FULLER EDWIN WILEY

SEA-GIFT

Edwin Fuller

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Fuller E.

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Содержание

CHAPTER I 5
CHAPTER II 8
CHAPTER III 10
CHAPTER IV 12
CHAPTER V 18
CHAPTER VI 25
CHAPTER VII 29
CHAPTER VIII 34
CHAPTER IX 45
CHAPTER X 50
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 53

Edwin Wiley Fuller
Sea-gift / A Novel

CHAPTER I

As the usages of society generally require an introduction between strangers before communications of any moment can transpire, I hasten now to introduce myself, that the readers hereof, as yet strangers, but whom I hope before long familiarly to call “gentle” and “dear,” may acquire at least one element of interest in the narrative I propose to offer, namely, acquaintance with its subject – modesty forbids me to say hero.

I am, then, at your service, John – ; no, I cannot call my own name, it always sounds strange in my own mouth. I’ll hand you my card in a moment; and while I am fingering nervously in my case for the best engraved one I reflect:

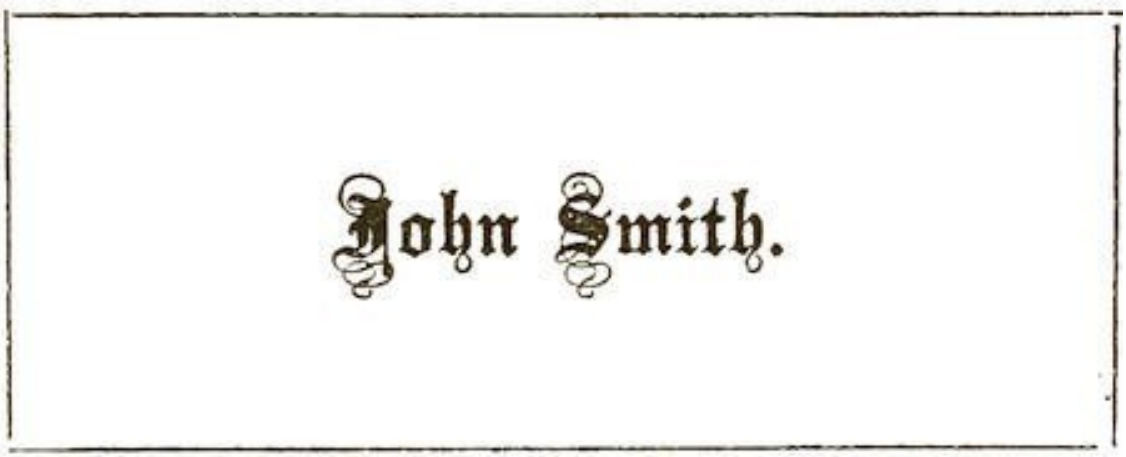
Why should you listen with the slightest attention to my history? How can I expect you to care any more for me and my affairs, than for anybody else and anybody else’s affairs? What right have I to inflict upon you a recital of events, in no way connected with yourself, that three-fourths of you believe untrue, and that concerns parties you never saw and perhaps never will see? None, reader, none!

All the attention you give must be entirely gratuitous, except what I shall gain by tickling the selfish side of your nature; for I well know that you like or dislike a book in proportion as yourselves are flattered. This flattery, however, must not be the result of the author’s effort, but your own. If the persons told of are beneath you in morals or intellect, then it is pleasant to reflect on your own superiority. Are they above you in these particulars? then you are pleased to associate with them, so to speak, and to assign to yourselves, in imagination, a similarity of conduct, under similar circumstances. The book must also possess an ingenuity of thought and expression that will make you conscious, to a flattering extent, of your own ingenuity in detecting it. Hence, often the most pleasant books to read are those that tell of simple things in such a way that you exclaim:

“I could have written that myself, if I had only thought of it.”

To afford self-complacent comparisons to the conceited, to furnish evidences of their own ingenuity to the soi-disant original, and to give conscious improvement to the soberly studious, is a more difficult task than I can undertake. I will simply tell my story, and leave the self-bees to suck what honey they please out of it.

Ah! I have at last found it. Here is my card:



You smile; you know me? No, I beg pardon, I have never had the honor of your acquaintance. You may have known some of the Smiths, but not the members of our immediate family. John is an old family name with us. My father, grand and great grandfather, were all named John; in fact we could ascend the family tree six squares, without getting out of the Johns; and even the seventh, who was an H (H. T. Smith), was preceded by numerous Johns, only to be distinguished from each other by the middle initials. There was a John A. Smith, and a John B. Smith, and a John C. Smith; coming down so alphabetically that I used to think, when a child, that, as father and myself only had John for our names, a great many Smiths, whose names were lost, had already lived, and used up the balance of the alphabet for their middle initials.

Our family is a very large one, being represented in almost every nation on the globe; but its vast extent is a matter of pride, not reproach, with me. When I remember the long list of Warriors, Statesmen, Scholars, and the immense army of Usemen it has given to the world, I conceive that the world owes the name a debt of gratitude, and, being one of the creditors, I expect partial payment at least.

The name itself points to an artizan origin, but the sieve of centuries has filtered our blood clear of the last dust of the anvil, and it throbs in our veins with Heraclidean purity. Perhaps the majority of my connections were men of humble birth, but where the number is so immense, we can claim only those that are creditable. Consequently, the aforesaid tree, hanging up in our library, with dusty, tarnished frame, and an age-yellowed parchment, presented a very mottled appearance of groups of very little blocks, with very little "*Smiths*" written on them, and very large blocks, their names spelt in capitals, and with broad red lines connecting them to us. These last were Smiths who attained to something and were worth claiming. Away off in one corner, with a great quantity of zigzag lines to make it even connect at all, was the name of John Smith, with "Capt." prefixed, and the date 1609. Father used to take me on his knee, when I grew old enough to listen, and tell me long stories about my brave relative, who had fought with the Turks, slept on straw, (a fact which led me to believe that he was also a kinsman of Margaret Daw), dared the Indians, looked calmly at Powhatan's lifted club, and then flirted with his gentle protectress, Pocahontas. Her descendants, in Virginia, father told me, always claimed kin with our family, though the relationship was based entirely on this approximation to matrimony between our ancestors. I remember well that I did not wish to recognise, as relatives, the children of the mulatto her picture represented her to be; and I insisted that they be put down with the little blocks and little Smiths, until he informed me that many of them had become distinguished; and while it was quite a disgrace in society to have had a dark ancestor with kinky hair, it was quite an honor to have had a dark ancestor with straight hair. I have seen, in life, since then, that social distinction often turns upon less than the crook of a hair.

For our immediate family there were father and mother and I, after I came.

My father was wealthy, owning a very large plantation near Goldsboro, a fine residence in Wilmington, N. C., and some heavy renting real estate in New York.

Possessing the means for it, he was fond of display, and stood among the neighbors, in the country, as a proud, though popular man. They admired his pride because it was above their envy, while his uniform courtesy and kindness flattered all with whom he had intercourse. His carriage at elections was sure to be welcomed with cheers, as it drove on the grounds, though he could never be persuaded to dabble in the turbulent waters of politics. In town, some loved, some envied, but all respected him. His perfect integrity, his generosity, and his social qualities, secured for him, at all times, a large circle of friends, while there were some who, feeling socially equal, were surpassed by him in character, both in their own eyes and in public opinion; these, of course, regarded him with some disfavor.

But of mother no tongue spoke evil. Every one possesses a distinguishing idiosyncrasy; hers was goodness – all that was comprehended under St. Paul's "charity." There was no sounding brass

or tinkling cymbal about her life; it was one of unselfish love, active benevolence, holy influence, and unassuming piety. I believe that the only command in the Bible she could not obey was, “Take up thy cross,” for her angelic temperament made every duty a pleasure, and every sacrifice a source of happiness. Nor was she only theoretically good. She put her faith into constant practice. When her pew was vacant at church, the doctor was sure to be our visitor; the pupils in her Sabbath school class made an entire transfer of the affections they should have reserved for their own mothers to her; and our servants refrained from any insolence and disobedience out of the purest respect for her – a perfect anomaly in slavery. The meanest hut in town could boast her presence if there was sickness within its walls; and our dining-room servants brought a salver and napkin for charity delicacies as regularly as they laid the cloth. Yet her charity was not of that order which begins anywhere else but at home; everyone in our house felt that she had a deep interest in them. Her smile was almost constant, and when she did reprove there was a tone of regret about her words, as if they pained her more than they did the recipient.

She and father were very happy together, though they lacked congeniality. He was fond of display and gaiety, she fond of retirement and quiet; his heart chiefly on the world, her’s all on heaven; he haughty though courteous, she gentle and kind; he formal, she good natured and easy in her every manner.

Father was a Polonius about dress, believing it should be “costly as thy purse can buy;” and he inundated mother’s wardrobe with silks, brocade and velvets, and constantly replenished her *bijouterie* with jewels of rare value, till she was as much bewildered as Miss McFlimsey, from a cause just the reverse. I have often smiled to see her, just to please father, start to church in a magnificent train and exquisite bonnet, looking for all the world like a poor dove, dressed in peacock’s plumage.

But I must not plunge into affairs too rapidly. Having given this short prologue before the curtain, I will now let it rise upon the first scene.

Ring the bell!

CHAPTER II

I was apparently expected, for, as I have been credibly informed, an extensive wardrobe had been prepared for me, and a whole drawer in the bureau appropriated for its storage. The said wardrobe consisted of several long sacerdotal robes, of the finest cambric; a dozen or more very unsacerdotal looking nether garments of linen and cambric, ruffled and trimmed with thread lace; a number of gowns of rich material; also a couple of flannel skirts, heavily embroidered, and seemingly intended only to tangle the feet; and quite a pile of unmentionables, with necessary fastenings.

There was also an elegant India muslin robe, trimmed with embroidery and fretted with lace, and a handsome lace cap, laid apart to themselves. These, as I afterwards learned, were intended for my baptismal suit.

I have thus particularized, because I am rather proud of having come into property so early.

One blustering night in the latter part of March I arrived, invaded the wardrobe, and appeared next morning on a pillow of state, ready to receive company. My appearance could not have been excessively prepossessing, as I formed no exception to the usual standard of æsthetic attainment exhibited by the little red monsters of my age. My hair was very thin and peach-fuzzy; eyes of uncertain hue, and apparently disgusted with the world and its sights, if we may judge from the persistency with which they kept the puffy, lashless lids closed; a dusty little forehead, that wrinkled so much when the eyes did open that one would suppose I had seen trouble, and "had losses" in the world from which I had so recently come; my mouth, purple and projecting with the upper lip, while the under lip was sucked in, after the most approved directions for pronouncing the Greek *phi*. The sleeves of my wrapper were rather too long (the usual fault in our first clothes, arising, perhaps, from the fact that while they are in process of construction there is no opportunity of trying them on us), and were rolled up around my tight-closed fists, which kept digging into my eyes with prize-fighting pertinacity.

The day following my advent being Sunday, and the place of my birth being in the country, many of the neighbors dropped in to see Mrs. Smith and the baby. All went through the same programme.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Smith; I hope you came through well; but then this is your first. There's nothing like getting used to it. And where's the little dear?"

And without waiting for my mother's replies and thanks, they would turn to the nurse holding me in her lap on the pillow, and removing the wrapping from my face as carefully as if it were a bird, and would fly out, they would gaze at me mesmerically, cluck to me with a perseverance undamped by the want of effect, and finally turn away with the defiant assertion that I was the perfect image of both my parents; an assertion which would have been at least debatable, from the fact that my father was very dark in complexion and feature, and my mother very fair. Some even insisted on holding me, the spinster visitors being particularly desirous of this privilege; and getting me in their laps, they would examine the tightness of my clothing, and the temperature of my skin, with the well assumed criticism of experience. And if one found, on thrusting her hands beneath my clothes, that my feet were cold, most proudly and complacently she would unfold my garments, and expose my little splotched limbs to the fire. My feet and legs must have looked very pitiful indeed, sticking out of a wilderness of flannel like two slim beets, crossing each other with their little flat soles, as if I was born to be a tailor!

When the visitors were gone my father would come and gaze long and steadily into my face, then anxiously suggest that something must be the matter with me, because I was lying so still; and my mother would call for me to be brought to her, and after innumerable fixings, adjusting the cloth over my face this way, turning my head that way, hiding the point of one pin, pulling out another, straightening this and that fold of a garment – after all these nervousnesses, peculiar to young

mothers, I would be found to be sleeping soundly; and then mother would regale herself with a long conversation between us, though it is more than probable she monopolized the talking.

But as my presence, so important to one household, had no effect whatever upon the old monarch of the glass and scythe, the days still managed to glide by, and with the crying spell at the morning bath, the troublesome feeding, father's fidgets and mother's anxiety, I arrived at the first era in baby life —*noticing*. What an important period! How many things were tried to attract my attention! Father whistled and clucked his mouth almost away; Aunt Hannah, my nurse, coming with my bottle, would tinkle on it with her thimble and sputter her lips to draw my blinking eyes towards her, and mother shook, successively and constantly, all her different bunches of keys over my face, in the vain endeavor to discover my favorite. Unconscious I, all the while lying on my back, vacantly staring to see the sounds. Mother now being able to sit up, it was her constant delight to have me in her lap, treating me as if I were a doll, and she a girl of ten; trying vainly to part and brush my scanty hair, making me sit up, while she kept my limber neck steady with one careful hand; and wearing my palms out teaching me to "patty cake." And such air castles as she would build for me! Telling me with as much emphasis as if I understood it all, and with each word, giving me a soft peck on the cheek with her forefinger.

"Never mind, tweetness! we'll do 'way from this old country house soon, and live in the town, and then, oh! the putty things Johnnie will have! A putty 'ittle tarriage and a g'eat big yocking horse, with a long mane and tail, and a 'ittle g'een wagon, and a 'ittle black dog, and ah! so many, many putties for a tweet 'ittle boy." Then chattering my chin in her ecstasy of love, till the titillation made me draw my face into a shape that might, by a very wide stretch of the imagination, be called a smile, she would scream for father to witness my display of intelligence. He, of course, would not believe it till I was chattered again; but instead of the laugh, the concussion of my gums would produce such plaintive wails that mother would apologise, with all the pleonasm of baby talk, and soothingly request me to "there, then, darling!"

