubts whether she was real, or only an optical delusion. And then her dancing! The first time Miss Jerusha saw her she came nearer fainting than she had ever done before in her life.

"Oh, my gracious!" said Miss Jerusha, in tones of horror, when afterward relating the occurrence, "I never see sich onchristian actions before in all my born days. There she was a-flinging of her legs about as if they belonged to somebody else, and a-twistin' of her arms about over her head, and a-jigging back and forward, and a-standin' onto one blessed toe and spinnin' round like a top, with the other leg a stickin' straight out like a toastin'-fork. I 'clare it gave me sich a turn as I hain't got over yit, and never expects to. Oh, my conscience! It was raily orful to look at the onnatural shapes that there little limb could twist herself into. And to think of her, when she got done, a-kneelin' down on one knee as if she was sayin' of her prayers, as she ought for to do, and then take and blow me up for not applaudin', as she called it. A sassy little wiper!"

Georgia's daily visits to Burnfield were a serious annoyance to Miss Jerusha; for there were some who delighted in her wild antics, just as they would in the mischievous pranks of a monkey, encouraged her in her willfulness, and exhorted her to defy the "Old Dragon," as Miss Jerusha was incorrectly styled. And such a hold did these counsels take on the mind of the young girl, that she really began to look upon Miss Jerusha in the light of a domestic tyrant – a sort of female Bluebeard, whom it would not only be right and just to defy and put down, but morally wrong *not* to do it. But though this was Georgia's inward belief, yet, to her credit be it spoken, a sort of chivalrous feeling led her always to defend Miss Jerusha on these occasions; and if any one went too far in sneering at her, Georgia's little brown fist was doubled up, and the offender, unless warned by some prudent friend to "look out for squalls," stood in considerable danger.

Then, too, the chief delight of the Burnfieldians was in watching her dance; and Georgia, nothing loth, would mount an extempore platform, and whirl, and pirouette, and flash hither and

thither, amid thunders of applause from the astonished and delighted audience. Her singing, too – for Georgia had really a beautiful voice, and knew every song that ever was heard of, from Casta Diva to Jim Crow – was a source of never-failing delight to the townfolks, who were troubled with very few amusements in winter; and Georgia was never really in her element save when dancing, or singing, or showing off before an audience.

And so the little explosive grenade became a well known character in Burnfield, and Miss Jerusha's injunctions to stay from it went the way of all good advice – that is, in one ear and out of the other. No sort of weather could keep the sprite in the house. The fiercer the wind blew, Georgia's high spirit only rose the higher; the keener the cold, the more piercing the blast, it only flashed a deeper crimson to her glowing cheeks and lips, and kindled a clearer light in her bright black eyes, and she bounded like a young antelope over the frozen ground, shouting with irrepressible life. Out amid the wildest winter storms you might see that small dark figure flying along with streaming hair, bending and dipping to the shrieking blast that could have whirled her light form away like a feather, flying over the icy ground that her feet hardly seemed to touch.

Georgia, wild, fervid child, vowed she *loved* the storms; and on tempestuous nights, when the wind howled, and raved, and shook the cottage, and roared through the pines, she would clap her hands in glee, and run down through it all toward the high rocks near the shore, and bend over them to feel the salt spray from the white-crested waves dash in her face. Then, coming back, she would scandalize Miss Jerusha, and terrify Fly nearly into fits, by protesting that the white caps of the waves were the bleached faces of drowned men holding a revel with the demons of the storm, and that whenever *she* died, she was determined to be buried in the sand, for that no grave or coffin could ever hold her, and she knew she would have splendid times with the mermaids, and mermen, and old Father Neptune, and Mrs. Amphitrite, and the rest of them, in their coral grottoes down below.

Now, Miss Jerusha was by no means strait-laced in spiritual matters herself, but such an ungodly belief as this would shock even her, and, with a deeply horrified look, she would lay down her knitting and begin:

"Oh, my stars and garters! sich talk! Don't you know, you wicked child, that there ain't no sich place as that under the sun? There's nothing but mud, and fish-bones, and nasty sharks like what swallered Joner down there. No, you misfortunate little limb, folks allers goes to heaven or t'other place when they die, and it's my belief you'll take a trip downward, and sarve you right, too, you wicked little heathen you!"

"See here, Miss Jerusha," said Georgia, curiously, "Emily Murray says there's another place – sort of half-way house, you know, with a hard name; let's see – pug – pug – no, *purgatory*, that's it – where people that ain't been horrid bad nor yet horrid good goes to, and after being scorched for awhile to take the badness out of them, they go up to heaven and settle down there for good. Is that so, Miss Jerusha?"

"There!" said Miss Jerusha, dropping her knitting in consternation, "I allers said no good would come of her going to Burnfield and taking up with unbelievers and other wagrants. Oh, you wicked, drefful little gal! *No*; there ain't no sich place; in course there ain't. If you had read that pretty chapter I gave you in the Bible last Sunday instead of tying Betsey Perwinkle's tail to her hind leg and nearly setting of her crazy, you wouldn't be such a benighted little heathen as you are."

"Well, I didn't like it – there! All about two ugly great bears eating a lot of children for calling somebody names. I don't like things like that. There ain't no fun in reading about them, and I'd a heap sooner read Robinson Crusoe; *he* was a nice old man, I know he was. And when I grow up to be a big woman, I'm going to find out his island and live there myself – you see if I don't."

Miss Jerusha gave a contemptuous snort.

"*You* grow up, indeed! As if the Lord would let a wicked little wretch like you, that believes in gods and goddesses and purgatory and such abominations grow up. No; if you ain't carried off

in a flash of fire and brimstone, like King Solomon or some of them, you may think yourself safe, my lady."

"Well, I don't care if I am," said Georgia. "I *do* believe in mermaids, because I've seen them often and often, and I know they live in beautiful coral grottoes under the sea, because I've read all about it. And I know there are witches, and ghosts and fairies, because I've read all about *them* in the 'Legends of the Hartz Mountains,' the nicest book that ever was, and some Hallow Eve I'm going to try some tricks – you see if I don't."

The little girl's eyes were sparkling, and she was gesticulating with eager earnestness. Miss Jerusha held up her hands in horror.

"My-y conscience! only hear her! Oh, what *ever* will become of that there young gal? Why, you wicked child, where do you expect to go when you die?"

"To heaven," said Georgia, decidedly.

"Humph!" said Miss Jerusha, contemptuously. "A nice angel *you'd* make, wouldn't you? More likely the other place. I shill hev to speak to Mr. Barebones to take you into his Bible class, for I believe in my soul it ain't safe to sleep in the house with such an unbeliever."

"Well, you may speak to him as fast as you like, but I sha'n't go. A sour, black old ogre, all skin and bones, like a consumptive red herring! I'm going with Emily Murray to that nice church where they have all the pretty pictures, and that nice old man, Em's uncle, with no hair on his head, and all dressed up so beautifully. And old Father Murray is just the dearest old man ever was, and hasn't got a long, solemn face like Mr. Barebones. Come, Bets, let you and I have a waltz."

And seizing Betsey Periwinkle by the two fore-paws, she went whirling with her round the room, to the great astonishment, not to say indignation, of that amiable animal, who decidedly disapproved of waltzing in her own proper person, and began to expostulate in sundry indignant mews quite unheeded by her partner, until Miss Jerusha angrily snatched her away, and would have favored Georgia with a box on the ear, only the recollection of the theatre manager returned to her memory, and her uplifted hand dropped. And Georgia, laughing her shrill, peculiar laugh, danced out of the room, singing a snatch from some elegant ditty.

"Was there ever such a aggravating young 'un?" exclaimed Miss Jerusha, relapsing into her chair. "I sartinly *shill* hev to speak to Mr. Barebones about her. Gracious! what a thing it is to be afflicted with children!"

True to her word, Miss Jerusha did speak to Mr. Barebones, and that zealous Christian promised to take Georgia in hand; but the young lady not only flatly refused to listen to a word, but told him her views of matters and things in general, and of himself in particular, so plainly and decidedly, that, in high dudgeon, the minister got up, put on his hat, and took himself off.

And so Miss Georgia was left to her own devices, and stood in a fair way of becoming a veritable savage, when an event occurred that gave a new spring to her energies, and turned the current of her existence in another direction.

## CHAPTER IV

### GEORGIA MAKES SOME NEW ACQUAINTANCES

"His boyish form was middle size,  
For feat of strength or exercise  
Shaped in proportion fair;  
And hazel was his eagle eye,  
And auburn of the darkest dye  
His short and curling hair.  
Light was his footstep in the dance,  
And firm his stirrup in the lists —  
And, oh, he had that merry glance  
That seldom lady's heart resists." — Scott.