My extreme youth prevented me from seeing the exact philosophy of "there then-ing" under pain, and I would continue my vocale till something more palatable to baby taste than baby talk would stop my mouth, and sleep's gentle wing would fan away my tears.

How long would a mother's patience watch my slumbers while she mused on the strange responsibility of her position! A soul given to her to form for good or evil; the potter's clay placed in her hands to make a vessel unto honor or dishonor! How fervent her prayer: "O, Father, guide me to guide him!"

What an impostor is the slumbering babe! His tiny hand, resting in dimpled fairness on your breast, seems to lift the veil of Futurity, and open to your view the brightest paths of flowery beauty, down which his feet shall patter with the innocence of childhood, run with the eager ambition of youth, stride with the honors of manhood, and totter with the feebleness of old age into the grave o'er which towers the marble tribute of a nation's love. Were the real curtain lifted, and Life's true pathway shown, how Earth's timid ones would shrink from its thorns and poisons, its bubble hopes and bitter cups. Thank God the Future is hidden, but the promise stands: "As thy days are, so shall thy strength be."

CHAPTER III

The year, growing old, began to feel ashamed of the jaunty green in which the spring and summer had decked him, and was laying aside his verdant garments, leaf by leaf, for the more dignified russet of autumn, when we – that is to say, father, mother and myself – prepared to return to our winter residence in Wilmington. I, of course, have no recollection of the journey, but have since been told that I stood it like a little soldier, though whether diminutive stature has anything to do with military fortitude I leave to nursery disputants to settle; as I believe their invariable encouragement to patience and endurance is the example of a fictitious officer of small size. The man has never been a child who has not been requested to take a dose of physic or bear a mustard plaster like a little captain, thereby inspiring himself with the greatest respect and admiration for the immense deglutitory capacity of that functionary, and the callosity of his epidermis.

The winter in turn passed away, and another spring and summer in the country, and we were returning again to town in the Fall, before I can begin to recollect things on my own account. What vague, undefined and grotesque memories they are! The carriage in which we travelled seems now to have been a chaos of shawls and baskets, from which father, mother and Aunt Hannah protruded helplessly, like pictures of fairies coming out of flowers. It was very cloudy, or at least everything now seems to have been gray when we started. The wheels commenced humming a drowsy tune, as they rolled through the sand, and soon hummed me to sleep; and when I awoke the carriage was going backward, and the sun had come out in the wrong place. Then we stopped at a well, near a house with a fat, wooden chimney, and an aspen tree in front, whose leaves seemed to be blinking all their eyes at me. A man in a broad-flapped hat came out with a gourd in his hand, and behind him a large yellow dog, that was tied to a piece of wood, and barked and jumped on each side of the string as if he wanted to shake it off. The well had a long pole, with a bucket at one end and a large stone at the other; and when Horace, our driver, went to it to draw some water for the horses, the stone seemed to fly up to the clouds. Then Horace filled the bucket and carried it to the horses, and I could hear them kissing it, as if they were so glad to see it; and, while I was listening at that, the man with the hat and dog handed in, at the carriage window, the great cool-looking gourd, with a long, crooked handle, down into which the water clicked, as if laughing, when father held it to me to drink.

After I had been bidden to “thank the kind gentleman, Johnnie,” and done so, Horace strapped the bucket again under the carriage, got up to his seat, and the house and well moved back out of sight, just as the man sent the stone flying up again to the sky. All is a blank for a long time – till Horace drives over a snake, and they hold me up to the window to see it. My eyes can discover nothing but the shadow of the bucket swinging between the wheels; and ever afterwards a bucket, under one of the old fashioned carriages, is associated with a dead snake and a hot, sandy road. There is another sleepy blank, and I drowsily rouse up, as we drive into town, to find it dark, and the lights all in a hurry to go somewhere, chasing each other by the carriage window, till one bold blaze stops right in front of it, and father exclaims, “Here we are!”

We get out, shawls, chaos and all, and I am carried up some broad stone steps, into a large hall with bright lights, and on through to a strange room, where there are new faces among the servants, a little excrescence of a fireplace, filled with red coals, and a large table steaming with good smelling dishes. Everything, for an indefinite period after this, is confused and unsatisfactory, and I can eliminate nothing into distinct recollection but two series of events, which, from their frequent repetition, have become facts of memory, viz., rides in my little carriage, and, in educational phrase, corrections; more plainly, whippings.

What tortures I suffered in my carriage, children alone know. Enclosed on three sides by the leather curtains, I was confined in front by a strap, which was buckled across my breast, to keep me from falling out, and, thus cooped up like a criminal, I would sit, listening to the grinding, gritty

sound of the wheels as they rolled over the flag stones, bumping my head against the framework, knocking my cap awry, and not knowing how to put it straight again, and suffering the misery of whining without being noticed – a source of much affliction, by the way, to many grown-up children – my nurse all the while walking behind, and pushing me along, engaged in too deep a conversation with other nurses to heed my murmuring!

One of my sorest trials was to pass the stores, and have some pert clerk stop my carriage and say:

"Hello! Auntie, whose child is that?"

"Col. Smith's, sir."

"Why," coming to me, and squatting down by the carriage, "I'll declare, he's a fine little fellow. How d'ye do, sir."

"Tell the gentleman how d'ye," persuades Aunt Hannah, who, like all nurses, is flattered by compliments to her protégé; but, before I can turn away in disgust, his tobacco-smelling moustache scratches my face. My greatest consolation, in all this persecution, was to meet little Lulie Mayland, my assigned sweetheart, though I was rather young for the blind god's arrow. Our nurses would lift us from our carriages and hold us up to kiss each other; and I would be in a perfect glee as she tried to put her little plump fingers into my eyes, and I felt her moist little mouth on my cheek. Putting me down in the foot of her carriage, we would be rolled home together, as happy and joyous as children only can be.

The other series of events to which I have alluded were, from their very frequency, fixed still more indelibly upon my mind; though the intense activity of certain cognitive faculties, during their occurrence, may have contributed somewhat to their retention. They were the immediate and inevitable consequence of any recusancy, on my part, in regard to the rules of the bath. I possessed the usual hydrophobic prejudice of extreme youth, and dreaded morning ablutions as Rome did the Gauls. Had I been old enough to have managed the bath myself I should not have cared, but to be washed like a dish, put into the tub, and spongeful after spongeful squeezed over me, was more than my good nature could submit to. Mother, finding her reasoning wasted, and her commands disregarded, would send for switches, and laying me across her lap, pour hot embers, as it seemed to me, on my naked legs. I did not stop to debate, which I might have done with propriety, whether the friction developed the latent heat of the rods, or whether they were actually set on fire and then applied; I simply recognized the fact, that unless the bath came the fire did, and I wisely chose the former. The embers' influence would last, on an average, about two days, when they would have to be again applied.

CHAPTER IV

I had been disturbing the centre of gravity of our globe for nine years, and had grown up into a mischievous, fun-making urchin – always out of the way when wanted, and in the way when not. I would have passed any committee on "boys," and probably taken the medal as the best specimen. I had fulfilled all the requisites of custom. I had torn out all my pockets with loads of marbles, knives, strings, stones, buttons, nails, &c. I had cut my hands and fingers, and fallen out of doors perhaps even more than was necessary. I could soil a ruffle with all the facility of contempt for such a feminine ornament. I could wear out shoes and tear a hat as quickly as the most reckless, and I had a real, first class aversion to "trying on" clothes in process of making; the rough edges of an unfinished jacket, rubbed into my neck by the fingers of the seamstress, not at all according with that placidity of temperament I had been advised to cultivate by the dogs-and-bears poetry, while the rapidity with which I could cover clean clothes with mud was, I fear, a matter of peculiar pride, as it was of certain punishment. My most perfect attribute of boyhood, however, was the devotion I bore my sweetheart, and the utter apathy and indifference with which I regarded all other girls.

Being such an one, I was highly gratified when mother said to me one day:

"Johnnie, we are going to give a dinner party next week, and as you will be without company, you may go over and invite Lulie Mayland."

"Oh! I'm so glad, I'm so glad," I sung out; "and I mean to go over right now, and tell her to come."

"No, no," said mother, smiling, and taking me by the jacket button, "we have not sent out our cards yet. Wait till Monday, then you may go."

I was disposed to whine at the delay, but she pinched my cheek as she got up from her chair, and said:

"No, you must do as I say, sir;" and left me, full of impatience for the advent of Monday. During the remainder of the week I exercised fully the child's faculty of being ubiquitous at home. The kitchen, however, received the largest share of my attention. I was around every table, dipping in every dish, and in the cook's way, to my fullest extent. If she turned around with a pan in her hand, it was sure to thump my head, and my anger thereat could only be appeased by letting me have a piece of dough to feel or a bowl to scrape. If eggs were to be beaten, I must try to froth them, till I was as full of foam as a half born Aphrodite; if flour was to be sifted, I was sure to get whitened; if spices were to be pounded I was certain to have my fingers mashed; and the burns I received, in trying to cook little dabs of cake, would have discouraged Mucius Scævola. Then my insatiate curiosity, and constant inquiries in regard to the numerous articles scattered around, would have worried out a less irascible nature than that of our cook; and by a final appeal to mother, and a command from headquarters, I would be forced to raise the siege, and retire from the field, with a jacket full of sugar and flour, sullenly licking my fingers in defiance.

Verily, children prove the old adage true: "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

And yet how dear to us are their mischievous ways, and how blank and drear would childhood be without them! The sunshine of their presence is always brightest when flecked by little clouds of annoyance. And when your tenderest bud has been plucked by the Reaper, your heartstrings throb saddest o'er the toy that's broken, and your tears fall in torrents o'er the little torn garment, while the clothes neatly folded pass unnoticed by.

Early Monday morning I hurried over to tell Lulie. As I entered her gate I discovered her at play, near a large rose bush, but was surprised and troubled to see a strange boy with her. I had somehow, in my own mind at least, assumed a kind of proprietorship over her, and the presence of any one else, in whom she could take any interest whatever, was excessively annoying. I managed to creep up quite near, without being discovered, and stood for some time watching them, and feeling, in my

jealousy, an almost irresistible desire to try a stone on the strange head. They were busy arranging a doll house, which consisted of rows of dirt piled up like fortifications, with lumps of moss for chairs and sofas, and an array of dolls that seemed to have been taken from the hospital, so much were they maimed in their legs and arms.

The strange boy and Lulie seemed very intimate, and bent their heads together, and talked in delighted and animated accents; he suggesting, and she listening and adopting his suggestions. And then he had on such new clothes, such a jaunty cap, such a blue jacket with bright buttons, and such boots with heels! In him I recognized a formidable rival, and concluded to retreat and give up all thoughts of the invitation. As I endeavored to slip away unobserved, I overturned a little tea set that was placed to one side, awaiting the completion of the house. At the noise they both turned around and saw me, and Lulie's face flushed a little as she exclaimed:

"There, now! see what you have done! turned over all my tea cups and broken I don't know how many!"

I offered, with all earnestness, the child's universal apology, "I didn't go to do it," but felt that it was not accepted, and that I, Lulie's acknowledged sweetheart, was not welcome. But boys are not oversensitive, and as I knew that to retire then would only make matters worse, I swallowed my confusion and joined in their play. Lulie did not introduce me to her companion, but I soon learned that his name was Frank, and that he was fast supplanting me in her favor. All my suggestions in regard to the disposition and arrangement of the furniture were at once overruled and disregarded for what he thought best.

All her questions and remarks were addressed to him, and they both seemed oblivious of my presence, save when they wished me to perform some office for them. Then Frank, as she called him, had such an insolent way of staring at me, and walking around with his hands stuck contemptuously into his trousers' pockets. And when we had completed the house, and were cleaning up, he raked away the earth with his boots, and made little ditches around the walls with his heels, and stamped the walks level; in short, made such a display of his morocco that I felt quite ashamed of my plain copper-tip shoes, and tried to hide them as much as possible by standing in the grass. After awhile it was proposed to get the doll's dinner ready, and then I thought of my errand. Without a moment's consideration for Frank's feeling, I broke out with: "Oh! Lulie, I forgot; you must come to our house to-morrow; we are going to have a dinner, and have got lots of good things cooked. There won't be any other girls there but you, and your pa and ma are coming, too. Won't you come?"

"I don't know," she replied, tying an apron on a very red-faced doll, with china feet, wooden legs, and her hair rubbed off the back of her head; "I don't want to go much, 'cause me and Frank are going to have a doll wedding to-morrow. Frank, let me tell you" – breaking off suddenly, and putting the doll down with her face on the ground, and her wooden limbs very much exposed, she took Frank aside to whisper something to him. I inferred it was a proposal to invite me to their dinner, as he replied loud enough for me to hear:

"No, let's have it all by ourselves."

Lulie seemed to assent, and as I had become rather incensed at the whole proceedings, I turned off without another word, and went home. Children suffer as keenly, if not as long, in their little loves and jealousies as older people; and I was as unhappy during the remainder of the day as was Octavia while Anthony was in Egypt. Many were the castles I had built in the air, in all of which Lulie reigned as queen. My favorite dream was to imagine her and myself wrecked, and playing Robinson Crusoe on some desert island. I had loved to think how we would sit together by the beach and watch the frightened billows fleeing to the shore, or stroll through shadowy forests in search of fruits; and how I would defend her from the wolves and bears, and how tender and confiding she would be when she had no one but me to look to. And then, at night, how cosy and snug we would be in our cave, which would be always warmed and lighted by some means. And when the savages came how we would shut the great stone door, and be safe and secure. But I had now found in the sand, not the naked foot

print Robinson saw, but a boot track, which conjured up more fears and suspicions than Defoe ever conceived; for it told of the presence of a cannibal for my heart.

The next day wore away and the guests began to arrive. Having nothing better to do, I stationed myself at the hall window to watch the carriages as they came up to our door, and their contents came out.

The first that arrived were the Cheyleighs, numbering Mr. Edward Cheyleigh and wife, a stylish old couple, who prided themselves on their family and position in society, and the two Misses Cheyleigh – ladies who had been in the market for some time, and as yet were unspoken. They were great sticklers for the usages of society, and dependent, in a great measure, on their social prestige and *en regle* manners for the attention they received. They were well aware of the fact, that while Mr. Cheyleigh had given balls and parties innumerable for their benefit, he had not yet given a wedding party, and to accomplish for him the privilege of giving one was and had been their constant aim, albeit its fervor was a little abated by its continued futility.