Miss Jerusha's memorable "house-cleaning" was over, and the cottage having been polished till it shone, and everything inside and outside reduced to the frightfully clean state that characterized everything belonging to that worthy lady, she was prepared to sit down and enjoy the reward of her labors, and the pleasure of an approving conscience. Fly and Betsey Periwinkle, who had been in an excessively damp and limber state for the last few days, and whom Miss Jerusha had kept tearing in and out and up and down like a couple of comets, were at last permitted to dry out, and might now safely venture to call their souls their own again.

Georgia, who rather liked a fuss than otherwise, quite enjoyed the house-cleaning, and spent an unusually large portion of her valuable time at the cottage while that domestic revolution was in full blast; now that it was over, she began to resume her slightly vagabondish habit of roaming round the country, always up to her eyes in business, yet never bringing about any particular result excepting that of mischief. When Georgia wished to enjoy the pleasures of solitude, which was not often, she strolled off to the beach, where, perched on top of a high rock, she meditated on the affairs of the State, or whatever other subject happened to weigh on her mind at the moment.

One morning she started off for her favorite seat in order to have a quiet read, having inveigled Miss Jerusha out of the "Pilgrim's Progress" for that purpose, in lieu of something more entertaining. Now this beach being so far removed from Burnfield, its solitude was rarely, if ever, disturbed; therefore, great was Georgia's surprise upon reaching it, to find a shady spot under her own favorite rock already occupied.

Miss Georgia came to a sudden halt, and, standing on tiptoe, gravely surveyed the new-comer, herself unseen.

Under the shadow of the overhanging rock, on the warm sands, lay a tall, slight, fashionably dressed youth, of sixteen or thereabouts, with handsome, regular features, a complexion of feminine fairness, a profusion of brown, curling hair, a high forehead, and unusually and aristocratically small hands and feet, the former as white as a lady's. The predominating expression of his face was a mixture of indolence and drollery; and as he lay there, with his half closed eyes, he looked the very picture of the *dolce far niente*.

"Well, now," thought Georgia, "I wonder who *you* are, and where you came from. I'll just go and ask him, though I do believe he's asleep. If he is, I reckon I'll wake him in double-quick time."

And Georgia, not being in the slightest degree troubled with that disease incident to youth, previous to the days of Young America, yclept bashfulness, marched up to the intruder, and planting herself before him, put her arms akimbo, and assuming a look of stern investigation, began:

"Ahem! See here, *you*, where did you come from?"

The young gentleman thus addressed leisurely opened a pair of large, dark eyes, and quietly surveyed his interrogator from head to foot, without disturbing himself in the slightest degree, or betraying the smallest intention of moving.

Very properly provoked at this aggravating conduct, Georgia's voice rose an octave higher, as she said, authoritatively:

"Can't you speak? Haven't you a tongue? I suppose it's the last improvement in politeness not to answer when you're spoken to."

This speech seemed to bring the young gentleman to a proper sense of his errors. Getting up on his elbow, he took off his hat and began:

"My dear young lady, I beg ten thousand pardons, but really at the moment you spoke I was just debating within myself whether you were a veritable fact or only an optical illusion. Having now satisfied myself on that head, I beg you will repeat your questions, which, unfortunately, in the excitement of the moment, I did not pay proper attention to, and any information regarding myself personally and privately, or concerning the world at large, that it lies in my power to offer you, I shall be only too happy to communicate."

And with this speech the young gentleman bowed once more, without rising, however, replaced his hat, and getting himself into a comfortable position, lay back on the sands, and supporting his head on his hands, composedly waited to be cross-examined.

"Humph!" said Georgia, regarding him doubtfully. "What is your name?"

"My name is Norval; on the Grampian hills – that is, it might have been Norval, only it happened to be Wildair – Charley Wildair, at your service, noted for nothing in particular but good-nature and idleness. And now, having satisfied your natural and laudable curiosity on that point, may I humbly venture to ask the name of the fascinating young lady who at this particular moment honors me with her presence?"

"Well, you may. My name's Georgia Darrell, and I live up there in that little cottage. Now, where do *you* live?"

"Miss Darrell, allow me to observe that it affords me the most dreadful and excruciating happiness to make the acquaintance of so charming and accomplished a young lady as yourself, and also to observe, that in all my wanderings through this nether world, it has never been my good fortune before to behold so perfectly fascinating a cottage as that to which you refer. Regarding my own place of residence, I cannot inform you positively, being a – 'in point of fact,' as my cousin Feenix has it – a wanderer and vagabond on the face of the earth, with no fixed place of abode. My maternal ancestor resides in a place called Brooklyn, a younger sister of New York city, and when not doing up my education in the aforesaid city, I honor that venerable roof-tree with my presence. At present, if you observe, I am vegetating in the flourishing and intensely slow town of Burnfield over yonder, with my respected and deeply venerated uncle, Mr. Robert Richmond, a gentleman chiefly remarkable for the length of his purse and the shortness of his temper."

"Squire Richmond's nephews! I heard they had come. Are you them?" inquired Georgia, stepping back a pace, and speaking in a slightly awed tone.

"Exactly, Miss Darrell. With your usual penetration and good genius, you have hit the right thing exactly in the middle; only, if you will allow me, I must insinuate that I am not his nephews – not being an editor, I have not the good fortune to be a plural individual; but with my Brother Richard we do, I am happy to inform you, constitute the dutiful nephews of your Burnfield magnate, Squire Richmond."

"Hum-m-m!" said Georgia, looking at him with a puzzled expression, and not exactly liking his indolent look and intensely ceremonious tone. "You ain't laughing at me, are you?"

"Laughing at you! Miss Darrell, if you'll just be kind enough to cast an eye on my countenance you'll observe it's considerably more serious than an undertaker's, or that of a man with a sick wife

when told she is likely to recover. Allow me to observe, Miss Darrell, that I suffered through the 'principles of politeness' when I was an innocent and guileless little shaver, in checked pinafores, and I hope I know the proprieties better than to laugh at a lady. A fellow that would laugh at a young woman, Miss Darrell, deserves to be – to be – a – a mark for the finger of scorn to poke fun at! Yes, Miss Darrell, I repeat it, he deserves to be a – I don't know what he doesn't deserve to be!" said Mr. Wildair, firmly.

"Well," said Georgia, rather mollified, "and what did you come up here for, anyway, eh?"

"Why, you see, Miss Darrell, the fact was, I was what you call expelled, – which being translated from the original Greek into plain slang, the chosen language of young America, – means I was politely requested to vamose."

"Oh," said Georgia, puckering up her lips as though she were going to whistle, "you mean they turned you out?"

"Pre-cisely! exactly! They couldn't properly appreciate me, you know. Genius never is appreciated, if you observe, but is always neglected, and snubbed, and put upon, in this world. Look at Shakespeare, and Oliver Goldsmith, and all those other old fellows that got up works of fiction, and see the hard times and tribulations they had of it."

"And how long are you going to stay here?" asked Georgia.

"That depends upon as long as I behave nicely, and don't endeavor to corrupt the minds of the rising generation of Burnfield, I suppose. I've been a perfect angel since I came, and would be at all times if they didn't aggravate me. My mother was very disagreeable."

"My mother was not – mamma never was disagreeable," said Georgia.

"Indeed! Wonderful old lady she must have been then! Is she living?"

"No: she's dead," said Georgia, looking down with filling eyes.

"Ah! excuse me. I didn't know," said the boy, hastily. "And your father?"

"Dead, too."

"Possible! With whom do you live?"

"Miss Jerusha."

"Miss Jerusha – who?"

"Skamp. She lives up in that cottage."

"Skamp! There's a pretty name to talk about! Old-lady, is she?"

"Yes; old and ugly."

"Ah! I guess I sha'n't mind an introduction, then. And what brings you down here, Miss Darrell? It's my time to ask questions now."

"Why, I came down here to read; and now, look here, I wish you wouldn't keep on calling me Miss Darrell; it sounds as if you were laughing at me. Say Georgia."

"With all my heart. Georgia be it – on one condition."

"Well, what is it?"

"That you call me Charley."

"Of course I'll call you Charley," said Georgia, decidedly; "I intended to all along. You didn't expect I'd say mister, did you?"

"Of course I didn't; I never indulge in absurd expectations. And may I ask the name of the book so fortunate as to find favor in your eyes, Miss Georgia?"

"Well, it's the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' I don't think much of it either – all about a man going on a journey, and getting into all sorts of scrapes. I don't believe it ever happened at all, for my part. And now, as you seem to like taking things easy, I guess I will too; so here we go!" said Georgia, as, shoving the book into her pocket, she made a spring forward, and by some mysterious sleight of hand, only understood by cats, monkeys, sailors, and depraved youths given to mischief, she clambered up the steep side of the high, smooth rock, and perched herself in triumph on the top, like a female Apollo on the apex of Mount Parnassus.

The young gentleman on the sands lifted himself on his elbow and stared at the little girl in a sort of indolent wonder at this energetic proceeding.