As they entered the hall, and found the hat and coat stands empty, Miss Ella, the younger, turned to her father, and with much petulance exclaimed:

"Now, pa, I hope you are satisfied; you would hurry us off, and now we are the very first. I declare it is really too bad."

"Yes, it is," chimes in Miss Gertrude, the elder, "and looks as if we were so dreadfully anxious to come."

"Well, my daughters," philosophises Mr. Cheyleigh, "somebody has to be the first, and we are fully ten minutes behind the time specified."

"Ten minutes!" exclaimed both young ladies, between the pronunciation of the "ten" and the "minutes," changing their faces from a frown to a smile, as mother, hearing their voices, appeared in the hall and welcomed them, taking the ladies off to the cloak room; while William, our servant, who had been leaning against the stair while their conversation was proceeding, recovered himself sufficiently to usher Mr. Cheyleigh into the parlor. Many others arrive and are passed in, until at length two young gentlemen approach, toss away their cigars, and stroll, as it were, up the steps, taking a long time to reach the door, and conversing in a low tone, which I could overhear.

"I wonder who is to be here to-day," said the first, frowning as if in pain, as he buttoned his glove with an effort; "dinners with old folks are devilish bores."

"I understand the two Misses Cheyleigh will be here, and that will be some relief," replied the other, pulling down his wristband, so as to show the white.

"Yes, quite a relief to you. From your devotion down at Bentric's last evening I should judge you were really in love with that long, languishing Gertrude."

"Hush, Cassell, I vow you shan't speak disrespectfully of her. I have a right to admire her, if she is a little oldish."

"Success to you, Berton! here goes for an hour's boredom with that little mincing, over vivacious Ella;" and he pulled the bell, muttering as he did so, "I say confound these small and select gatherings; a fellow is always put off with a fussy old maid, or a gassy old fogy, who'll talk you into an anatomy in five minutes."

"Any way," whispered the other, as William opened the door, "old Smith keeps good wine and feeds well."

They are followed in turn by others, till at last Dr. Mayland's carriage drives up, and, to my great surprise and delight, I recognise the curly little head of Lulie through the window. I was too much piqued by her conduct of the day before to run out and meet her, but sprang at her from behind the door, as she entered, in a conciliatory kind of way, and we both lost our stiffness in a hearty laugh. Without waiting for more arrivals I hurried her off to the nursery.

"I thought you were not coming," I began, as soon as we were fairly in, "but that you and that Frank somebody were to have a doll's party."

"Yes, but you see Frank and I fell out," she replied quickly, "and I think he is ever so mean."

"So do I," I responded warmly, "don't let's have anything more to do with him; we can always have more fun by ourselves, can't we?"

"Yes, we can; you are not mad because I said what I did yesterday, are you?"

"No, that I am not," I replied, delighted at the turn things had taken; "but come, Lulie, let me show you what father gave me on my birthday."

Sitting down together on the rug before the bright glowing fire, we took out of its box a little model of a house in separate pieces, and commenced to put it together. I sat and gazed at her, as she bent over the blocks, trying to make piece after piece fit; and she looked so beautiful, with one side of her face all red from the fire, and her clustering brown curls drooping so gracefully around it, that I could resist the inclination no longer, but leaned forward and kissed the glowing cheek.

"Oh stop!" she said, tossing her head without looking up; "you bother me so I can't build the house at all."

This was so much milder than I expected I tried another.

"Stop, I tell you," she exclaimed, feigning to strike me with one of the blocks; "see, you've tumbled all the top of the house off."

"I will stop," I said, looking at her very earnestly, "if you will give me a kiss of your own accord."

"Here, then," she said, raising her head; and throwing back her curls she put up her rosy lips, and I kissed her. People say children know nothing about love, but there was a thrill of pleasure and a smack of romance in that kiss before the nursery fire, that none which have ever since touched my lips have possessed.

We amused ourselves in various ways till the servant brought in our dinner, spread the nursery table, and, as I gave Lulie my high chair, piled up books in another for me, to bring me up to a comfortable level with our meal, then left us to enjoy it. We chewed out praises, and smacked out lavish encomiums on the skill of the cook, as we eagerly applied ourselves to her dainties; and when Lulie had sipped the last trembling particle of *blanc mange*, and added the *debris* of the last grape to the goodly pile on her fruit plate, we got down, instead of rising, from our chairs, and went from the nursery to the dining room. The ladies had withdrawn some time since, and the gentlemen had almost finished their wine. The two young men, who had characterized dinners with old folks as devilish bores, had excused themselves, and gone back to the parlors.

Finding nothing to interest us in the dry, stale jokes or political fanfarronade of the dining room party, we ran off to the parlors, and took our station on each side of the door, to watch all within. The ladies were grouped round the fires or examining the pictures, while Mr. Cassell and Miss Ella, Mr. Berton and Miss Gertrude, were promenading slowly the whole length of the rooms. We thought this was a great sign of love, and watched them with great interest. As they approached our end of the room we could hear very well, but when their backs were turned their words were gradually lost; so that our ideas of the tenor of their conversation were somewhat disconnected. Mr. Berton, who seemed interested in what he was saying, and Miss Gertrude equally so, approached first.

"Yes, indeed," he was saying, as they came into earshot, "we had a most charming time. The moonlight was as bright as day, and the Minnie scarcely rippled the water. The music, too, was better than usual, and we danced eight sets going down, besides the round dances. We missed you a great deal; everybody was inquiring for Miss Gertrude."

"Ella told me what a delightful excursion it was," replied Miss G., trying to pout bewitchingly, as if still vexed at her own absence. "I was so exceedingly unwell that ma would not hear to my going, and I had a real hard cry over it. When do we have another?"

"I am afraid not before another moon. We are talking, however, of getting up a picnic for the Sound next – ." They passed down the room, and out of hearing, as Cassell and Miss Ella came up, she all smiles, he all languor.

"You say they are from the western part of the State?" he inquired, with a drawl, as if he only pursued the subject because he was too lazy to find another.

"Yes," replied Miss Ella, with nervous vivacity, "from Charlotte, I think. They are quite an addition to our society, are they not?"

"Quite!" laconicised Cassell, as if he had done all for the subject that could be required of him.

"And then," she continued, "they are connected with the Cartoneaus of South Carolina, who, you know, are some of the first people in the State. Mr. Paning brought a letter of introduction to pa from Judge Francis Cartoneau. He and ma called, of course, and were much pleased, though Mrs. Paning, ma thought, was a little stiff."

Lulie and I were immensely interested in this conversation, and eagerly listened for its further development.

Mr. Cassell paused awhile, as if to debate whether his system could stand a continuance of the conversation, then, with a resigned arch of his eyebrows to himself, asked:

"Do they intend to reside here?"

"Oh yes, they have bought Mr. Huxley's place, and are having it fitted up in magnificent style. When they move in I understand they intend giving a grand ball!"

Mr. Cassell paused again, then taking a flower from his lappel, bit it savagely, and asked:

"Have they any daughters?" as if it was the last question she might expect from him.

"No, they have only one child – a little boy – named Frank, after his uncle, Judge Cartoneau."

Cassell did not appear at all interested in the name of the little boy, but I was intensely so, and leaned in the door to hear more, but, unfortunately, they had passed down the room out of hearing, while Miss Gertrude and her beau came again into audience. They were still on the subject of the excursion, and Mr. Berton was verging towards the sentimental, while Miss Gertrude was encouraging him with all the art she could command.

"I'll vow I didn't, Miss Gerty; I sat apart almost the whole night, thinking of you."

"Why, Mr. Berton! Ella told me you were perfectly devoted to Miss Withers."

"Withers, indeed! she's perfectly horrid; but did you think enough of me to inquire what I did?"

"Of course, I – " Her remarks were broken off, as far as we were concerned, by the entrance of the gentlemen from the dining room. We tried to dodge, and get away, but two of them caught us, and holding us by the ears, asked our names – which question seems to be, with most people, a test of a child's intelligence. To answer it was a task I dreaded more than Hercules did the Augean stables. My name, short as it was, seemed to stretch into a length equal to the King of Siam's whenever I had to pronounce it; and I have often blessed the man who invented cards. There being no escape now, we drawled out, respectively, "John Smith" and "Lulie Mayland," and were released, one of our captors remarking as we scampered off:

"Smith, you and Mayland ought to raise them up for each other. They will make a fine match one of these days."

I fully forgave him for asking my name, and earnestly wished he might be a prophet.

Glad to get away, Lulie and I ran out into the back yard, and played till 'twas very dark, when one of the servants came to call us in. We found all the guests gone but Dr. and Mrs. Mayland, who were just entering their carriage. I bade Lulie a hasty good-bye, and turned back into the house, feeling a joyous flutter about the heart, as if a humming bird were enclosed in it and was struggling to escape. Mother met me in the hall, and said:

"John, it is so late you need not get your lesson to-night, but, as you are perhaps sleepy, you can go into the nursery, and I will come in and hear you say your prayers."

Though I was a good stout boy, mother could not get out of the old habit of seeing me to bed, and hearing me repeat my prayers aloud.

I entered the nursery, but instead of undressing, sat down by the fire, and began —

"Fancy unto fancy linking."

Again I was on the desert island, but the boot track had disappeared, and our snug grotto received the addition of a grate, a rug, and a house model. The savages came, and smacked their bloody lips through the bars of our cave, and yelled with eager desire to reach us, but I cared not. I was happy as long as those curls were drooping over the blocks, and I was stealing kisses from the rosy architect.

Mother came in, and broke my reverie. I got up, undressed, and kneeled down by her side. Laying my cheek on her knee, I commenced "Our father" with my tongue, while my mind was still in the grotto with Lulie. I had not repeated half, when a ferocious savage tore loose a bar, and was squeezing himself through the aperture, while I stood on the defensive, with one of the Corinthian columns of our little house for a weapon, ready to strike down the invaders. So vivid was the picture that even my tongue forgot its office, and with the broken prayer upon my lips I lay gazing into the glowing coals. Mother's hands touched my head as she said gently:

"My child, what are you thinking of? Remember, you are praying to the great God, who will not hear you unless you ask in earnest. If you were asking your father for something you wished very much would you not think of what you were saying?"

"Yes, ma'am," I replied, meekly, at length recalled from my vision.

"And do you not want God to take care of father and mother, and yourself, to-night?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then ask him as you ought." And with that soft hand upon my head all earthly visions vanished, and I repeated the oft-said prayer, with all of childhood's earnestness, and its simple, trusting faith.

I rose, got in the bed, received mother's good-night kiss, and, as I closed my eyes, Queen Mab's grey gnat coachman drove his atomic team across my nose, and Lulie, models, savages, Cassell, Miss Gertrude, and crestfallen Prank Paning, all danced before me, and danced me to sleep.

CHAPTER V

On the morning succeeding the day described in the last chapter, father startled me very much at the breakfast table, by asking:

"John, how would you like to commence school? you are getting too old to be playing all the time."

"Oh, ever so much!" I replied, eagerly, watching his face closely, to see if he was in earnest. "Ned Cheyleigh began last session, and I can read and spell as well as he can now, so it will be easy for me to keep up."

"Well, I saw Miss Hester Weck about it yesterday, and she said she would be very glad to take you, so you can get ready to start to-morrow morning."

I was too much excited to eat any more, but began teazing mother to begin right away on my school outfit.

"Mother, I want a satchel to carry my books in, and a basket for my luncheon; and, mother, please get me a string for my top, because all the boys play top, and I broke my string yesterday; and father, please sir, get me a knife to peel apples and to cut pencils with, and a piece of leather to make me a sling, and a – "

"Hush, Johnnie," said mother, "be quiet, and I will be sure to have you ready. The school room is just around the corner, so you can come home for your lunch; and as your 'books' only consist of one 'Angell's First Book' you will hardly need a bag."

I gulped down a mouthful of food, then hastening from the table, I got my Reader and devoted the whole morning to picking out all the hard words and spelling them over. By dinner time I had mastered nearly all of them, and could read with considerable fluency the pathetic tale of retributive justice which befel the cruel James Killfly.

That evening when father came in he brought me a beautiful knife with a file blade in it. To possess a knife with a file blade had always been one of the unattained pinnacles of my ambition – this appurtenance, in my eyes, being the very *toga virilis* of cutlery; and as my property in this department had hitherto consisted of blunt pointed Barlows, and fatigued looking dog knives, with their edges purposely made dull, to be the undisputed owner of an exquisite pearl handled knife, with brightest blades, placed me at once upon the pinnacle, and I enjoyed the situation. I was never tired of opening and snapping the blades, and blowing my breath upon them, as the larger boys did, to test their metal. I trimmed my pencil quite away, because the cedar cut smoothly, and the chairs suffered as severely as Washington, Sr.'s, cherry tree did.

I rose next morning with the sun, and was busying everywhere in my preparations for school. Breakfast finished, with my book in my hand, and that adored knife in my pocket, I started with father for the school. I felt a little sinking about the heart as I kissed mother good-bye and descended the steps, and would, had I not been ashamed, have shrunk from the new life I was entering, and gone back to the old routine of play. As we turned our corner I looked back, and mother was still standing in the door, gazing thoughtfully after us. I could not then understand or appreciate her feelings, but I can now.

Miss Hester answered our tap at her door in person, and invited us in to a seat. I shrank closer to father as the curious eyes of the scholars were all turned towards me, and I found no kindly sympathy in the glances. Father took a seat and entered into conversation with Miss Hester, while I timidly surveyed the apartment where my ideas were to be taught to shoot.

Miss Hester Weck kept a small preparatory school for girls and boys, and ruled it with old maidish particularity. All the scholars had to sit up straight on three rows of benches, which were so arranged with reference to Miss Hester's seat that she could have a full view of all. None were allowed to speak or laugh, and as for rocking backwards and forwards, a motion believed by children to be

conducive to study and essential to retention, the thing was unheard of in Miss Hester's school. Some, indeed, had tried it on first entering, but after one or two interviews with Miss Hester's rod they had learned to study in one position. On one side of the room was a row of pegs for the girls' hats and bonnets, and on the opposite side a similar row for the boys'. At one end of the room was the rostrum on which our monarch sat, and at the other was a long desk, covered with ink splotches, at which the scholars wrote. Having completed my survey of the room I turned my attention to the scholars, and scanned their faces closely, as I was to associate, more or less intimately, with all of them. They were all, with the exception of two or three, munching the corners of their books, and staring steadily at father and me. There were five occupants of the front bench, who, I thought, from their position, must be first grade scholars. The first was a tall, raw-boned girl, with sandy hair and freckled face, and light gray eyes, turned up at the corners, giving her a sinister and Chinese expression that assured me of victimization. Next to her was her brother, a small and sleepy second edition of herself, not at all revised or corrected. Then came a bright-eyed little fellow who was engaged in the pleasant diversion of making hideous faces at me. At his side was a fat, redheaded girl, who was the only one studying; and lastly, a stupid, tow-haired youth, whose straight flax hair looked as if it had been hung on his head to dry, and had dried stiff, and who was gazing at me as if I were vacancy.

The second bench held three girls and two boys, who resembled in many particulars those on the first bench. On number three I recognized, to my great joy, Ned Cheyleigh and Lulie Mayland, and to my annoyance Frank Paning. Before we had concluded our interchange of whispered salutations, father rose and said to Miss Hester:

"I will now leave him with you. He is a good boy and easy enough to manage, though a little inclined to mischief."

"Oh, I will take care of that," she said. "We will be first rate friends; won't we, Johnnie?"

Father left me, the door closed on him, and I was beginning to enter Life's shallowest waters alone.

"Come here, Johnnie," said Miss Hester, "let me see how much you know, so that I can put you in a class."

I rose, and with a great swelling knot in my throat, drew my book from my side pocket and carried it to her.

"How far have you been in this?" she said, as she carelessly fluttered over the leaves.

"I went clear through it, ma'am, under mother."

"Well, let me see how you spell; spell 'honest'?"

I had begun, at first, spelling by recollecting how the letters looked on the page, but mother had broken me from it and taught me to spell words by their sound. Accordingly I stammered out, while my eyes filled with tears and the knot in my throat almost choked me:

"O-n-n-e-s-t – Onnest."

At this Frank Paning led off with a laugh, followed by the whole school. A rap on Miss Hester's desk secured silence, and she proceeded.

"Don't be so frightened, child, try another word; spell 'Business.'"

Knowledge of everything, save the names of the letters, was gone, and I blindly blurted out:

"B-i-z-z-i-n-e-double ess!" I broke down completely and stood there trying to hide my crying, while the perverse tears would drop on the floor, and my nose, treacherous organ, required constant snuffling or the tell-tale use of my handkerchief.

Another titter was heard, but Miss Hester repressed it, and said in her kindest tone:

"Poor child, you are too much agitated to spell. I will put you, for the present, in a class with Lulie Mayland and Edward Cheyleigh. Go there, and let her show you where the lesson is."

As I started across the room a wad of chewed paper struck me in the face. I did not see who threw it, but Miss Hester did, and calling up Frank Paning gave him a sound whipping.

Sitting down with Ned and Lulie I felt more at my ease, and by the time recess was announced, felt like joining in the games. All was clatter and chatter as we poured from the door, and the scholars forgot I was a "newy" in the excitement of the play. The game of "goosey" was proposed and commenced. We separated to our bases, and at the call advanced. Scampering hither and thither, some tried to catch, some to be caught. I dodged, in good earnest, both boys and girls, and endeavored to reach the opposite base with a zeal that would have adorned a fanatic. But it was no use; the tall and freckled girl singled me out, and with a speed that would have disdained Atalanta's apples, pursued steadily, and with the utmost perseverance, after me. No matter how I twisted, turned and doubled, still she was behind me, nearer and nearer, never relaxing her speed, while with every backward glance I gave, her brown calico dress flew higher and higher, and her parrot-toed feet stepped over each other more and more swiftly.

Of course she overhauled me, and, catching me by the lower edge of my jacket, triumphantly dragged me backwards to the base, in the style known as "walking turkey." Throughout the whole game it was my fate to be caught by the girls, but I was not over timid on this score, and rather enjoyed it. At one o'clock I ran home for lunch, and gave father and mother a detailed account of my morning's experience, omitting the crying scene. I returned to the school room with a light heart, and, as children are not very formal, was soon acquainted with all the scholars. Frank met me first, and begged my pardon for his rudeness in the morning. He made himself so kind and attentive to me that my prejudices against him imperceptibly began to wear off, though I could not help observing that he was overbearing to those who were meaner dressed than himself, and whom he considered his inferiors.

As the days wore on I had time to form intimacies, and I found one friend in the school whom I could "grapple unto my soul with hooks of steel."

Between Edward Cheyleigh and myself there sprang up the most lasting friendship. He was the most noble hearted boy I ever knew. Manly and firm to the last degree, yet gentle and soft as a girl in his manners; full of life and gaiety, yet no amount of persuasion could make him yield his consent to what he thought was wrong. He was, in consequence, rather unpopular with the scholars, and I have often seen his face flush at a sneer about his being the favorite, after a refusal to join in some plan to worry Miss Hester. I used to admire his firmness and moral courage, and long to imitate his example, but I was too much afraid of the ridicule of the school, and I would often forfeit Ned's approval rather than face the jeers of so many.

As the session passed on I lost all my reserve, and, with the absence of embarrassment, came my love for fun. I was soon up to all the tricks of school, and an expert in their performance. I was perfect in the art of chewing and shooting paper, and William Tell took no more pride in his apple feat than did I in the accuracy with which I could plant a two inch pulp in a boy's forehead across the room, and never attract a glance from Miss Hester. I could gauge a pin to the exact desideratum of pain, as I inserted it just above my neighbor's point of contact with the bench. I could stand up and call out, "M' I g' out?" as loudly as the boldest, or assume, with perfect ease, the don't care expression and slinging gait, after a mortifying attempt at recitation. These accomplishments were only acquired after months of timidity and practice, but by degrees I became a ringleader in all the mischief, and many were the difficulties I became involved in. Frank Paning always joined us in our schemes, but somehow generally managed to escape the punishment that fell on the rest of us.

One day Miss Hester was later coming than usual. We had all assembled, and waited patiently for her some time, when Frank suddenly proposed that we bar her out, and make her give us holiday. His proposition was agreed to by several, of which I was the first; while all the girls, and two or three of the very small boys, went outside to wait for her. We commenced our operations with vigor, piling up chairs, tables, and Miss Hester's desk, against the door, in our haste turning the ink over the copy books and papers, and scattering the pens and rulers generally. As we concluded our arrangements, we observed Ned still inside, sitting quietly at his usual corner.

"Why, hallo, Ned!" said Frank, "I thought you were outside with the other girls. Why don't you go?"

"Because I don't wish to," Ned replied, quietly, rubbing out one figure on his slate with a wet forefinger and putting down another.

"But you won't tell on us, will you?" asks a timid one.

"I shall not tell on any one, as it is none of my business;" and Ned bent over his slate as if that was all he had to say.

"All right! here she comes 'round the corner," exclaimed two or three excited ones, peeping through a crevice in the window. "Wonder what the old lady will do?"

Sure enough Miss Hester was coming, walking with all the majesty of a teacher, and carrying demoralization to our garrison by her very presence. As she came up we could hear a chorus of shrill voices crying:

"Lor! Miss Hester, what do you think? the boys have locked us and you out, and say they won't let us in till you promise to give 'em holiday."

She did not reply, but we heard her come up the steps, and shake the door two or three times. Finding it barred, there was an ominous silence of a minute or two, then another more violent shake. The more timorous of our number now wished to open the door, and surrender unconditionally; but Frank and I, by dint of hard persuasion, and by representing to them that this course would not palliate their sin, induced them to hold out. She left the house, and went off, walking rapidly. The advocates of surrender now gained strength, but we argued and plead them into a little more obduracy. Before our council of war had ended Miss Hester returned with a carpenter, and we felt that the battle was hers. We got our books, took our seats, and watched, with anxious eyes, the door, as it creaked and strained with every blow. A moment more and it flew open, scattering our barricade in every direction, and Miss Hester marched in victorious. Having dismissed the carpenter, and put things to rights, she turned her attention to the perpetrators of the deed. We saw, from the miniature thunder cloud that had gathered between her brows, that there was no hope for mercy, so we prepared to meet our fate resignedly. Calling us all up in a row, she began at the top of the roll:

"Eliza Atly, were you inside or outside?"

Miss Eliza Atly, the freckled girl, with corner-drawn eyes, is delighted to testify that she was outside.

"Abram Barn, outside or inside?"

Abram Barn, the small, fat boy, with puffy cheeks and dry tow hair, bubbles out his answer as if it were liquid:

"Out chide, m'm!"

"Edward Cheyleigh?"

"Inside, ma'am."

"Edward! I am surprised at that. Did you bar the door against me?"

"No, madam."

"Do you know who did it?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do, but I cannot tell."

Miss Hester's face flushed, as she said, sternly:

"Those who conceal are as guilty as those who commit."

She proceeded down the roll, receiving confessions from some, and denials from others, till she came to Frank's name.

"Frank Paning," she said, with her darkest frown, "did you bar my door?"

"No, madam, I did not."

He had been nailing down the windows while we were barring the door.

"Did you see who did it?"

"I did not see any one do it. When I looked the door was all barred up tight."

Every one looked at him in amazement, but he replied by a smirk of conceit at his success.

"John Smith, did you help to keep me out?" thundered Miss Hester, her patience all gone.

"Yes, ma'am, I did."

"That will do; you can all take your seats."

My name completed the roll, and she laid aside the book, and took up the rod. After some remarks on the enormity of our offence, and the surprise she felt that some of her best scholars should have countenanced it, and that it was her unpleasant duty to punish all concerned, she proceeded to call up the offenders in order.

"Edward Cheyleigh, come here, sir. I regret very much the necessity of punishing you, as it is the first time, and I have never before even reproved you; but the offence is very grievous, and as you know who did it, and won't tell, you are accessory to the deed. Hold out your hand!"

I could stand it no longer, as Ned, with his face crimson from mortification, yet his head erect with conscious innocence, held out his hand for the undeserved blows, but springing from my seat, I cried:

"Miss Hester, Ned had nothing to do with it. We all begged him to join us, but he wouldn't; and if you are going to whip him, let me take his share."

"Stand back, sir," she said sternly, "your time will come soon enough. Your hand, Edward."

He extended each palm, and received the cutting blows without a quiver, then turned to his seat. As he sat down his fortitude gave way, and, burying his face in his hands, he burst into sobbing.

My time came last, but so much did I feel for Ned that I scarce heeded the stinging ferule. Miss Hester, after some further remarks, dismissed us for the evening. As we poured from the door, the occasion furnished food for more chattering than a cargo of magpies could have made.

"Wasn't old Hess mad, though?" says one, whose hand was still red from the ruler.

"She couldn't get much out of my hand with her old slapjack," boasts another, rubbing his hands unconsciously on his pants, in striking contradiction of his assertion.

As Frank Paning came out I heard him say:

"But didn't I get out of it nice?"

"Yes, you sneaked out like a dog," I replied indignantly. Another chimed in:

"Yes, you did. Ned Cheyleigh's good game, though. I don't believe he ever would have told old Hess, if she had beat him till now."

"Umph!" sneered Frank, "'twas because he was afraid to tell. He knew some of us would whip him if he did."

Ned was coming down the steps, the traces of tears still on his cheeks, when he heard Frank's remarks.

The crimson on his face gave place to the white hue of anger, as he walked up to Frank and said:

"You lie. I dare you to try it."

Frank looked sheepish, but the boys were all around him, and he felt that he must fight, so, laying down his books, he met Ned.

What a momentous subject of interest is a fight between school boys! A duel between senators excites not more proportionate attention.

These only passed a couple of blows, then clinched and fell, Frank underneath. What digging in the ground with heels and toes! Frank trying to wring his body from under Ned, and Ned trying to hold him down; while the enthusiastic spectators clapped their hands and shouted as the tide of battle wavered:

"Oh my, Ned! Hold him down! Turn him over, Frank! Throw out your leg and push! Jerk his hands up, Ned," etc., etc.

After several futile struggles Frank gave up, cried "Enough!" and both arose considerably soiled and blown.

I took Ned in charge, and we started home, I brushing the dirt from his clothes, and endeavoring to remove all traces of the conflict.

"Ned," I said, as we reached Mr. Cheyleigh's gate, "I am so sorry I got you into this trouble."

"Oh, never mind that," he replied cheerfully. "I hated it on account of its being my first, but I wasn't in fault any way, and I wouldn't tell her now to save her life."

Ned was human, and could not but feel anger at his undeserved punishment.

We parted, and I hastened home. Anticipating Miss Hester's narration of the affair, I gave a faithful account of it; taking care to describe our conduct as "having just locked her out for a little fun," and descanting, in glowing terms, on her cruelty to Ned. Father's brow darkened, and he shook his head ominously when I had concluded.

"John," he said at length, and I knew by his tone that he did not see the joke as I did, "this will not do. You are always getting in some school difficulty. I must look into this affair and learn the true state of the case. Go, get your supper and then go to bed. I will see you in the morning."

I sullenly went into the dining room and partook of the meal, with gloomy forebodings of the morrow, for I knew, from experience, that the "seeing" in the morning meant something more than vision.

I went to my chamber and got to bed, but not to sleep (for it was too soon for that, and I could still hear out doors the sounds of day life and activity); but to ruminate on the injustice of Miss Hester, father and the world generally. I felt that father should have taken my part and not threatened another punishment, when I had already expiated my fault at Miss Hester's hands. I took a gloomy delight in forgetting all his kindness, and bringing up to memory all his chastisements and reproofs, and I finally came to the conclusion that I was a poor, persecuted little martyr, that nobody cared for me, and that it would be such a sweet revenge to bundle up all my clothes in a handkerchief and run away. I thought how fine it would be to go far away where no one ever heard of our home, and achieve an immense fortune; and when, at last, everybody thought me dead, and father was sufficiently penitent for his cruelty, to return in a gilded chariot, with several dozen white horses, and riding up before our door in great state, inquire if Col. Smith, the father of an exiled child, lived there. The only obstacle to my fugitive project was the lack of somewhere to run to; and as no suitable place presented itself to my mind, I gave up the scheme for the present, always to be renewed, though, when aggrieved, and always to be as far from execution. I persevered, however, in my misanthropic musings till I had rendered myself thoroughly miserable, when my reverie was broken by the entrance of mother, who came and sat down on the edge of my bed. Taking my hand in her soft palm, she said:

"Tell me all about your difficulty, Johnnie. How did it occur?" Turning my face from the wet, warm pillow up to her's, I gave a full recital of all, throwing in towards the last a few reflections on father's harsh treatment, as it appeared to me.