"Eh, what? you're up there, are you? May I ask, Miss Georgia, if it is your custom to perch yourself up there, like Patience on a monument, whenever you wish to appreciate the beauties of literature? Oh! the amount of unnecessary trouble people put themselves to in this world! Now why – I simply ask as a matter of courtesy – what possible object can you have in risking your neck in order to be slightly elevated above your fellow-mortals, eh?"

"Just for fun," said Georgia, as standing on one toe she cut a pigeon-wing, at the imminent danger of tumbling off and breaking her neck.

"For fun! Well, it's singular what perverted notions of amusement some people have. Now I – I'm about as fond of that sort of a thing, I may safely say, as any other youth; yet you'll excuse me when I say I really cannot see the point of that joke at all."

"*You* couldn't do it," said Georgia, exultingly; "bet you any thing you could not."

"Well, now, I don't know about that," said the youth, surveying the rock slowly with his large, indolent eyes; "of course, it's not polite or proper to contradict a lady, or else I should beg leave to differ from you in that opinion. There are precious few things, Miss Georgia, that I ever attempted and failed to execute, though I say it. I'm what you may call a universal genius, you know, equal to a steep rock, or any other emergency, up to anything, ancient or modern, or, to use another favorite and expressive phrase of Young America, a class to which I am proud to belong – I am, in every sense of the word, 'up to snuff.'"

"Bother!" exclaimed Georgia, to whom this homily, like all the lad's speeches, was Greek, or thereabouts. "It's all very fine to lie there like a lazy old porpoise, and talk such stuff, but you can't climb this rock, say what you like – now then."

"Can't I though!" exclaimed Master Charley, flinging away his cigar and springing up with more energy than might have been expected from his previous indolence, which, however, was more than half affected. "By Jove! then, here goes to try. Miss Georgia, if in my efforts in your service I turn out to be a case of 'Accidentally killed,' you'll see that the coroner's inquest is held properly, and that all my goods and chattels, consisting of a cigar-case, a clean shirt, and a jackknife, are promptly forwarded to my bereaved relative. Now then, here goes! '*Dieu et mon droit!*'"

So saying, the lad, with a great deal more skill and agility than Georgia had given him credit for, began climbing up the high rock. It was no easy task, however, for the sides were quite perpendicular and almost perfectly smooth, only suited to sailors and other aquatic monsters used to climbing impossible places.

Georgia clapped her hands and laughed her shrill elfish laugh at his desperate efforts, and, taunted by this, the boy made a sudden spring at the top, missed his footing, and tumbled off backward on the sands below.

With a sharp exclamation of alarm, Georgia, with one flying leap, sprang clear off the beetling rock, and alighted, cat-like, on her feet by his side. The lad lay perfectly still, and Georgia, terrified beyond measure, bent over and tried to raise him, and not succeeding in this, suddenly bethought herself of Miss Jerusha's infallible plan for all distresses, mental and bodily, and, catching him by the shoulder, gave him a sound shaking.

This vigorous proceeding had the effect of completely restoring Master Charley, who had been for the moment stunned by the force of the fall, and, opening his eyes, he slowly raised himself and looked with a slightly bewildered glance around.

"Well, I knew you couldn't do it," cried Georgia, who, now observing that he was not killed, recovered all her aggravating love of teasing.

"Ugh! you tantalizing little pepper-pod! that's the sort of remorse you feel after nearly depriving the world of one of its brightest ornaments. 'Pon my word, I never was so nearly extinguished in all my life. Ain't you ashamed of yourself, Miss Georgia, now that you've been and gone and done and

made me put my foot in it so beautifully? And speaking of feet reminds me that I have given my ankle a twist, and must see whether it is to be relied upon or not for the journey home, two miles being no joke, even at the best times."

So saying, Mr. Wildair got on his feet and attempted to walk, an experiment which resulted in his making a very wry face – and uttering something like a subdued howl, and finally sinking back in his former position.

"Well, here's a precious go, and no mistake!" was the exclamation jerked out of him by the exigency of the case; "here's my ankle has thought proper to go and sprain itself, and now I'll leave it to society in general if I'm not in just the tallest sort of a fix. Yes, you may stare and look blank, Miss Georgia, but I'll repeat it, you've used me shamefully, Miss Georgia, yes, abominably, Miss Georgia, and if you keep on like this, you stand a fair chance of sharing my own elevated destiny. You perceive I'm a fixture here, and may as well take up my quarters where I am for life, for out of this I can't go."

"Whatever will you do?" exclaimed Georgia, in dismay.

"Why, come to anchor here, of course; walking's out of the question. If you would be so obliging as to hunt me up a soft rock to sleep on, and where I could compose myself decently for death, it would be more agreeable to my feelings than to scorch here in the sand. Attempt to walk I positively can't and won't, traveling on one foot not being the pleasantest or speediest mode of locomotion in the world."

"Now, I declare, if it ain't too bad. I'm real sorry," said Georgia, whose sympathies were all aroused by the good-humor with which Master Charley bore his painful accident.

"Well, I wouldn't take it too much to heart if I were you, Miss Georgia; it might have been worse, you know – my neck, for instance."

"I'll tell you what," said Georgia, "I've got an idea."

"Pshaw! you're only joking," said Charley, incredulously.

"No, I ain't; I'll go for Miss Jerusha, and make her come here and help you up. You wait."

"Really," began Charley, but without waiting to hear him, Georgia bounded off, and clambering up the bank with two or three flying leaps reached the high road, and rushed impetuously along toward the cottage.

"There's an original for you," said the proprietor of the sprained ankle, looking after Georgia. "Well, this sprained ankle is mighty pleasant, I must say. If the old lady comes down she'll have to carry me on her back, for walk I won't."

Georgia, meanwhile, on charitable thoughts intent, rushed along where she was going, and the consequence was that she ran with stunning force against some person or persons unknown advancing from the opposite direction.

"Heads up!" said a pleasant voice; and Georgia, who betrayed symptoms of an insane desire to pitch head over heels, was restored to her center of gravity. "Rather an energetic mode of doing business this, I must say."

Georgia looked up, and jerked herself from the grasp of the stranger, a young man, dressed in a student's plain suit of black, who stood looking at her with a smile.

"What did you run against me for?" said Georgia, with one of her scowls, instantly taking the offensive.

"Run against *you*! Why, you are reversing cases, madam. Allow me to insinuate that you ran against *me*."

"I didn't, either! I mean I shouldn't if you hadn't poked yourself right in my way." Then, as a sudden idea struck her, she breathlessly resumed: "Oh, yes; you'll do better than Miss Jerusha! Come along with me to the beach, and help him up!" said Georgia, gesticulating with much earnestness.

"Help who up, my impetuous little lady?" said the young man, with a smile.

"Why, *him*, you know! He tumbled off – I knew he would all along – and went and sprained his ankle, and now he can't get up. It hurts him, I know, though he don't make a fuss or nothing, but

talks and looks droll – nice fellow, I know he is! Help him up to our house, and Miss Jerusha'll fix him off, she will! Come! come along, can't you?"

All this time Georgia had stood, with sparkling eyes, gesticulating eagerly, as was her habit when excited; and now she caught him by the arm and pulled him vigorously along.

The stranger, with a laugh, allowed himself to be borne on by this breathless little whirlwind; and in less than ten minutes after she had left him, Georgia stood beside Charley Wildair on the beach.

Charley looked up as they approached, and glancing at her companion, exclaimed:

"Hallo, Rich! Well, here's a slice of good luck, anyway. How in the world did you scare *him* up, Miss Georgia?"

"Why he ran against me," said Georgia, "and nearly knocked my brains out. Do you know him?"

"I should think I did – rather!" said Charley, emphatically. "Here, Rich, come and help me up, there's a good fellow!"

"What have you been at now?" said Rich, as he obeyed. "Some piece of nonsense, I'll be bound."

"No, sir, I haven't been at nonsense. I was attempting to treat myself to a rise in the world by climbing up that rock, and, losing my equilibrium, the first thing I knew I was gracefully extended at full length on the sands, with one limb slightly dislocated, as completely floored an individual as you ever clapped your eyes on. For further particulars, apply to Miss Georgia here. And that reminds me, you haven't been duly presented to that young woman. Allow me to repair that error before proceeding to business. Miss Darrell, let me have the pleasure of presenting to your distinguished notice, my brother, Mr. Richmond Wildair, a young man chiefly remarkable for a rash and inordinate attachment for musty old books, and – having his own way. Mr. Wildair, Miss Georgia Darrell, a young lady whose many estimable qualities and aggravating will of her own require to be seen to be appreciated. Ahem."

And having, with great *empresment* and pomposity, delivered himself of this "neat and appropriate" speech, Mr. Charles Wildair drew himself up with dignity – which, as he was obliged to stand on one foot, with the other elevated in the air, hardly made the impression it was intended to make.

Mr. Richmond Wildair held out his hand to Georgia with a smile, and, after looking at it for a moment, in evident doubt as to the propriety of shaking hands with him, she at last consented to do so with a grave solemnity quite irresistible.