"Hush! hush! Johnnie, you must not speak so. I know it seems hard to you, but it was well calculated to provoke your father. This is the fourth or fifth time you have been punished this session, and he knew it would not do to encourage you in such rebellious conduct."

I remained silent and grum, and mother continued:

"I know boys think it very manly and brave to be insubordinate at school, and to show all the disrespect they can to the teachers; if they are reproved to reply pertly, and if they are chastised, to bear it without flinching. All these are foolishly considered marks of great spirit. But it is a very mistaken idea. Is it not wrong, culpably wrong, to obstruct and impede the labors of those who are striving to do us good? The very fact of their being compensated renders them responsible to parents and guardians for a more careful instruction of those placed under their charge, and yet you endeavor by every means to prevent the discharge of this responsibility, even though you are to receive the benefit. The teacher's task is a difficult one any way, and you should strive to lighten the burden, by prompt and ready obedience, instead of scheming to make it heavier. Miss Hester is an old lady, and entitled to our respect from her very age; and then she is alone in the world; she has no one to

look to for protection, and makes all her living by her little school. How shameful and sinful, then, to tease and trouble her! No wonder she lost her patience when she found herself locked out of her own house, compelled to stand in the street, a laughing-stock for the passers by. And see, too, another consequence of your fun, as you called it: your little playmate, Ned Cheyleigh, who had the manliness to refuse to join you, is punished equally with the guilty, and has to suffer for your fault. I like fun and innocent mischief myself, but never let it be enjoyed at the expense of another's feelings."

Her kind words and manner unnerved me, and the black cloud in my heart poured its rain from my eyes, as I sobbed out:

"I – didn't – mean – to hurt – her – feelings – , and – I'll – beg – father's pardon – and hers – the first – thing – in – the – morning. I told – Ned – how sorry – I was – about – him – this – evening."

"Well, I hope you will let this prove a lesson to you for the future. It's getting late; good night."

As she left the room I turned over on my pillow, took another hearty pull at my tears, and was then at Morpheus' service.

CHAPTER VI

I rose early next morning, full of good resolutions; and, to put the first in execution, found father, and asked his pardon. He granted it kindly, and said, with a smile:

"I have determined to remove you to the Academy. You are getting almost too large for Miss Hester to manage. I will continue your tuition pay to her for the remainder of the session, as it is our fault that you leave her. You may remain at home to-day, as it is Friday, but on Monday you must commence with Mr. Morris."

I was perfectly delighted with the transfer, as it would add considerably to my dignity, for I had long looked forward to entering the Academy as an era in life.

As soon as breakfast was over, I ran around to Miss Hester's school house, to make my acknowledgment to her. She was very kind in her manner toward me, and did not seem to bear any ill will for my conduct of the day before. When I mentioned the subject of my removal, as I did not say anything about the continuation of the pay, the old lady seemed very much to regret my leaving, was confident we could get on pleasantly together, and felt assured that I would behave, for the rest of the term, like a little gentleman. As I was not equally certain on all these points, I told her that father thought it best, and that I must do as he wished. I therefore got up my books, slate and stationery, and marched out of the little house where I had spent so many happy hours, followed by the envious eyes of all the scholars, who were still to slave it out there. I met Ned on my way home, and we had a short conversation, making arrangements to desk together, and vowing eternal fealty and fidelity to each other.

I put my books away as soon as I reached home, and ran over to Dr. Mayland's to see Lulie. Much to my disappointment she had gone to school, so nothing was left for me but to mope about all day in idleness. There is nothing in the world so wearisome as idleness without company. In vain I lounged over town seeking amusement. All my companions were at school, and everybody and everything seemed to have something to do. I strolled down to the wharves to find some relief in the sights down there, but all seemed intent on some occupation, and I could find no sympathy for my solitude. The loaded dray rattled a reproof at me as it passed; the smiths tinkering over old boilers hammered work into my ears; the clerk, busy with his marking brush, and the brawny wharf hands, rolling the sticky barrels hither and thither, were living lectures to me. Even the horse, at the unloading vessel, pulled up the weight, and backed again, with a stern disregard of his own pleasure. An old black rosin raft, floating lazily down the tide, was the only thing in sight at all congenial, and that was too far out in the river to be reached.

The idle boy in the country may find pleasure where there are so many objects to amuse: the brook with its fish, the toy mill with its flutter wheel, the barn yard with calves to be broken to the yoke, the orchard and plum nursery, all help to pass the time; but woe to the idle in the crowded thoroughfare!

Time is the only coachman who drives exactly by his schedule, and with all my impatience Monday did not come till Monday morning. I was too eager not to be equally punctual, and at nine o'clock precisely I entered Mr. Morris's school room. How different it was from Miss Hester's! Boys of every size, from the six foot youth to the little lad of my own height, were ranged, two and two, at their desks about the room. Most of the small ones manifested a strong desire to stamp my appearance indelibly on their memory, by an intense stare. The larger ones scarce noticed me; perhaps turning their heads to see who had disturbed the majestic silence of the hall.

Mr. Morris called me to his stand, and, after a few questions, assigned me to a class and a desk. I took my seat, arranged my books, and then, not feeling so much abashed as at Miss Hester's, I looked about me with more confidence and closer scrutiny. 'Twas the same school room and boys that every one has seen; the dignified big boys, turning over the leaves of their lexicons, and running

their fingers through their hair in the most erudite manner, occasionally spitting in the boxes at the sides of their desks, as if half their dignity depended on their mode of expectorating; half grown boys reclining in various positions, but chiefly sitting on one foot, while the other hung down, tapping against the sides of the bench; and little chaps, some studying, some talking, but most of them resting their cheeks upon their crossed hands laid flat upon their desks, while they stared at the "new boy."

My experience at Miss Hester's, however, had taught me to accommodate myself to circumstances, so I made myself easy in my new quarters, and at the morning respite went out boldly with the rest, to join in the amusements.

The story of our difficulty at Miss Hester's had reached most of the boys through their younger brothers, who attended her school, and quite a throng gathered around me to question and admire, for the mere fact of my having had a difficulty at all, and having left the school, rendered me at once the hero and martyr of the occasion in their eyes. I related the affair with as much gusto as I could assume, and felt as proud of my insubordination as Cato did of his economy. As I concluded my recital, one of the lexicon dignitaries strode up, and, looking over the heads of those around me, remarked carelessly:

"Is that the little devil who turned his teacher out? If he tries his hand here, I'll bet Jep will take the spunk out of him."

I could not comprehend his words, but I formed a terrible idea of Jep, who was so given to the extraction of spunk, and inwardly resolved that I would carefully avoid all acquaintance with him. I afterwards learned that it was an abbreviation of Mr. Morris's given name, Jepthah. This reassured me, and I debated for some time whether to test Jep's extracting powers, and preserve my reputation among my schoolmates, or assert over myself at least my moral courage, and heed my mother's words of advice in regard to my deportment. At last I resolved on the latter course of conduct, and gave up all thoughts of resisting authority.

At the close of the week Mr. Morris said to the school:

"Remember, boys, next is composition week, and I do not want a single one to fail to write an essay. You can select your own themes, but you must receive assistance from no one."

I was very much astonished, for the thought of writing an essay or composition had never entered my mind. To express my ideas on paper, and then read them out to the whole school! 'Twas a task in my eyes to appall a statesman. Still, I was not one to give up easily, and, possessing no small share of self confidence, I determined to do the best I could. For days my brain was racked to find a subject on which I could say anything at all. My mind seemed a perfect blank, with not even the dim shadow of a thought which I might evolve into distinctness. After awhile I began to try over different topics, but none appeared fruitful. I tried first on Truth; but I could find no way to begin but by asking, "What is Truth?" – a question I could not answer, so I gave that up. Then I tried "Vacation;" but here my only opening was an abrupt recountal of its scenes and pleasures, and these were too much identified with Lulie to be made public, so I abandoned that. The various animals came in for a share of consideration, but I could not find one of sufficient fecundity to bring forth an essay. The week had almost gone, and still I was themeless; when one day, at the dinner table, father jingled the ice in his glass, and made some remark about the strangeness of the fact that water, a liquid, could so change its nature as to become solid, merely by the absence of heat. Suddenly it popped into my head that I would write about ice. I bounced up, ran into the library, and, after an hour's hard labor, appeared with the following:

> ICE.
>
> Ice is frozen water. Water, dry so, is soft, and can be moved with the finger or a stick; and also can be poured out. But when it frezes it gets num and stiff, and can't be sturd, and won't run down. ice is also very good for many things, if it was not for ice we could not have ice creem or soda water, because the creem would melt and be custud; ice is also very smooth and can be skaited on, but boys should

not skait where it is thin, for they might break in and be sinful. ai boy once skaited on the sabbath and got drownd. To look at ice ought to make us want to study, so we can learn all about it, and about the people who live where it grows thick and can be driven with dogs upon. so I will put up my writing and try to study some.
Your afextionate scolar,
JOHN SMITH.

P. S. – A eastern king would not believe the traveller when he told him about thick ice.

This postscript I added as a display of my knowledge of history, which I feared would appear pedantic in the body of the composition, but would be striking and casual at its close.

This important production I folded, endorsed with my name, and laid it away till Friday evening. Before handing it in, I read it to father and mother. I construed their smiles into compliments, and carried it to Mr. Morris with no small degree of satisfaction. Addison never felt more sure of praise than I did; and yet the following week 'twas returned to me a perfect Joseph's coat of red ink corrections and erasures. *Væ literatis!*

But compositions were nothing to my next appearance in the school, for we were soon required to declaim. Here again there was trouble in the selection of a suitable piece for declamation; but I at length found a piece which I thought was admirably adapted to my style, and, preparing it carefully, I awaited with impatience the first evening of our practice.

It came at last, and, as I saw the "first" scholars walk up the rostrum with dignity, and with grace of manner and well modulated voice, declaim beautiful selections, I felt that nothing was easier, and in my self confidence pitied the poor blockheads, of which there were not a few present, who drawled out their speeches in such an awkward and confused way. I was considerably worried, however, as Mr. Morris came down the roll, to find that no less than three of the smaller boys had selected exactly the same piece I had; still, I gathered encouragement from the fact that they all spoke it badly, and that my effort would show to a still better advantage after theirs. I was startled from my complacent comparisons by the loud tones of Mr. Morris, calling out:

"John Smith, you will next declaim!"

It is strange how easily confused and startled we are by the unexpected pronunciation of our names in public; the simple utterance of mine, on this occasion, overturned all my confidence and self-reliance, and I rose from my seat with a hair-rising sensation that took away my last hope of distinction.

I ascended the rostrum with that peculiarly awkward feeling of being in somebody else's skin, which fitted badly, and was especially tight about the cheeks and eyes. And my hands! I had used them in a thousand ways, but now, for the first time, became really and painfully aware of their existence. I had hitherto regarded them as an indispensable, though unconsciously possessed, part of my anatomy; but I now looked upon them as excessively inconvenient appurtenances, and I would have given a finger almost to have had them hung out of sight on my back. However, there they were and I had to dispose of them. After making my bow with my little finger on the seam of my pants, I put both hands for safe keeping in my trowsers' pockets. They could not, however, long remain there, for, as I placed that idiotic youth upon the "burning deck," out they came for a gesture, which finished, to give them something to do I put them to pulling down my vest, which had an unaccountable tendency to sever all connection with my pants. The flames now had to be shown

– "round him o'er the dead,"

and my hands nobly left my vest for action. Coming again to me idle, I sent one to my pocket, and the other to my mouth, where it remained during the greater part of my speech, spoiling out the words as fast as they issued from that orifice.

My embarrassment and confused state of ideas also developed other startling blunders, which cooler moments would have corrected. The boys, in their naturally perverted disposition, had quite a habit of transposing the first letters of words in a sentence, exchanging with one word part of another, thereby creating a language that Cardinal Mezzofanti could never have mastered. With my imitative tendencies, I had no sooner entered the school than I caught the habit in all its force; and talked in this perverted style so constantly that I was an animated Etruscan hieroglyph to all at home. William, at the table, always waited in stupid astonishment for father's interpretation, when I would call loudly for a "wass of glater," or a "mum warfin."

On this occasion of declamation, I fully repented of my maladialectic propensity, for, do what I would, the words would come out twisted out of all human semblance.

Mr. Morris, in our private practice, required each one to announce the subject of his speech; so, troubled as I have described by my hands and tongue, I thus declaimed:

Basicianco

The stoy bood on the durning beck,
Whence all but flem had hid,
The lims that flate the wrettle back
Rone shound him do'er the ead.

Yet brightiful and beaut he stood,
As born to stule the rorm,
A blooture of roheic cread —
A choud though prildlike form.

Bang! went Mr. Morris's ruler on his desk as I completed the last verse.

"Bring me the book, sir," he thundered, "that contains all that nonsense."

Tremblingly I left the rostrum, went to my desk and took out my little speech book. Having examined it, and found that Mrs. Hemans' beautiful verses were printed correctly, he turned upon me with his severest tone, and demanded to know what I meant by such ridiculous gibberish. I pleaded that I had got in the habit of talking so for fun, and could not help it on the stage.

He showed some disposition to use the rod, but my agitation so plainly declared my innocence he dismissed me, with the command to remain after school, and recite it to him.

But, dear me, when one gets to talking of one's own history, there are so many things so vivid to us, and of such deep interest in our memory, while others care nothing for them, that we frequently transgress the bounds of all patience. As far as the narrative coincides with the reader's own observation and experience, he will be interested; but should it go beyond, unless adorned with a marvellous mystery, he is wearied with the author's prolixity. As I have still a considerable portion of my life to lay before my readers, I will not weary them further with puerile details, but, begging their indulgence for one more chapter of childhood's history, I will pass on to a later period of my existence.