And thus Richmond Wildair and Georgia Darrell met for the first time. And little did either dream of what the future had in store for them, as they stood side by side on the sands in the golden light of that breezy, sunshiny May morning.

## CHAPTER V

### "LADY MACBETH."

"Who that had seen her form so light,  
For swiftness only turned,  
Would e'er have thought in a thing so slight,  
Such a fiery spirit burned."

"And now what am I expected to do next?" said Richmond, looking at his two companions. "I am entirely at your service, monsieur and mademoiselle."

"Why, you must help him up to our house," said Georgia, in her peremptory tone, "and let Miss Jerusha do something for his lame ankle."

"And after that you must transport yourself over to Burnfield with all possible dispatch, and procure a cart, car, gig, wagon, carriage, wheelbarrow, or any other vehicle wherein my remains can be hauled to that thriving town, for walking, you perceive, is a moral and physical impossibility."

"All right!" said Richmond. "Here, take my arm. How will you manage to get up this steep bank? Do you think you can walk it?"

"Nothing like trying," said Charley, as leaning on his brother's arm he limped along, while Georgia went before to show them the way. "Ah, that was a twinge. The gout must be a nice thing to have if it is at all like this. I never properly felt for those troubled with that fashionable and aristocratic disease before, but the amount of sympathy I shall do for the future will be something terrifying. Here we are; now then, up we go."

But Master Charley found that "up we go" was easier said than done. He attempted to mount the bank, but at the first effort he recoiled, while a flush of pain overspread his pale features.

"No go, trying to do that; get up there I can't if they were to make me Khan of Tartary for doing it. Ah – h – h! there's another twinge, as if a red-hot poker had been plunged into it. The way that ankle can go into the aching business requires to be felt to be appreciated."

Though he spoke lightly, yet two scarlet spots, forced there by the intense pain, burned on either cheek.

Richmond looked at him anxiously, for he loved his wild, harum-scarum, handsome young brother with a strong love.

"Oh, he can't walk; I know it hurts him; what *will* we do?" said Georgia, in a tone of such intense motherly solicitude that, in spite of his painful ankle, Charley smiled faintly.

"I know what *I* shall do," said Richmond, abruptly. "I shall carry him."

And suiting the action to the word, the elder brother – older only by two or three years, but much stronger and more compactly built than the somewhat delicate Charley – lifted him in his arms and proceeded to bear him up the rocks.

"Why, Richmond, old fellow," remonstrated Charley, "you'll kill yourself – rupture an artery, and all that sort of thing, you know; and then there'll be a pretty to do about it. Let go, and I'll walk it, in spite of the ankle. I can hold out as long as it can, I should hope."

"Never mind, Charley; I'm pretty strong, and you're not a killing weight, being all skin and bone, and nonsense pretty much. Keep still, and I will have you up in a twinkling."

"Be it so, then, most obliging youth. Really, it's not such a bad notion, this being carried – rather comfortable than otherwise."

"Now, don't keep on so, Charley," said Georgia, in a voice of motherly rebuke. "How is your ankle? Does it hurt you much now?"

"Well, after mature deliberation on the subject, I think I may safely say it *does*. It's aching just at this present writing as if for a wager," replied Charley, with a grimace.

Georgia glanced at Richmond, and seeing great drops of perspiration standing on his brow as he toiled up, said, in all sincerity:

"See here, you look tired to death. *Do* let me help you. I'm strong, and he ain't very heavy looking, and I guess I can carry him the rest of the way."

Richmond turned and looked at her in surprise, but seeing she was perfectly serious in her offer, he repressed his amusement and gravely declined; while Charley, less delicate, set up an indecorous laugh.

"Carry me up the hill! Oh, that's good! What would Curtis, and Dorset, and all the fellows say if they heard that, Rich? 'Pon honor, that's the best joke of the season! A little girl I could lift with one hand offering to carry me up hill?"

And Master Charley lay back and laughed till the tears stood in his eyes.

His laughter was brought to a sudden end by an unexpected sight. Little Georgia faced round, with flashing eyes and glowing cheeks, and, with a passionate stamp of her foot, exclaimed:

"How *dare* you laugh at me, you hateful, ill-mannered fellow? Don't you ever dare to do it again, or it won't be good for you! If you weren't hurt now, and not able to take your own part, I'd *tear your eyes out!* – I just would! Don't you DARE to laugh at me, sir!"

And with another fierce stamp of her foot, and wild flash of her eyes, she turned away and walked in the direction of the cottage.

For a moment the brothers were confounded by this unexpected and startling outburst – this new revelation of the unique child before them. There was in it something so different from the customary pouting anger of a child – something so nearly appalling in her fierce eyes and passionate gestures, that they looked at each other a moment in astounded silence before attempting to reply.

"Really, Georgia, I did not mean to offend," said Charley, at last, as they by this time reached the high-road, and the exhausted Richmond deposited him on his feet. "I am very sorry I have angered you, but I'm such a fellow to laugh, you know, that the least thing sets me off. Why I'd laugh at an empress, if she did or said anything droll. Come, forgive me, like a good girl!" and Charley, looking deeply penitent, held out his hand.

But Georgia was proud, and was not one to readily forgive what she considered an insult, so she drew herself back and up, and only replied by a dangerous flash of her great black eyes.

"Come, Georgia, don't be angry; let's make up friends again. Where's the good of keeping spite, especially when a fellow's sorry for his fault? One thing I know, and that is, if you don't forgive me pretty soon, I'll go and heave myself away into an untimely grave, in the flower of my youth, and then just think of the remorse of conscience you'll suffer. Come, Georgia, shake hands and be friends."

But Georgia faced round, with a curling lip, and turning to Richmond, who all this time had stood quietly by, with folded arms, surveying her with an inexplicable smile, which faded away the moment he met her eye, she said, shortly:

"You had better come along. I'll go on ahead and tell Miss Jerusha you're coming." And then, without waiting for a reply, she walked on in proud silence.

She reached the cottage in a few minutes, and, throwing open the door with her accustomed explosive bang, went up to where Miss Jerusha sat sewing diligently, and facing that lady, began:

"Miss Jerusha, look here!"

Miss Jerusha lifted her head, and, seeing Miss Georgia's flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, the evidence of one of her "tantrums," said:

"Well who hev you bin a-fightin' with *now*, marm?"

"I haven't been fighting with any one," said Georgia, impatiently, for a slight skirmish like this was nothing to pitched battle she called fighting; "but there's a boy that has sprained his ankle down on the beach, and his brother's bringing him here for you to fix it."

Now, Miss Jerusha, though not noted for her hospitality at any time, would not, perhaps, on an ordinary occasion make any objection to this beyond a few grumbles, but on this particular morning everything had gone wrong, and she was in an (even for her) unusually surly mood, so she turned round and sharply exclaimed:

"And do you suppose, you little good-for-nothing whipper-snapper, I keep an 'ospital for every shif'less scamp in the neighborhood? If you do, you are very much mistaken, that's all. If he's sprained his ankle, let him go sommer's else, for I vow to Sam he sha'n't come here!"

"He *shall* come here!" exclaimed Georgia, with one of her passionate stamps: "you see if he sha'n't. I told him he could come here, and he shall, too, in spite of you!"

"Why, you little impident hussy you!" said Miss Jerusha, flinging down her work and rising to her feet, "how dare you have the imperance to stand up and talk to me like that? We'll see whether he'll come here or not. *You* invited him here, indeed! And pray what right have you to invite anybody here, I want to know? You, a lazy, idle little vagabone, not worth your salt! Come here, indeed! I wish he may; if he doesn't go out faster than he came in it won't be my fault!"

"Just you try to turn him out, you cross, ugly old thing! If you do I'll – I'll *kill* you; I'll set fire to this hateful old hut, and burn it down! You see if I don't. There!"

The savage gleam of her eyes at that moment, her face white with concentrated passion, was something horrible and unnatural in one of her years. Miss Jerusha drew back a step, and interposed a chair between them in salutary dread of the little vixen's claw-like nails.

At that moment the form of Richmond Wildair appeared in the door-way. Both youths had arrived in time to witness the fierce altercation between the mistress of the house and her half-savage little ward, and Richmond now interposed.

Taking off his hat, he bowed to Miss Jerusha saying in his calm, gentlemanly tones:

"I beg your pardon, madam, for this intrusion, but my brother being really unable to walk, I beg you will have the kindness to allow him to remain here until I can return from Burnfield with a carriage. You will not be troubled with him more than an hour."

Inhospitable as she was, Miss Jerusha could not really refuse this, so she growled out a churlish assent; and Richmond, secretly amused at the whole thing, helped in Charley, while Georgia set the rocking-chair for him, and placed a stool under his wounded foot, without, however, favoring him with a single smile, or word, or glance. She was in no mood just then either to forget or forgive.