CHAPTER VII

At the close of the second session it was proposed that we give a party. We held a meeting in the Academy, and elected a Committee of Management. These important and business transacting gentlemen soon came around with their subscription lists. As I was one of the small boys I had to subscribe only a dollar, but I felt as munificent as Mithridates, when I wrote "John Smith," and, parallel with it, placed a small crooked "1" and two very fat ciphers, yoked together like the sign of the spectacles over a jeweller's store. At dinner that day I obtained the amount from father, and mother pinned it in my jacket pocket for safety. When I returned in the afternoon I took out the pin before I reached the Academy and crumpled the bill in my pocket, to give it a careless look. When I handed it to the collector he expressed no gratitude, and evinced no feeling whatever on the subject, merely checking off my name with his pencil, and placing my dollar, in the coolest manner possible, with the other funds of the enterprise. But I was repaid, however, for such indifferent treatment, when the gilt embossed tickets came out, and I received my two. I carried one home, and put it in our card basket as a standing evidence of my interest in the party, and sent the other to Lulie, with my compliments written in ink of the bluest hue.

Of course those who would not subscribe were regarded with great contempt by all who did, and epithets expressive of avarice and miserly meanness were heaped with unsparing liberality upon them. In some cases these were deserved, but there were many very poor boys in school, and I often blushed to hear their poverty ridiculed and themselves made the subjects of unfeeling jest. I recall one little scene.

I was standing near, perhaps, the poorest boy in school, when one of the managers, a proud, stuck-up youth, approached, and said to him:

"I say, Willie, you'll give us something for the party, won't you?"

I noticed a slight quiver on Willie's lip as he replied:

"I have only twenty-five cents at home, and mother is not able to give me any more, but you are welcome to that, if you will have it."

"We don't want any of your quarters. A dollar is the smallest contribution we take. But let me tell you, if you don't subscribe you must not go to the party, and hang around to fill your pockets."

"You need not fear that I will come," said the little fellow, as he drew his hat over his face and turned away, not however, before I had seen something glistening fall from his cheek, and make a tiny, wet circle in the sand.

This digression, with the hope that some school boy who may read this book, may be led to reflect (which is rare) that others, besides himself, have feelings that may be hurt.

The eventful evening of the eventful day at length arrived, and I went up to my room to make my extensive toilet. My clothes were spread out on the bed ready for my donning, and I stopped to contemplate their striking effect. My white pants gleamed beside a new blue jacket, with as bright buttons as Frank Paning ever dared to wear, and a snowy collar, already folded down, lay beside a handsome silk bow. I had given orders that my pants should be starched very stiff, with very deep creases down the legs. These instructions I found faithfully fulfilled, for they were so stuck together it was with great difficulty I could open the legs sufficiently to admit my own, and when they were at last on, I found that our laundress had ironed the creases down the sides instead of on the front of the legs, and the wide, hard linen stood out on each side of my feet like great paddles, and tapped, one against the other, with a noise that would have attracted attention in a mill. To add to my discouragement about the pants, my shoes, which I had ordered to be shined up for this extra occasion, came up to my room with one string gone; and as it could not be found, and it was too late to go out to purchase another, I had to borrow a light colored one with brass tips from mother, and trust to luck to hide my feet. As I had not reached the age of ability to fasten my own collar, I called in Aunt Hannah, who

was passing my door. The old lady, being a little dim of vision, pinned my collar and bow just far enough to one side to give my head the appearance of being set on crooked; but as I was not extremely fastidious, and was moreover in great haste, I thought it would do by slightly turning my head, so as to keep my chin just over the bow. Putting on my jacket, and seeing its perfect fit, restored my equanimity, but I lost it fearfully again when I came to brush my hair.

The Lacedæmonians used always to comb their hair before entering battle, and if their crinal adjustment caused them a tithe the irritation mine did me, we may cease to wonder at their reckless courage and desperate conduct.

My locks yielded to the combined influence of comb, brush, water, and oil, and smoothly fell, except in one particular place – that perverse spot in the crown of the head, where the hair seems to have grown in a whirlwind. Here it would not "down," but remained a capillary Banquo, in obstinate uprightness. After repeated proofs of its invincible stubbornness I was forced to leave it proudly erect, like the republic of Ragusa, among crouching kingdoms. Having completed my Beau-Brummellization, and received father's injunction not to stay late, I hurried to the assembly rooms.

The managers had engaged two halls; one for the grown people, with music stand and waxed floor, and a large empty room, with a few benches round the wall, for the little folks and their games. Thither I bent my course, and entered. Just inside the door I found a throng of the inevitable party jackals, who always frequent public entertainments. They hang round the doors, and stand in corners till supper is announced, when, the moment the ladies leave the table, they rush in upon the spoils. They number among them many who claim eminent respectability, yet who, being too bashful to mingle with the ladies, are of course too bashful to behave well. As I squeezed my way through this motley throng, many were the taunts I heard levelled at my unfortunate person, all of which I treated with silent contempt; but as I entered the hall fairly I heard a hoarse whisper behind me:

"He's getting skeered on the top of his head, look how his hair has riz."

I wilted under this last remark, and involuntarily smoothed my hand over the Ragusan hairs, to the great delight and boisterous merriment of the jackals.

As soon as I had time to look about me, I saw Ned Cheyleigh, Frank Paning, and Lulie Mayland, over in a corner, with several other boys and girls of my acquaintance. Ned motioned to me to join them, and, much relieved, I hastened across the room.

There were two benches arranged so that their occupants were placed *vis à vis*, and on one of these sat the boys, with their hats on their knees, and their arms resting on each others' shoulders. The girls occupied the other, and were much more at their ease, though there was very little attempt at conversation, as the moment anybody spoke everybody else looked straight at them, and listened. This state of affairs proving very dry and uninteresting, it was proposed that we play some games. The proposal came from Frank, and Lulie was the first to accede to it. This circumstance, trivial as it was, tended greatly to diminish my interest in the proceedings. Frank and I had never had much dealing with each other since the affair at Miss Hester's, though that was not so much the cause as the fact that we were rivals for Lulie's heart. The little flirt always made me believe, when I was alone with her, that I was decidedly her preference, but somehow when we were both thrown into her presence, Frank always received the lion's share of her smiles, remarks and attention. My good temper for the evening was nearly spoiled on this occasion when Frank proposed "Club Fist," and laid his doubled-up hand in Lulie's lap, she placing her's immediately on it, followed by the hands of all the throng, till there was quite a Timour's tower of human bones. To think of her hand being pressed by every other hand down on his, was almost too much for a lover to bear, but I swallowed my resentment as best I could, and joined my own hand to the tower.

The very startling query, "What have you got there?" and the immediate abduction of the dimpled hand of a girl, or the chubby fist of a boy from the pile, were all gone through with, till the bottom hand was reached. The chain of destruction from the cat who so feloniously appropriated

"my share," to the knife hid behind the old church door, was carefully ascended, and the solemn sentence pronounced:

"A for apple, P for pear, the first one who laughs or speaks shall receive three hard slaps and pinches." All were as silent as Pythagorean novitiates, though many were the contortions to restrain laughter, till after a few moments Lulie's merry laugh was heard.

She pleaded that she could not help it; that Frank made such a funny face at her that she was compelled to laugh. She was, however, convicted, and we commenced to punish her. When it came Frank's turn to pinch her, he did so so severely that she gave a little scream of pain, and declared she would pay him for it presently. When she presented her arm to me I felt that all the gallantry of my soul forbade cruelty to her, and I scarcely touched the soft flesh. My consideration did not seem to be very highly appreciated, for she turned off without a word, and commenced the payment of her debt to Frank. A very torturing and envy-causing game they made of it for me, as I looked frowningly on, wishing most earnestly that she was in my debt, and would pay it as thoroughly.

Club Fist was now voted dull, and blindman's buff proposed. Frank volunteered to be blindfolded, and the game soon became a merry one. Peals of laughter, as all ran helter skelter to avoid him, whispers of stealth as they crept about behind him, and screams of excitement as they just eluded his grasp, added pleasant confusion to the merriment. Frank took good care to arrange the handkerchief so that he could see, though he stumbled about enough to avoid suspicion. He pretended to single out Lulie by her laugh, and soon made her his captive. Then Lulie was blinded, and after a long chase caught one of the girls, who in her turn caught Ned. Frank this time contrived to stumble against Ned, and of course, being caught, wore the handkerchief again. Poor artless I played with all my might, and dodged and tacked with as much earnestness as Acteon did his own dogs. After the bandage had been exchanged many times I was caught by some one, but just as I was preparing to become as blind as Melctal, Frank said we had had enough of the game, and all agreed to quit. We amused ourselves in various ways for an hour or so longer, Frank making an almost entire monopoly of Lulie, while I hung around with dogged expectancy of a chance after a while. After another hour's interval supper was announced, and each of the boys took his engagée to the supper hall. I went sullenly alone. The room was densely crowded, and the clatter of plates and dishes, the jingle of glasses, the hum of voices, the popping of corks and cracker bon bons, and the general noise of the bustle to and fro, confused and deafened me. The grown people from the other hall were there, and boys and girls, beaux and belles of whiskers and satins, all mingled in an incongruous and grotesque mass. Squeezing my way down the table I found myself opposite to Frank and Lulie, and, as I saw him engaging her in conversation, or piling up her plate with delicacies, overwhelming her with constant and tender attentions, which were received as tenderly by her, jealousy deprived me of all appetite, and I strove to divert my attention by observing those around me. As I glanced down the long tables, a double vista of snowy necks and arms, white waistcoats, flashing jewels, sparkling fans, with an occasional raising here and there of a white glove, or a cobweb handkerchief, appeared as if on dress parade, ranged in open order for the table to march through. Here a vivacious beauty raised a dainty bit on her fork, and poising it at her mouth as she finished a remark, looked as if the fork were a doctor, and she had sore throat; there a languid youth dipped his downy attempt at a moustache in a glass of wine, and a little farther on a courting couple, without originality, seemed actually interested in the verses on the candies. But however engaged, at what stage soever of the supper they arrived, everybody seemed to be of some interest to somebody else, except myself. I was emphatically alone. I was getting desperate, and turned to leave the table, when I glanced at Lulie, and saw that Frank had left her side temporarily. As she caught my eye, she said, with her sweetest smile:

"John, won't you please get me some frozen cream, this on the stand has all melted; Frank has gone now to see if he can find a waiter who knows anything about the table. The confusion is quite confusing;" and she coughed with an affected air behind her fan, as if her last sentence had been quite an effort.

Glad to be of any service to anybody, I bowed, and, taking her proffered plate, dived into the throng, to make my way to the freezers. Now nearly run over by a hastening waiter, now in the way of a retiring couple, often spilling little streams of the melted cream over the black cloth of a gentleman, or the pearly silk of a lady, and, before I could recover from their indignant glance or muttered objurgations, having it tilted into my own bosom by some passers, I at length reached the stand on which was placed the freezing apparatus. Here I had to wait till all patience was exhausted before I could get what I wished, but, stubbornly determined, I stood my ground, and at length received my plate, heaped up as if for a glutton. To return with a running-over plate was indeed more perilous than my journey thither. I was threading my way carefully along, and had proceeded half way down the room, when I met Frank and Lulie leaving.

"Oh! you found it after all," she said, as she saw me approaching, carrying the dripping plate out at arm's length, as if it were a hot kettle, "I am very much obliged for the trouble you have taken, but Frank brought me some a short time after you left."

I was too much chagrined to reply, but giving Frank a dagger look as they passed out, I threw the plate down on the nearest table, and left the room. I resolved, as soon as I could get an interview with Lulie, to load her with reproaches, and bid her farewell forever. But on going back to the party room I saw Lulie sitting by herself, Frank having left her for awhile. I determined to go immediately to her and have my talk out with her, but felt like modifying very much the bitterness of its spirit. What we say in a person's presence is very much less than what we think we will say before we see them.

I went over and took a seat by Lulie, and for the first time in the evening felt a little gleam of pleasure in my heart. She received me kindly, and made some trifling remark about my being out of spirits, but I did not heed her. Coming, like a boy, bluntly to the point, I asked:

"Lulie, do you like Frank Paning? I do not, he tries to be so smart."

"Why, yes," she said, coloring a little, and biting the tip of her fan, "I do like him some; surely you don't dislike him for being smart."

"I don't mean smart that way; but there's another bigger reason than that: he is always with you when I want to be."

"Well, that's your fault," she replied, looking at me archly. "I am sure if he comes to me first you can't expect me to drive him away for you, can you?"

"But he's been with you all to-night, and I have not had a chance to even talk with you a minute. I wanted to carry you to the supper, but of course he was ahead of me."

"You ought to have asked me before he did."

"Even if I had you would have preferred going with him, wouldn't you?"

"Oh! I must not say, it might flatter you."

"I wish," I muttered savagely, "he was back in South Carolina, or wherever he came from."

"I certainly do not," she said, with some warmth; "I thought you and Frank were great friends."

"We were at first, but ever since he lied to Miss Hester, I have not had any use for him."

"I was angry with him myself that day," she said, after a little pause, and with a slight change in her tone, "but he has made it all right since. He says he did not see any reason why he should take a whipping when he could get out of it without telling a lie. I cried real hard, though, that day about you and Ned."

"I don't expect you cried much for me; 'twas all for Ned."

This I said as a feeler, and I watched closely, as well as vainly, to discover some sign of emotion in her reply.

"No, indeed," she said, looking straight at me, without any drooping of the timorous eyelids, as I had expected; "I felt as if I could take half your blows."

"I would have them doubled to hear you say so," I replied, with great warmth and an attempt at a theatrical pressure of my heart, which, however, failed in its effect, from my ignorance of the exact location of that vital organ.

The conversation was now beginning to assume for me a most agreeable turn, and I was beginning to feel recompensed for all my chagrin of the evening, when, to my unspeakable horror I saw William, our servant, coming across the room with my cloak in his hand.

"Marse John, your father says it is time for you to come home. Here is your cloak mistis sent."

The reversion of feeling was too strong for utterance, and with a choked voice and swimming eyes I rose, and, without a word of parting to Lulie, went out with William. Just as I reached the outer door I met Frank coming in. He bowed with mock reverence, and said, with a sneer:

"Good night, little baby; go to your cradle."

"I'll whip you to-morrow!" was all I could grind out between my clenched teeth, while he ran, laughing, into the hall. As I groped my way down the steps, my eyes all blinded with tears, I heard some one say:

"Here come the band! they are going to play for the children."

This was the last feather on the camel's back of my fortitude, and I broke down into sobbing.

To have Lulie think I was babyish, and had to be sent for; to have our conversation broken off so suddenly, when it was becoming so pleasant; to leave a scene of gaiety before it was finished, and then, too, when the best part was coming, and, above all, to have my hated rival triumph in my humiliation, was enough to have crushed a stouter heart than mine.

When we reached the corner, round which we turned into our street, William stopped, and said:

"There! listen at the music!"

I wiped away the tears from my eyes, and looked back at the building. 'Twas brightly illuminated, and indistinct forms could be seen passing to and fro at the windows. A quick, lively air from the band came floating to my ears, and I knew Frank was by Lulie's side.

"Oh, William," I sobbed, "I – do – want – to – go back – so bad."

"I think it was a pity marster sent for you so soon," he said, "but you are done and away now, and we'd better go on home."

Wretched, indeed, I ascended the steps at home, and was met at the door by father.

"Well, Johnnie," he said, locking the door after I had gotten in, "this is right late for a little boy to be up, isn't it? What! crying! What is the matter?"

"Father – , I did – hate to – leave – so much – . The – band was coming – to play – for us – and I was just – beginning to – see some – fun."

"I am sorry I broke you up," he said, kindly, "but it is very late, and much for the best that you should be at home. Good night; run up to bed."

I went up to my room, and tumbled on the bed with my clothes on. My mind was full of bitter, burning thoughts. I fancied I could still hear the band, and whenever I closed my eyes Lulie's form, with Frank hovering near, rose to my vision.

Next morning I rose with a headache, and for relief walked out. My steps involuntarily led me to the scene of my chagrin, and in a sad kind of reverie I wandered through the rooms.

'Tis sad food for reflection to visit a ball room the morning after the ball. Dreary silence has taken the place of noisy mirth and revelry, and the walls and floor look wan in the yellow sunlight, as if suffering from their night's dissipation. The chandeliers quiver their pendent prisms at your approach, and tinkle a drowsy salutation. Around the music stand are scattered a leaf or two of music, fragments of rosin, and half sucked lemons; along the floor we pick up a fallen wreath, a slipper's rosette, or a torn fragment of tarlatan. These are all that remind us of the whirling throng that mingled here.

'Tis very much like life! We thoughtlessly dance upon its arena, and departing leave behind us, some at least, the evergreen wreath, some the tarnished rosette of pleasures tried and found empty, and some the poor torn shred of fruitless ambition.

CHAPTER VIII

One would hardly recognize in the tall youth the little boy that cried so when called away from the party, but times and persons change a great deal in seven years. Ned Cheyleigh is still my bosom friend, nobler, truer and more manly, if a soul such as his can know any degree of improvement. Frank Paning and myself, after innumerable quarrels and make-ups, have grown somewhat intimate, partly from the fact that our families are near neighbors, and partly because we are thrown together so constantly at school, being the only two members of a Latin class. He has lost much of his boyish rudeness, and when it is politic is kind, obliging and pleasant, but I still often feel in his presence the old sensation of repulsion. Lulie is still the bone between us, though with infinite tact she contrives to preserve the balance of feeling. Frank thinks he has the best of the contest, and I often am obliged to think so too, though generally my conceit and vanity keep my spirits up. Thus much for relative position as regards each other. And if, reader, you have become interested in us sufficiently to desire to see us personally, I will endeavor to give you our pictures. First, then, is Ned, a rather stout, thick-set figure; round open face, with large very blue eyes, firm mouth – not expressed so much in the lips as in the set of the teeth beneath them; brownish dark hair, which, though always kept short, always looks dishevelled; nose the least prominent feature in his face, though straight and well formed; his whole face expressing so much integrity of conduct and candor of meaning, that Campanella would have sworn by him without ever hearing him utter a word, though there was not as much depth in it as a man of the world could have wished for. Frank was almost his exact opposite, and much the handsomer of the two. His form was very tall for his age, and graceful; his hair jet black, and curling crisply over a well shaped head; his nose slightly aquiline and long; his mouth, with very white teeth, was always a little curled, either with a smile or a sneer; and, whatever his state of feelings, it ever wore one of these expressions, their only variation being an increased intensity. His eyes were rather small, very black, yet showing a great deal of white in their oblique glances. He always looked straight at you in ordinary pleasant converse, or when he thought he had you at a disadvantage; but when himself in the inferiority, his glance was down and aside, in fact every way but into your eyes. For instance, he could never look his teacher in the face when arraigned for a misdemeanor, yet he would gaze steadily at a comrade while accusing him of wrong. And it was a frequent jest in school that when Frank Paning's eyes fell he was under "hack."

But to give you an exact idea of Lulie Mayland is beyond my power. I can describe well enough her bright sunny face, with its clear hazel eyes, its dimpled chin and pouting lips, and her cheeks with the roses coming and going with almost every word; but I cannot describe the effect of the thoughts that seemed to be ever coming up from her soul to her face, yet never uttered. There was always something more beneath those eyes you longed to know. If she looked and expressed sorrow for a misfortune, you knew, as you gazed into her face, there was a vast well of sympathy untold. If she laughed, and laughing was her life's most constant phase, you felt that it was only the bubbles of mirth, that its springs were yet to be sounded. And in my intercourse with her I always felt there were two Lulies – one on the surface, a bright laughing girl, with a warm sunny heart, whom I loved dearly, and who I sometimes thought loved me; the other was a far more radiant being, whose face was beneath the first Lulie's, and whose shadow or likeness she constantly wore, though never distinctly enough to be perfectly recognized. And this last Lulie was the idol of my heart – she whom I adored so unceasingly, and yet who I knew deep in my heart never loved me.

I would not affect mystery with this duality; I simply wish to present an idea of one of those faces we sometimes see – faces that, strive how they will, by word and look, can never express all their meaning; faces that, from their very secrecy, so to speak, possess a power we either dread or love. Lulie's power over me I loved; and loving, hoped one day to attain to the love of her inner soul.

Mr. Cheyleigh possessed a beautiful residence on the Sound, about eight miles from Wilmington, and Ned invited Frank and myself to spend the vacation with him. What an Elysium it was for us! Horses, dogs and boats at our command! Every nook of the Sound was explored in our fishing, crabbing and shrimping excursions; every swamp and lake invaded in our search for summer game. But of all our pleasures the greatest was to go over to the beach and take the surf. The delicate votaries of fashion at the watering places know nothing of its real luxury. Swathed in flannel and buoyed by ropes they strangle through the tortures of a dip, and declare it charming. But to go beyond the reach of *lorgnettes*, to disrobe entirely without fear of the sun's tanning, to trip lightly over the cool moist sand, and plunge into the great tossing ocean, is to really enjoy the thing.

But now we are in; we find our depth, and wait for the wave. Ah, here it comes! A great green fellow, crumbling towards the shore; a smooth, glassy valley before it, and its white crest curling proudly in its power. "Here it is! how it rustles! turn your backs! now spring!" and the next instant, swept from our feet, we ride the great monster to land, where he throws us high upon the sand, and sinks back to his watery domain, with a growl for our intrusion.

With our numerous sports time passed all the more rapidly, and we were preparing to return home. The evening previous to the day appointed was a dark and threatening one. A heavy blue bank lay in the west, and though the sun, as he passed beyond it, had thrown across it a bright golden fringe, it refused to be propitiated, and sullenly waited till he had disappeared, when it loomed blackly up, while the constant quivering of the lightning, and the distant, heavy jarring of the thunder told that a storm of no ordinary magnitude was brewing. After tea Mr. Cheyleigh went out on the back piazza to smoke, while we boys took our seats on the steps, and in subdued tones told tales of the awful effects of lightning, and its affinity for isolated houses like Mr. Cheyleigh's. The cloud had now reached half way up the heavens, and its dark line was distinctly marked on the blue of the sky. A few brave little stars were twinkling defiantly in front of it, though the bright evening star had long since sunk behind its folds. It grew very dark, so that all objects in the yard were invisible, save when for an instant illuminated by the greenish flickering glare of the lightning. We at length caught the dull roar of the distant wind, while the leaves gave their premonitory rustle, as a poor frightened little zephyr fled to them for refuge. We heard the tap of Mr. Cheyleigh's pipe, and saw the fiery sparks fall from the railing and glow a moment or two amidst the grass, then a few great drops of rain pattered down on the steps, and we rose and entered the house. Windows were pulled down, shutters were fastened, and doors were closed. Another shake among the trees, and then came the shedding, gushing sound of the rain as it fell in torrents, while the wind in all its fury burst upon us. The house cracked, the windows shook, and the corners howled in the terrific blast, while the window sashes clashed back and forth in their slides, as if the storm would burst in the very panes. The lightning showed through the blinds even with the lamps lighted, as if it was broad day out doors, every other second, while the thunders filled up the intervals of darkness with repeated peals, each of which seemed vieing with its predecessor in stunning, deafening sounds.

We all gathered around the lamp stands in silence, and looked into each other's faces, with eyes wide open from apprehension. Mrs. Cheyleigh had two of the smaller children in her lap, their heads buried in her bosom, and her head resting down on theirs, to keep from seeing the lightning. Mr. Cheyleigh was trying to read, but at every severe peal of thunder would take down the paper and press his thumb and forefinger over his eyes, as if muttering a prayer to himself. The dining room maids were standing back against the wall, their hands folded under their white aprons, and their heads leaning together as they whispered and snickered about their sable beaux. At length Mrs. Cheyleigh spoke, her voice having a very solemn and liturgical tone:

"Mr. Cheyleigh, isn't this an awful storm?"

As if in applause of her question, a burst of thunder, louder than any before, rolled across the sky, and fell off somewhere in the distance with a terrible thump and a long deep growl.

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Cheyleigh, taking his fingers from his eyes to tear off a corner of his newspaper and put in his mouth; "I have not known so strong a blow as this for several years."

"I trust," said Mrs. Cheyleigh, raising her head from the children, with the prints of their heads on her cheeks, "that there is nothing like this to-night at the Springs, where Gertrude and Ella are."

"Nonsense, my dear," said Mr. Cheyleigh smiling a little, "this storm only extends a few miles along our coast. I fear for the vessels, though, if there should be any in reach of this wind."

"Oh, 'twould be frightful, indeed, to be on the water such a night as this. I hope every ship is safe in some harbor," answered Mrs. Cheyleigh, laying her hands on the little heads in her lap, as if they were two little ships, and her arms were their harbor. Aye, they were! Live how or where we may, life's ocean has no surer shelter from its storms than a mother's arms; and if early in our voyage this harbor is closed up by the tomb rocks, we only beat about as best we may till we anchor in the vail!

Mr. Cheyleigh now rose, and going to the window, shaded his eyes with the palms of his hand, while he gazed out into the darkness. Turning into the light again, he said:

"I think the danger of the storm is over now, only the rain is falling. As amusements are out of the question I think the children had better go to bed."

Mrs. Cheyleigh accordingly raised the two little ones from her lap, they getting up with their hair over their eyes, which they kept half shut, as if afraid of another blinding flash of lightning. As they left the room with their attendant, we sat down to the table and made a hasty supper, and after that took our lamps and retired.

In our rooms we undressed, and laying down commenced to talk over the subject of lost ships and rescues. The thunder had moved so far off as to be scarcely audible, though the pale reflected lightning still flickered through the shutters. The wind was still very strong, and drove the heavy rain drops with sharp clicks upon the window panes, as if a million little storm sprites were trying to kick the glass in with their tiny feet. As we lay there, our imaginations filled with the horrors of the sea, we performed enough feats in fancy to have made bankrupt all the humane societies by our demands for medals.

We saved from watery graves enough fair women to set up a larger colony of Bacchæ than Euripides ever sung, or Tennyson jailed in his Womans' Rights College. We brought off enough treasure in our lifeboat to give every ass in the nation a pair of gold ears, which, in the present condition of affairs, would require more of the precious metal than a Briarean Midas could ever touch into existence with all his hands.

After saving several fleets larger than the Armada we at length got to sleep. Once I awoke under the impression that I heard a cannon shot, and listening I heard three distinct booms, at intervals of a minute or two; but as the lightning was still glimmering I concluded it was the thunder, and, getting a little closer to Ned, dropped to sleep again.

When we went down next morning we found that the storm had left strong marks of its violence everywhere. The yard was washed into gullies and trenches, and strewed with the limbs and leaves of the trees and bunches of mistletoe. One side of the garden paling was blown down, and the rose bushes and shrubbery torn and bent. Down at the stables the water was standing in great yellow pools, in which were floating the shingles and pieces of board torn from the roofs around. The horses and mules were all wet on their backs and manes, where the rain had beat through after the shingles were loosened. The cattle were all drenched, and looked as melancholy, as they stood around the fences with their sleek dripping coats, as if they had been bereaved. The chickens, as well as the dogs, had their tails drooping down instead of erect, a sure sign that they were out of spirits, and nothing in sight seemed to have enjoyed the storm except an old black and white Muscovite drake, who was washing his muddy feathers in a muddy puddle of water near the gate, fluttering his wings, bobbing his head, and whispering, in the greatest glee, to his lady, who was waddling around the edge, followed by a little brood as yellow as if just hatched from the famous golden eggs.

The corn, as far as we could see, was lapped and twisted in the rows, while the rice was lying flat as before a sickle. The sky was still overcast, and great shaggy masses of cloud were drifting rapidly southward, as if ashamed of the havoc they had made. Here and there for an instant shone little patches of blue sky, which kept coming and going all the morning, increasing each time in size, till at noon the sun shone brightly out, jeweling the foliage, gilding the landscape, and even condescending to paint a tiny spectrum on each glistening blade of grass.

After dinner Ned proposed that we go over to the beach, and see the effect of the storm there. As it took us some time to get our boat ready, and the wind was against us, we did not get to the beach till late in the evening. The clouds had all been bleached by the sun to fleecy whiteness, and now, taking their gorgeous orange vestures from the wardrobe of the West, they ranged themselves like Titanic sentries to guard their monarch's couch.