"And now I'm off," said Richmond, after seeing Charley safely disposed of. "I will be back in as short a time as I possibly can; and meantime, Miss Georgia," he added, turning to her with a smile as he left the room, "I place my brother under your care until I come back."

But Georgia, with her back to them both, was looking sullenly out of the window, and neither moved nor spoke until Richmond had gone, and then she followed him out, and stood looking irresolutely after him as he walked down the road.

He turned round, and seeing her there, stopped as though expecting she would speak; but she only played nervously with the hop-vines crowning the walls, without lifting her voice.

"Well, Georgia?" he said inquiringly.

"I – I don't want to stay here. I'll go with you to Burnfield, if you like. Miss Jerusha's cross," she said, looking up half shyly, half defiantly in his face.

A strange expression flitted for an instant over the grave, thoughtful face of Richmond Wildair, passing away as quickly as it came. Without a word he went up to where Georgia stood, with that same light in her eyes, half shy, half fierce, that one sees in the eyes of a half-tamed and dangerous animal when under the influence of a master-eye.

"Georgia, look at me," he said, laying one hand lightly on her shoulder.

She stepped back, shook off the hand, and looked defiantly up in his face. It was not exactly a handsome face, yet it was full of power – full of calm, deep, invincible power – with keen, intense, piercing eyes, whose steady gaze few could calmly stand. Child as she was, the hitherto unconquered

Georgia felt that she stood in the presence of a strong will, that surmounted and overtopped her own by its very depth, intensity and calmness. She strove to brave out his gaze, but her own eyes wavered and fell.

"Well?" she said, in a subdued tone.

"Georgia, will you do me a favor?"

"Well?" she said, compressing her lips hard, as though determined to do battle to the death.

"My brother is alone, he is in pain, he did not mean to offend you, he is under *your* roof. Georgia, I want you to stay with him till I come back."

"He laughed at me – he made fun of me. I *won't*! I hate him!" she said, with a passionate flush.

"He is sorry for that. When people are sorry for their faults, a magnanimous enemy always forgives."

"I don't care. I *won't* forgive him. I was doing everything I could for him. I would have helped him up hill if I could, and he *laughed at me!* I won't stay with him!" she exclaimed, tearing the hop branches off and flinging them to the ground in her excitement.

He caught the destructive little hands in his and held them fast.

"Georgia, you *will!*"

"I *won't!* not if I die for it!" she flashed.

"Georgia!"

"Let me go!" she cried out, trying to wrench her hands from his grasp. "I never will! Let me go!"

"Georgia, do you know what hospitality means?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is your guest now. Have you ever read about the Arabs of the desert, my proud little lady?"

"Yes."

"Well, you know once their most deadly enemy entered their house, they treated him as though he were the dearest friend they had in the world. Now, Georgia, you will be a lady some day, I think, and – "

"I will stay with your brother till you come back," she said, proudly; "but I *won't* be his friend – never again! I liked him then, and I wanted to do everything I could for him. I would have had *my* ankle sprained if it would have made his well. I was so sorry, and – he – laughed at me!"

In spite of all her evident efforts her lips quivered, and turning abruptly, she walked away and entered the house.

Richmond Wildair stood for an instant in the same spot, looking after her, and again that nameless, inexplicable smile flitted over his face.

"*Conquered!*" he said, with a sort of exultation in his voice; "and for the first time in her life, I believe. Strange, wild child that she is. I see the germs of a fine but distorted character there."

He walked down the road, whistling "My love is but a lassie yet," while Georgia re-entered the house, and with a dark cloud still on her face, walked to the window and looked sullenly after the retreating figure of Richmond.

Master Charley, who had a taste for strange animals, had been devoting his time to drawing out Miss Jerusha, practicing all his fascinations on her with a zeal and determination worthy of a better cause, and at last succeeded in wheedling that deluded lady into a recital of her many and peculiar troubles, to all of which he listened with the most sympathizing, not to say painful attention, and with a look so intensely dismal that it quite won the old lady's heart. But when he praised Betsey Periwinkle, and stroked her down, and spoke in terms of enthusiastic admiration of a pair of moleskin pantaloons Miss Jerusha was making, bespeaking another pair exactly like them for himself, his conquest was complete, and he took a firm hold of Miss Jerusha's unappropriated affections, which from that day he never lost. And on the strength of this new and rash attack of "love at first sight," Miss Jerusha produced from some mysterious corner a glass of currant wine and a plate of sliced gingerbread,

which she offered to her guest – a piece of reckless extravagance she had never been guilty of before, and which surprised Fly to such a degree that she would have there and then taken out a writ of lunacy against her mistress, had she known anything whatever about such a proceeding. Master Charley, being blessed with an excellent appetite of his own, which his accident had in no way diminished, graciously condescended to partake of the offered dainties, and launched out into such enthusiastic praises of both, that the English language actually foundered and gave out, in his transports.

And all this time Georgia had stood by the window, silent and sullen, with a cloud on her brow, and a bright, angry light in her eyes, that warned both Miss Jerusha and Charley Wildair that it was safer to let her alone than speak to her just then. For though the girl's combustible nature was something like a blaze of tow, burning fiercely for a moment and then going out, she did not readily forgive injuries, slights, or affronts, or what she considered such. No, she brooded over them until they sank deep among the many other rank things that had been allowed to take root in her heart, and which only the spirit of true religion could now ever eradicate.

The child had grown up from infancy neglected, her high spirit unchecked, her fierce outbursts of temper unrebuked, allowed to have her own way in all things, ignorant of all religious training whatsoever. She had heard the words, God, heaven and hell – but they were *only* words to her, striking the ear, but conveying no meaning, and she had *never* bent her childish knee in prayer.

What wonder then that she grew up as we find her, proud, passionate, sullen, obstinate, and vindictive? The germs of a really fine nature had been born with her, but they had been neglected and allowed to run to waste, while every evil passion had been fostered and nurtured.

Generous, frank, and truthful she was still, scorning a lie, *not* because she thought it a sin, but because it seemed *mean* and cowardly; high-spirited, too, she would have gone through fire and flood to serve any one she loved; *but*, had that one offended her, she would have hurled her back into the fire and flood without remorse.

Ingratitude was not one of her vices either, though from her conduct to Miss Jerusha it would appear so; but Georgia could not love the sharp, snappish, though not bad-hearted old maid, and so she believed she owed her nothing, a belief more than one in Burnfield took care to foster.

Not a vice that child possessed that a careful hand could not have changed into a real virtue, for in her sinning there was at least nothing mean and underhand; treachery and deception she would have scorned and stigmatized as *cowardly*, for courage, daring, bravery, was in the eyes of Georgia the highest virtue in earth or heaven.

Richmond Wildair understood her, because he possessed an astute and powerful intellect, and mastered her, because he had a *will* equal to her own, and a mind, by education and cultivation, infinitely superior.

Georgia, almost unknown to herself, had a profound admiration and respect for *strength*, whether bodily or mental; and the moment Richmond Wildair let her see he could conquer her, that moment he achieved a command over the wild girl he never lost.

Yet it galled her, this first link in the chain that was one day to bind her hand and foot; and, like an unbroken colt on whom the bridle and curb are put for the first time, she grew restive and angry under the intolerable yoke.

"What right has he to make me stay?" she thought, with a still darkening brow. "What business has he to order me to do this or that? Telling me to stay with his brother, as if he was my master and I was his servant! I don't see why I did it; he had no *business* to tell me so. I have a good mind to run away yet, and when he comes he'll find me gone – but no, I promised to stay, and I will. I wouldn't have stayed for anybody else, and I don't see why I did for him. I won't do it again – I never will; the very next thing he asks me to do I'll say no, and I'll *stick* to it. I won't be ordered about by anybody!"

And Georgia raised her head proudly, and her eye flashed, and her cheek kindled, and her little brown hand clenched, as her whole untamed nature rose in revolt against the idea of servitude. Some wild Indian or gipsy blood must have been in Georgia's veins, for never did a lord of forest

rock or river resolve to do battle to maintain his freedom with more fierce determination than did she at that moment.

Her resolution was soon put to the test. Ere another hour had passed Richmond Wildair returned with a light gig, and entered the house.

Georgia saw him enter, but would not turn round, and Charley, getting up, bade Miss Jerusha a gay good-by, promising to come and see her again the first thing after his ankle got well. Then, going over to Georgia, he held out his hand, saying:

"Come, Georgia, I am going away. *Do* bid me good-by."

It was hardly in human nature to resist that coaxing tone; so a curt "good-by" dropped out from between Georgia's closed teeth; but she would neither look at him nor notice his extended hand.

And with this leave-taking Charley was forced to be content; and, leaning on Richmond, he went out and took his place in the gig.

Then Richmond returned, and bowing his farewell and his thanks to Miss Jerusha, slightly surprised at the mollifying metamorphosis that ancient lady had undergone, he went up to Georgia, saying, in a low tone:

"Come with me to the door, Georgia; I have something to say to you."

"Say it here."

He hesitated, but Georgia looked as immovable as a rock.

"Well, then, Georgia, I want you to forgive my brother before he goes."

Georgia planted her feet firmly together, compressed her lips, and, without lifting her eyes to his face, said, in a low, resolute tone:

"Richmond Wildair, I won't!"

"But, Georgia, he is sorry for his fault; he has apologized; you *ought* to forgive him."

"I won't!"

"Georgia, it is wrong, it is unnatural in a little girl to be wicked and vindictive like this. If you were a good child, you would shake hands and be friends."

"I won't!"

"Georgia, for *my* sake – "

"*I won't!*"

"Obstinate, flinty little thing! Do you like me, Georgia?"

"No!"

"You don't? Why, Georgia, what a shame! You don't like me?"

"No, I don't! I hate you both! You have no business to tease me this way! I won't forgive him – I never will! I'll *never* do anything for you again!"

And, with a fierce flash of the eyes that reminded him of a panther he had once shot, she broke from his retaining grasp and fled out of the house.

He was foiled. He turned away with a slight smile, yet there was a scarcely perceptible shade of annoyance on his high, serene brow, as he took his place beside his brother and drove off.

"What took you back, Rich?" asked Charley.

"I wanted to bid good-by to that unique little specimen of girlhood in there, and get her to pardon you."

"And she would not?"

"No."

"Whew! resisted *your* all-powerful will! The gods be praised that you have found your match at last!"

Richmond's brow slightly contracted, and he gave the horse a quick cut with the whip that sent him flying on.

"And yet I will make her do it," he said, with his calm, peculiar, inexplicable smile.

"Eh? – you will? And how, may I ask?"

"Never you mind – she shall do it! I have conquered her once already, and I shall do it again, although she *has* refused this time. I did not expect her to yield without a struggle."

"By Jove! there's some wild blood in that one. There was mischief in her eyes as she turned on me there on the hill. I shall take care to give her a wide berth, and let her severely alone for the future."

"Yes, she is an original – all steel springs – a fine nature if properly trained," said Richmond, musingly.

"A fine fiddlestick!" said Charley, contemptuously; "she's as sharp as a persimmon, and as sour as an unripe crab-apple, and as full of stings as a whole forest of nettle-trees."

"Do you know, Charles, I fancy Lady Macbeth might have been just such a child?"

"Shouldn't wonder. The little black-eyed gipsy is fierce enough in all conscience to make a whole batch of Lady Macbeths. May all the powers that be generously grant I may not be the Duncan she is to send to the other world."

"If she is allowed to grow up as she is now, she will certainly be some day capable of even Lady Macbeth's crime. Pity she has no one better qualified to look after her than that disagreeable old woman."

"Better mind how you talk about the old lady," said Charley; "she and I are as thick as pickpockets. I flattered her beautifully, I flatter myself, and she believes in me to an immense extent. As to the young lady, what do you say to adopting her yourself? You'd be a sweet mentor for youth, wouldn't you?"

"You may laugh, but I really feel a deep interest in that child," said Richmond.

"Well, for my part," said Charley, "I don't believe in vixens, young or old, but you —*you* always had a taste for monsters."

"Not exactly," said Richmond, untying a knot in his whip; "but she is something new; she suits me; I like her."

## CHAPTER VI

### TAMING AN EAGLET

"In her heart  
Are sown the sparks that kindle fiery war;  
Occasion needs but fan them and they blaze."

*Cowper.*

"Mind's command o'er mind,  
Spirits o'er spirit, is the clear effect  
And natural action of an inward gift  
Given by God."

All that day little Georgia went wandering aimlessly, restlessly, through the woods, possessed by some walking spirit that would not let her sit still for an instant. She had kept her vow; she had resisted the power of a master mind; she had maintained her free will, and refused to do as he commanded her. Yes, she felt it as a command. She had thrown off the yoke he would have laid on her, and she ought to have exulted in her triumph – in her victory. But, strange to say, it surprised even herself that she had *not*; she felt angry, sullen and dissatisfied. The consciousness that she was wrong and he was right – that she ought to have done as he told her – would force itself upon her in spite of her efforts. How mean and narrow her own conduct did look now that she came to think it over, and the fever of passion had passed away; had she been brave and generous she felt she would have forgiven him when he so often apologized; it was galling to be laughed at, it was true, but when he was sorry for his fault she knew she ought to have pardoned him. How they both must despise her; what a wicked, ugly, disagreeable little girl they must think her. How she wished she had been better, and had made up friends, and not let them go away thinking her so cross and sullen and obstinate.

"Miss Jerusha says I'm ugly and good for nothing and bad-tempered, and so does every body else. Nobody loves me or cares for me, and every body says I've got the worst temper they ever knew. People don't do anything but laugh at me and make fun of me and call me names. Mamma and Warren liked me, but they're dead, and I wish I was dead and buried, too – I do so! I'll never dance again; I'll never sing for anyone; I'll go away somewhere, and never come back. I wish I was pretty and good-tempered and pleasant, like Em Murray: every body loved her; but I ain't, and never will be. I'm black and ugly and bad-tempered, and every one hates me. Let them hate me, then – I don't care! I hate them just as much; and I'll be just as cross and ugly as ever I like. I was made so, and I can't help it, and I don't care for any body. I'll do just as I like, I will so! I can hate people as much as they can hate me, and I will do it, too. I don't see what I was ever born for; Miss Jerusha says it was to torment people: but I couldn't help it, and it ain't my fault, and they have no business to blame me for it. Emily Murray says God makes people die, and I don't see why he didn't let me die, too, when mamma did. Mamma was good, and I expect she's in heaven, but I'm so bad they'll never let me there I know! I don't care for that either. I was made bad, and if they send me to the bad place for it, they may. Em Murray'll go to Heaven, because she's good and pretty, and Miss Jerusha says *she'll* go, but I don't believe it. If she does, *I* sha'n't go even if they ask me to, for I know she'll scold all the time up there just as she does down here. If they do let her in, I guess they'll be pretty sorry for it after, and wish they hadn't. I 'pose them two young gentlemen from New York will go, too, and I know that Charley fellow will laugh when he sees me turned off, just as he did this morning. I don't believe I

ought to have made up with him, after all. I won't either, if his brother says I *must*. If he lets me alone I may, but I'll never offer to do anything for him again as long as I live. Oh, dear! I don't see what I ever was born for at all, and I do wish I never had been, or that I had died with mamma and Warren."

And so, with bitterness in her heart, the child wandered on and on restlessly, as if to escape from herself, with a sense of wrong, and neglect, and injustice forcing itself upon her childish uncultivated mind. She thought of all the hard names and opprobrious epithets Miss Jerusha called her, and "unjust! unjust!" was the cry of her heart as she wandered on. She felt that in all the world there was not such a wicked, unloved child as she, and the untutored heart resolved in its bitterness to repay scorn with scorn, and hate with hate.

It was dark when she came home. She had had no dinner, but with the conflict going on within she had felt no hunger. Miss Jerusha's supper was over and long since cleared away, and, as might be expected, she was in no very sweet frame of mind at the long absence of her *protegee*.

"Well, you've got home at last, have you?" she began sharply, and with her voice pitched in a most aggravating key. "Pretty time o' night this, I must say, to come home, after trampin' round like a vagabone on the face o' the airth all the whole blessed day. You deserve to be switched as long as you can stand, you worthless, lazy, idle young varmint you! Be off to the kitchen, and see if Fly can't get you some supper, though you oughtn't to get a morsel if you were rightly sarved. Other folks has to toil for what they eat, but you live on other folks' vittals, and do nothing, you indolent little tramper you!"

Miss Jerusha paused for want of breath, expecting the angry retort this style of address never failed to extort from the excitable little bomb-shell before her, but to her surprise none came. The child stood with compressed lips, dark and gloomy, gazing into the fading fire.

"Well, why don't you go?" said Miss Jerusha angrily. "You ought to take your betters' leavin's and be thankful, though there's no such thing as thankfulness in you, I do believe. Go!"

"I don't want your supper; you may keep it," said Georgia, with proud sullenness.

"Oh, you don't! Of course not! it's not good enough for your ladyship, by no manner of means," said Miss Jerusha, with withering sarcasm. "Hadn't I better order some cake and wine for your worship? Dear, dear! what ladies we are, to be sure! Is there anything particularly nice I could get for you, marm, eh? P'raps Fly'd better run to Burnfield for some plum puddin' or suthin', hey? Oh, dear me, ain't we dainty, though."

Georgia actually gnashed her teeth, and turned livid with passion as she listened, and, with a spring, she stood before the startled Miss Jerusha, her eyes glaring in the partial darkness like those of a wild-cat. Miss Jerusha, in alarm, lifted a chair as a weapon of defense against the expected attack; but the attack was not made.

Clasping her hands over her head with a sort of irrepressible cry, she fled from the room, up the stairs into her own little chamber, fastened the door, and then sank down, white and quivering, on the floor of the room.

How long she lay there she could not tell; gusts of passion swept through her soul. Wild, fierce, and maddening raged the conflict within – one of those delirious storms of the heart – known and felt only by those whose fiery, tropical veins seem to run fire instead of blood.

She heard Miss Jerusha's step on the stairs, heard her approach her door and listen for a moment, and then go to her own chamber and securely lock the door.

In that moment the half crazed child hated her; hated all the world; feeling as though she could have killed her were it in her power. Then this unnatural mood passed away – it was too unnatural to last – and she rose from the floor, looking like a spirit, with her streaming hair, wild eyes, and white face. She went to the window and opened it, for her head throbbed and ached, and leaning her forehead against the cool glass, she looked out.

How still and serene everything was! The river lay bright and beautiful in the dark bright starlight. The pine trees waved dreamily in the soft spring breeze, and the odor of their fragrant leaves came borne to where she sat. The silence of the grave reigned around, the lonesome forest seemed

lonelier than ever to-night, and so deep was the stillness that the plaintive cry of the whip-poor-will, as it rose at intervals, sounded startlingly loud and shrill. She lifted her eyes to the high, bright, solemn stars that seemed looking down pityingly upon the poor little orphan child, and all her wickedness and passion passed away, and a mysterious awe, deep and holy, entered that tempest-tossed young heart. The soft, cool breeze lifted her dark elf locks, and lingered and cooled her hot brow like a friend's kiss. Georgia had often looked at the stars before, but they never seemed to have such high and holy beauty as they possessed to-night.

"God made the stars," thought Georgia; "I wonder what He made them for? Perhaps they are the eyes of the people that die and go to heaven. I wonder if mamma and Warren are up there, and know how bad I am, and how wicked and miserable I feel? I guess they would be sorry for me if they did, for there is nobody in the world to like me now. Some people pray; Emily Murray does, for I've seen her; but I don't know how, and I don't think God would listen to me if I did, I'm so dreadful bad. She taught me a pretty hymn to sing; it sounds like a prayer; but I've forgot it all but the first verse. I'll say that anyway. Let's see – oh, yes! I know two."

And, for the first time in her life, she knelt down and clasped her hands, and in the light of the beautiful solemn stars, she softly whispered her first prayer.

"Oh, Mary, my mother, most lovely, most mild,  
Look down upon me, your poor, weak, lonely child;  
From the land of my exile, I call upon thee,  
Then Mary, my mother, look kindly on me.  
In sorrow and darkness, be still at my side,  
My light and my refuge, my guard and my guide.  
Though snares should surround me, yet why should I fear?  
I know I am weak, but my mother is near.  
Then Mary, my mother, look down upon me,  
'Tis the voice of thy child that is calling to thee."

Georgia's voice died away, yet with her hands still clasped and her dark mystic eyes now upturned to the far-off stars, her thoughts went wandering on the sweet words she had said.

"Mary, my mother!" I wonder who that means. My mamma's name was not Mary, and one can't have two mothers, I should think. How good it sounds, too! I must ask Emily what it means; she knows. Oh, I wish – I do wish I was up there where all the beautiful stars are!"

Poor little Georgia! untaught, passionate child! how many years will come and go, what a fiery furnace thou art destined to pass through before that "peace which passeth all understanding" will enter your anguished, world-weary heart!

When breakfast was over next morning, Georgia took her sun-bonnet and set off for Burnfield. She hardly knew herself what was her object in passing so quickly through the village, without stopping at any of her favorite haunts, until she stood before the large, handsome mansion occupied and owned by the one great man of Burnfield, Squire Richmond.

The house was an imposing structure of brown stone, with arched porticoes, and vine-wreathed balconies. The grounds were extensive, and beautifully laid out; and Georgia, with the other children, had often peeped longingly over the high fence encircling the front garden, at the beautiful flowers within.

Georgia, skilled in climbing, could easily have got over and reached them, but her innate sense of honor would not permit her to steal. There was something mean in the idea of being a thief or a liar, and meanness was the blackest crime in her "table of sins." Perhaps another reason was, Georgia did not care much for flowers; she liked well enough to see them growing, but as for culling a bouquet for any pleasure it could afford her, she would never have thought of doing it. While she stood gazing

wistfully at the forbidden garden of Eden, a sweet silvery voice close behind her arrested her attention with the exclamation:

"Why, Georgia, is this really you?"

Georgia turned round and saw a little girl about her own age, but, to a superficial eye, a hundred times prettier and more interesting. Her form was plump and rounded, her complexion snowy white, with the brightest of rosy blooms on her cheek and lip; her eyes were large, bright and blue, and her pale golden hair clustered in natural curls on her ivory neck. A sweet face it was – a happy, innocent, child-like face – with nothing remarkable about it save its prettiness and goodness.

"Oh, Em! I'm glad you've come," said Georgia, her dark eyes lighting up with pleasure. "I was just wishing you would. Here, stand up here beside me."

"Well, I can't stay long," said the little one, getting up beside Georgia. "Mother sent me with some things to that poor Mrs. White, whose husband got killed, you know. Oh, Georgia! she's got just the dearest little baby you ever saw, with such tiny bits of fingers and toes, and the funniest little blinking eyes! The greatest little darling ever was! Do come down with me to see it; it's splendid!" exclaimed Emily, her pretty little face all aglow with enthusiasm.

"No; I don't care about going," said Georgia, coolly. "I don't like babies."

"Don't like babies! – the dearest little things in the world! Oh, Georgia!" cried Emily, reproachfully.

"Well, I don't, then! I don't see anything nice about them, for my part. Ugly little things, with thin faces all wrinkled up, like Miss Jerusha's hands on wash-day, crying and making a time. I don't like them; and I don't see how you can be bothered nursing them the way you do."

"Oh, I love them! and I'm going to save all the money I get to spend, to buy Mrs. White's little baby a dress. Mother says I may. Ain't these flowers lovely in there? I wish we had a garden."

"Why?"

"Oh, because it's so nice to have flowers. I wonder Squire Richmond never pulls any of his; he always leaves them there till they drop off."

"Well, what would he pull them for?"

"Why, to put on the table, of course. Don't you ever gather flowers for your room?"

"No."

"You don't! Why, Georgia! don't you love flowers?"

"No, I don't love them; I like to see them well enough."

"Why, Georgia! Oh, Georgia, what a funny girl you are! Not love flowers! What *do* you love, then?"

"I love the stars – the beautiful stars, so high, and bright, and splendid!"

"Oh, so do I; but then they're so far off, you know, I love flowers better, because they're nearer."

"Well, that's the reason I *don't* like them – I mean not so much. I don't care for things I can get so easy – that everybody else can get. Anything I like I want to have all to myself. I don't want anybody else in the world to have it. The bright, beautiful stars are away off – nobody can have them. I call them mine, and nobody can take them from me. I like stars better than flowers."

"Oh, Georgia! you are queer. Why, don't you know that's selfish? Now, if I have any pleasure, I don't enjoy it at all unless I have somebody to enjoy it with. I shouldn't like to keep all to myself; it doesn't seem right. What else do you like, Georgia?"

"Well, I like the sea – the great, grand, dreadful sea! I like it when the waves rise and dash their heads against the high rocks, and roar, and shriek, and rage as if something had made them wild with anger. Oh! I *love* to watch it then, when the great white waves break so fiercely over the high rocks, and dash up the spray in my face. I know it feels then as I do sometimes, just as if it should go mad and dash its brains out on the rocks. Oh, I do love the great, stormy, angry sea!"

And the eyes of the wild girl blazed up, and her whole dark face lighted, kindled, grew radiant as she spoke.

The sweet, innocent little face of Emily was lifted in wonder and a sort of dismay.

"Oh, Georgia, how you talk!" she exclaimed: "love the sea in a storm! What a taste you have! Now I like it, too, but only on a sunny, calm morning like this, when it is smooth and shining. I am dreadfully afraid of it on a stormy day, when the great waves make such a horrid noise. What queer things you like! Now I suppose you had rather have a wet day like last Sunday than one like this?"

"No," said Georgia, "I didn't like last Sunday; it kept on a miserable drizzle, drizzle all day, and wouldn't be fine nor rain right down *good* and have done with it. But I like a storm, a fierce, high storm, when the wind blows fit to tear the trees up, and dashes the rain like mad against the windows. I go away up to the garret then and listen. And I like it when it thunders and lightens, and frightens everybody into fits. Oh, it's splendid then! I feel as if I would like to fly away and away all over the world, as if I should go wild being caged up in one place, as if – oh, I can't tell you how I feel!" said the hare-brained girl, drawing a long breath and keeping her shining eyes fixed as if on some far-off vision.

"Well, if you ain't the queerest, wildest thing! And you don't like fine days at all?"

"Oh, yes, I do – of course I do; not so much days like this, cold, and clear, and calm, but blazing hot, scorching August noondays, when the whole world looks like one great flood of golden fire —*that's* the sort I like! Or freezing, wild, frosty winter days, when the great blasts make one fly along as if they had wings —*they're* splendid, too!"

"Well, I don't know, I don't think so. I like cool, pleasant days like this better, because I have no taste for roasting or freezing," said Emily, laughing. "Oh, I must tell mother about the droll things you like! Let me see what else. Like music?"

"Some sorts. I like the band. Don't care much for any other kind."

"And I like songs and hymns better. And now, which do you prefer – men or women?"

"Men," said Georgia, decidedly.

"You do! Why?"

"Oh, well – because they're stronger and more powerful, and braver and bolder; women are such cowards. Do you know the sort of a man I should like to be?"

"No; what sort?"

"Well, like Napoleon Bonaparte, or Alexander the Great. I should like to conquer the whole world and make every one *in* the world do just as I told them. Oh, I wish I was a boy!"

"I don't, then," said Emily, stoutly. "I don't like boys, they're so rude and rough. And these two conquerors weren't good men either. I've read about them. Washington was good. I like *him*."

"So do I. But if I had been him I would have made myself King of America. I wouldn't have done as he did at all. Now, where are you going in such a hurry?"

"Oh, I shall have to go to Mrs. White's. I've been here a good while already. I wish you would come along."

"No," said Georgia decidedly, "I sha'n't go. Good-by."

Emily nodded and smiled a good-by, and tripped off down the road. Georgia stood for a moment longer, looking at the stately mansion, and then was about to go away when a hand was laid on her and arrested her steps.

Close to the wall some benches ran, hidden under a profusion of flowering vines, and Richmond Wildair had been lying on one of these, studying a deeply exciting volume, when the voices of the children fell upon his ear. Very intently did he listen to their conversation, only revealing himself when he found Georgia was about to leave.

"Good-morning, Miss Georgia," he said, smilingly; "I am very glad to see you. Come, jump over the fence and come in; you can do it, I know."

Now, Georgia was neither timid nor bashful, but while he spoke she recollected her not very courteous behavior the previous day, and, for the first time in her life, she hung her head and blushed.

He appeared to have forgotten, or at least forgiven it, but this only made her feel it all the more keenly.

"Come," he said, catching her hands, without appearing to notice her confusion; "one, two, three – jump!"

Georgia laughed, disengaged her hands, and with the old mischievous spirit twinkling in her eyes, with one flying leap vaulted clear over his head far out into the garden.

"Bravo!" cried Richmond; "excellently done! I see you understand gymnastics. Now I would offer you some flowers only I heard you say you did not care for them, and as for the stars I regret they are beyond even my reach."

Georgia looked up with a flush that reminded him of yesterday. "You were listening," she said disdainfully; "that is mean!"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Georgia, I was not listening intentionally; I am not an eavesdropper, allow me to insinuate. I was lying there studying before you came, and did not choose to put myself to the inconvenience of getting up and going away to oblige a couple of small young ladies, more particularly when I found their conversation so intensely interesting. Very odd tastes and fancies you have, my little Lady Georgia."

Georgia was silent – she had scarcely heard him – she was thinking of something else. She wanted to ask about Charley, but – she did not like to.

"Well," he said, with a smile, reading her thoughts like an open book, "and what is little Georgia thinking of so intently?"

"I – I – of *nothing*," she was going to say, and then she checked herself. It would be a falsehood, and Georgia as proud of never having told a lie in her life.

"And what does 'I – I' mean?"

"I was thinking of your brother Charley," she said, looking up with one of her bright, defiant flashes.

"Yes," he said, quietly, "and what of him?"

"I should like to know how he is."

"He is ill – seriously ill. Charles is delicate, and his ankle is even worse hurt than we supposed. Last night he was feverish and sleepless, and this morning he was not able to get up."

A hot flush passed over Georgia's face, retreating instantaneously, and leaving her very pale, with a wild, uneasy, glitter in her large dark eyes. Oh! If he should die, she thought. It was through her fault he had hurt himself first, and then she had been obstinate, and would not forgive him. Perhaps he would die, she would never be able to tell him how sorry she was for what she had done. She laid her hand on Richmond's arm, and, looking up earnestly in his face, said, in a voice that trembled a little in spite of herself: "Do – do you think he will die?"

"No," he said, gravely, "I hope – I think not; but poor Charley is really ill, and very lonely, up there alone."

"I – I should like to see him."

It was just what Richmond expected; just what he had uttered the last words to hear her say. Her eyes were downcast, and she did not see the almost imperceptible smile that dawned around his mouth. When she looked up he was grave and serious.

"I think he will be able to sit up this afternoon. If you will come up after dinner you shall see him. Meantime, shall I show you through the grounds? Perhaps you have never been here before."

He changed the subject quickly, for he knew it would not do to particularly notice her request. Georgia had often before wished to wander through the long walks and beautiful gardens around, but now her little dark face was downcast and troubled, and she said, gravely:

"No – thank you!" The last words after a pause, for politeness was not in the little lady's line. "I will go home now, and come back by-and-by. You needn't open the gate; I can jump over the fence. There! don't mind helping me. Good-by!"

She sprang lightly over the wall, and was gone, and pulling her sun-bonnet far over her face, set out for home.

Miss Jerusha wondered that day, in confidence to Fly and Betsey Periwinkle, what had "come to Georgy," she was so still and silent all dinner-time, and sat with such a moody look of dark gravity in her face, all unusual with the sparkling, restless elf. Well, they did not know that the free young forest eaglet had got its wings clipped for the first time, that day, and that Georgia could exult no more in the thought that she was wholly unconquered and free.

Richmond Wildair was at his post immediately after dinner, awaiting the coming of Georgia. He knew she would come, and she did. He saw the small, dark figure approaching, and held the gate open for her to enter.

"Ah! you've come, Georgia!" he said. "That is right. Come along; Charley is here."

"Does he know I am coming?" asked Georgia, soberly.

"Yes, I told him. He expects you. Here – this way. There you are!"

He opened the door, and ushered Georgia into a sort of summer-house in the garden, where, seated in state, in an arm-chair, was Master Charley, looking rather paler than when she saw him last, but with the same half droll, half indolent, languid air about him that seemed to be his chief characteristic.

"My dear Miss Georgia," he began, with the greatest *empressement*, the moment he saw her, "you make me proud by honoring so unworthy an individual as I am with your gracious presence. You'll excuse my not getting up, I hope; but the fact is, this unfortunate continuation of mine being resolved to have its own way about the matter, can be induced by no amount of persuasion and liniment to behave prettily, and utterly scouts the idea of being used as a means of support. Pray take a seat, Miss Georgia Darrell, and make yourself as miserable as circumstances will allow."

To this speech, uttered with the utmost *verve*, and with the blandest and most insinuating tones, Georgia listened with a countenance of immovable gravity, and at its close, instead of sitting down, she walked up, stood before him, and said:

"Yesterday you laughed at me, and I was angry. You said you were sorry, and I – I came to-day to tell you I was willing to make up friends again. There!"

She held out one little brown hand in token of amity. With the utmost difficulty Charley maintained his countenance sufficiently to shake hands with her, which he did with due decorum, and then, without another word, Georgia turned and walked away.

No sooner was she gone than Charley leaned back and laughed until the tears stood in his eyes. While he was yet in a paroxysm Richmond entered.

"Has she gone?" asked Charley, finding voice.

"Yes, looking as sober as Minerva and her owl."

"Oh! that girl will be the death of me, that's certain. By George! it was good as a play. There she stood with a face as long as a coffin, and as dark and solemn as a hearse," and Charley went off into another fit of laughter at the recollection.

"She condescended to forgive you at last, you see."

"Yes, Miss Georgia and I have, figuratively speaking, smoked the pipe of peace. Touching sight it must have been to a third person. It was a tight fit, though, to get her to do it."

"I think I could manage that proud little lady, if she were a sister of mine. I shall conquer her more thoroughly yet before I have done with her. I have a plan in my head, the result of which you will see pretty soon. I expect she will struggle against it to the last gasp, but she shall obey me," said Richmond.

## CHAPTER VII

### GEORGIA'S DREAM

"The wild sparkle of her eye seemed caught  
From high, and lighted with electric thought,  
And pleased not her the sports which please her age."

Two weeks passed. Charley was quite well again, and had left no effort untried to reinstate himself in the good graces of Georgia. As that young gentleman, in the profundity of his humility, had once told her he seldom failed in anything he undertook, and with his seeming genial good humor and handsome boyish face, he never found it a difficult task to make people like him, and Georgia was no more able to resist his influence than the rest of the world. And so they became good friends again – "brothers in arms" Charley said.

At first Georgia tried to resist his advances, and felt indignant at herself for allowing him to talk her into good humor and make her laugh; but it was all of no use, and at last the struggle was given up, and she condescended to patronize Master Wildair with a grave superiority that disturbed the good youth's gravity most seriously at times.

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