Far away toward their domain stretched a verdant panorama of washed and fresh looking forests, white, nestling cottages and the wimpling sheen of the Sound. We turned to the grand old ocean, who would not be so easily appeased. The scowl of his fury still lingered on his face, and he lashed the shore in sullen though subsiding rage. The parting sun threw over his angry countenance a shimmering veil of gold, but could not hide the frown. Yet 'twas wondrous pleasing to behold the myriads of sunlit bubbles, sparkling with rainbow helmets, mount their billow steeds, and, in a long, regular line, come charging to the shore. As fast as one squadron was dashed upon the immovable sand, that lay like a great yellow dragon before them, another succeeded; and, like the victims of Peter the Hermit's and Bernard's fanaticism, these millions of little crusaders were wasted on a fitting type of the desolate East.

After contemplating the scene for some time, we began to search up and down the beach for signs of wreck or objects tossed ashore. Something far down the beach caught our eye, and we all hastened toward it, wondering what it could be. There was a dark object, whose shape we could not make out, and near it a bright scarlet something. Curiosity lent wings, and we flew over the distance. Frank Paning was rather fleeter than Ned or myself, and outran us by many yards. We saw him, as he reached the objects, raise both hands and turn towards us with a face full of horror. In a moment we were at his side.

Before us, on the sand, lay two figures still and cold. One was the form of a little girl, lashed to what appeared to be the door of a ship's cabin. She was bound closely to it with ropes, and was lying with her bloodless cheek pressed down upon the rough panels. Her garments seemed to be of very fine material and make, though now drenched with sea water; over her shoulders was clinging a scarlet cape or mantle, which was the red spot that had attracted our notice. At her side was strapped a curiously carved steel box, now heavily oxidized by the salt sea.

The door and its human freight had been cast high up on the shore; but, tied by one wrist to the knob of the door, lower towards the water, stretched the figure of a man. He was lying on his face, which was so much sunk in the yielding sand that we could only observe his hair, which was long and gray. His form was tall and large, and clad in a black suit of clothes; around his waist was strapped a broad belt of leather, to which, if anything was attached, we could not see it, as the ends must have been beneath him. Ever and anon a wave would break on the shore, and, as if mocking its victims, come rustling up the sand, covering the half buried feet, floating the clinging clothes, on and up, till it lifted and waved like moss the dank gray hair, then sink, sighing, back to the sea; while he lay there, so heedless of all, stretching the cord-bound hand, with its blue, water-shrivelled fingers, appealingly yet protectingly, toward the child on the door.

We gazed long, with all the silence of horror, at the sad spectacle, and with agitated looks at each other. I at length spoke:

"Boys, what must we do? They ought to know of this at Mr. Cheyleigh's."

"Yes, indeed, they ought," said Ned. "Let's go over and get the negroes and the big boat, and carry both bodies home."

"Do you reckon they are both dead?" whispered Frank.

"They must be," returned Ned, looking at them both attentively. "The man is, I am sure; for, if not dead before, the water washing so constantly over him since he has lain here would have drowned him."

"Let's see, any way," said I; and we all three stooped to lift the man first. Not without a shudder did we touch the cold, clammy flesh, as we strove to drag him up from the water's edge. His weight was too great for us, clogged as he was with sand and water, and we could only move him up the bank a foot or two, and turn him over on his back. We cleaned the sand as well as we could from his mouth, nostrils and eyes – the faded blue balls of the last being so thickly covered with the fine, sharp grains that we had to wipe them very hard with our handkerchiefs – at least Ned and I did; Frank vowed he wasn't going to put his handkerchief in a dead man's eyes, just to get the grits out.

We then left the man and tried the girl with better success. We cut the cords that held her to the door, and lifted her up; Ned supporting her head as tenderly as a woman. Never had I dreamed of such beauty! Her face was as colorless as marble, but showed more perfectly for that its exquisite outline; her temples were chased with a network of blue veins that were brought out more distinctly by the cold water she had been in so long. Her eyes were closed, but the lids atoned by their rose-leaf texture and long black fringe. Her mouth was partially open, as if gasping, but made up for this slight disfigurement by disclosing a set of the clearest, smoothest teeth. But, though each separate feature was beautiful, there was a look about them when combined that baffles all description. Perhaps her beauty was enhanced by her romantic surroundings; but I could not help thinking, as she lay there so passive and still, that the angel who had borne her soul away had been trying on the faces of heaven, to see which would suit her best, and had forgotten to take off his fairest.

As we looked on in silent admiration, Ned placed his hand upon her forehead, and exclaimed with great animation:

"Look here, John! her flesh does not feel like the other's – it is cold, but not so clammy."

A touch confirmed his remark; for while her hands and forehead were icy cold, there was not that peculiar deathlike clamminess or inelasticity about them that tells so infallibly that the soul has departed, and we drew hope from this circumstance that she might yet live. We ran at the next wave and caught our hats full of water, which we dashed into her face, without stopping to reflect that she had perhaps had enough of water for the present. We loosened her clothing as delicately as possible, and began chafing her hands and arms. Our anxiety to revive her made us almost drown her again with our hats of water, and in our eagerness we rubbed the tender flesh almost raw on her hands and arms.

In the midst of our efforts Ned, who was supporting her, exclaimed:

"Look! look! she drew her breath."

We gathered excitedly around and watched her closely, but her face was still marble – no sign of life in its pale outlines! After we had gazed a long while in the most intense suspense, a quick spasmodic gasp came through her parted lips, and a quiver played over her eyelids.

What a moment for our heroism! We felt that we were saving from the monster sea a fairer being than ever Palamon and Arcite tilted for. Beowulf, conquering the hideous Grendel, felt no more chivalric pride than did we, as our lovely waif lay with fitful breathings in our arms.

At length her respiration became more regular, and her eyes slowly unclosed. "Eyes" is a meagre word for the magnificent black orbs turned so timidly and wonderingly upon us; they probably served the commonplace purpose of vision, but the pleading eloquence of their look, and the emotions of fear and amazement which were almost audible in her gaze, declared their primary object to be expression.

Turning them restlessly from one to another of us, and failing to recognize any one, she closed them, as if in pain. Ned now ventured to speak, though we were almost afraid he would scare the soul away again that had been so hardly persuaded to return.

"Are you suffering now? Don't be alarmed, we are all friends."

Again she opened her eyes, looked wildly at him, then suddenly seemed to come to consciousness. With a frantic look of horror she cried out: "*Oh, padre! padre! oh donde està mi padre!*" and other frantic sentences, in a language unknown to us, and strove to rise to her feet. Ned and I assisted her, and she stood up on the sand. It was most unfortunate that she did so; for, as she gained her feet, her eyes fell on the corpse near the water, and, with a soul-piercing shriek, she sank to the earth, and all our efforts to revive her again were unavailing. As it had now grown quite dark we intended to hurry across the sound and tell Mr. Cheyleigh. Our sail boat being very small, it was thought best to leave one of us with the body, and to take the little girl in the boat over to the house. As it was not a pleasant solitude by any means, we drew pebbles to see who should remain, and it fell to my lot. Accordingly, Ned and Frank took up their fair burden, and promising me to make all the possible haste they could, went slowly up the banks to their boat. I saw them lay their charge down gently, hoist the sail and glide away in the darkness, and I was alone with the dead. The sun had long since gone down, and the red tinge of the sky was paling into the dusky gray of twilight. Far up and down the beach the dreary waste of waters grew drearier in the deepening shades, and the darkness fell so fast that when I looked up at the sky for a moment, and then turned to the sea, an hour seemed to have elapsed when measured by the increase of gloom. The sail of Ned's boat at last disappeared behind a point of land, and there was nothing for me to watch but the dead man's face and the moaning, tossing waters. It was now too dark to distinguish his features; there was only the ghastly white shape of his face, that, as I gazed so long upon it, seemed to make hideous grimaces at me – now sneering at my timidity, now opening its faded eyes to glare at me for having sent the little girl away; now shutting one eye and opening the other, sometimes reversing the face, putting the eyes in the chin and the mouth in the forehead; sometimes disappearing entirely, then suddenly coming back as white as ever. I would have fled up the beach, but I was afraid the corpse would spring up and run after me. And the whole scene was full of death! The stars seemed dead men's eyes, the sob of each wave was a dying groan, the white foam caps were dying faces, struggling for life, and a white gull, flying across the sky, was a cloth from the face of a corpse.

Suddenly a light came over the waters, and I looked up to find that the moon, at its full, was raising its great yellow disc from the waves. As if in kindly sympathy with me, the light came dancing over the burnished sea, but ceased its gambols at the shore, and threw its wan radiance over the dead face.

With the light I grew bolder, and rose and stood by the corpse, to see if it had moved. But it was lying as we had placed it, without a quiver in the face; and again I sat down upon the sand. Looking over the sound I saw Mr. Cheyleigh's boat coming, and the rapid flash of the dripping oars told that it was speeding well. Inexpressibly relieved, I went down to the landing and stood there, as unconcerned as if I had been pleasantly entertained on the beach. The rigging rattled as the sails came down, the keel grated on the sand, and Mr. Cheyleigh, Ned and Frank, and four stout negroes got out and went to the body. They wrapped it in blankets, laid it in the bottom of the boat, and with a stiff breeze and strong oars we soon glided under the shadow of Mr. Cheyleigh's boat house. Ned, Frank and I sprang out and ran ahead to see about the little girl.

Mrs. Cheyleigh was up in her chamber with her, and we could see only two or three excited negroes, who could tell nothing. We soon heard the negro men coming up the steps with their loaded, faltering tread, and we followed them into the back parlor, where, under Mr. Cheyleigh's direction, they deposited their burden, smoothed the blankets over him, and marched out, picking up their hats from the corners of the doors, where they had thrown them as they came into the "gretouse."

Mr. Cheyleigh then went up stairs to aid Mrs. Cheyleigh while we turned into the dining room, where they were just bringing in supper.

"I wonder what will be done with her if Mrs. Cheyleigh succeeds in bringing her to?" said Frank, as we took our seats near the open window.

This was something we had not thought of, and we were somewhat startled by the query; as we considered her ours by right of discovery, and her disposal, consequently, a matter of importance to each of us.

"I suppose," continued Frank, "she'll have to go to the Orphan Asylum."

I repudiated the idea with indignation.

"Never!" I said warmly; "if her friends do not come forward and claim her, I will get father to adopt her, as he has no other children beside me."

"Oh! perhaps you will," said Frank, with something of a sneer in his tone; "any way I claim an interest in her, and will have her for my sweetheart."

"You had better first learn whether she is alive or not," said Ned, reprovingly.

The waiting maid, Tildy, here interrupted us:

"Marse Ned, supper's ready; you reckon your mar's gwine to come down?"

"She don't want none, nohow," said Winny, another maid, coming into the room. "I jes come outen her room and she was a rubbing the little gal with brandy and mustard."

Tildy again put in, half to Winny and half to us:

"I wonder how come dey never stood de man on his head to let de water run outen his mouth?"

"Sheer! what you know 'bout it, gal?" rejoined Winny, giving her a push on the shoulder with the back of her hand. "I tell you what, doe Tildy, dey ain't no poor bokra; de little gal had on de finest underclose I ever see, mo' lace and stuff all round 'em; and when mistis was undressing her she taken off her neck er big gold chain with er locket hung to it. I taken it up and looked at it, and it's got a whole heap er sets in it, dat shines wors'n mistis's breastpin."

Mr. Cheyleigh here entered the room and said:

"Winny! your mistress wants a cup of hot tea and some toast carried up to her immediately. Come to the table, boys, Mrs. Cheyleigh will not be down to-night."

We sat down to the table, but could not eat for eager questions. Mr. C. informed us that, after much rubbing and many stimulants, the little girl had become conscious, and had been able to speak. She had addressed Mrs. C. at first in Spanish, but, on hearing her give some order to the servants, inquired if Mrs. C. spoke English, and learning that she did, used our language quite fluently. Mrs. C. had gotten her to bed and was trying to keep her from talking. She had, by a few questions, learned that the little girl was a Cuban; that her name was Carlotta Lola Rurlestone, and that she was lost from a ship the night before. She was constantly asking for her father, and Mrs. Cheyleigh had thought it best not to tell her of his death, but had evaded her queries as best she could. She was under the influence of an opiate now, and Mrs. C. wanted the house kept quiet.

After supper we had food enough for conversation till a late hour, when we retired only to dream of shipwrecks, and corpses, and half drowned girls.

At the breakfast table the following morning we were glad to meet Mrs. Cheyleigh, who was able to give us still more news about our little protégé. She told us she seemed much better, though feeble; that she recollected the scene now, and was weeping violently about her father's death; that her mother had been dead several years; that her father was a native of New Orleans, and that he and she had started to this country to spend the summer, as was their custom; that they had stormy weather for several days, and been driven somewhat from their course, and when the violent storm came on it was said that the ship was sinking; that her father had lashed her to a cabin door he had wrenched off, and, that he might not get separated from her, tied his wrist to its knob. He threw her into the water and tried to follow, but was jerked over by the weight of the door, and fell, striking his head violently against it. He seemed to be stunned, as he made no motion afterwards, but drifted about with the door, his face down in the water and his whole body sometimes out of sight. That the ship was soon blown off and out of sight, and that her agony was so great, as she saw her father drowning, and could not move to help him, that she had become insensible, and had known nothing more till she was in Mrs. Cheyleigh's room, though she remembered faintly seeing strange faces around her as in a dream.

"She is in constant distress about her father," continued Mrs. C., "but I hope that, with proper care and attention, she will recover. Mr. Cheyleigh has sent to town for Dr. Mayland, and also for the Coroner, who will hold his inquest as soon as possible."

Very soon after breakfast the Coroner arrived, and his jurymen began to drop in one by one.

We went out to the back piazza, where they were assembling, and walked among the crowd, listening to a confused jargon of questions in regard to the crops, wonderful tales of the ravages of the late storm, and surmises as to the drowned stranger, and the probable verdict that would be rendered.

The Coroner was a middle aged man, of great self-importance, who evidently thought an inquest a work of as great moment as a national negotiation. He took but little interest in the conversation of the others present, though he occasionally addressed some words to Mr. Cheyleigh, who was sitting near him. After considerable delay, and the assemblage of a large crowd of people, he pulled out his great fat silver watch, and said slowly:

"Well, I reckon we had as well begin. The morning is getting on smartly. Where is the body, Mr. Cheyleigh?"

Mr. Cheyleigh led the way, the Coroner and his jury following in single file till they reached the parlor. They crowded round the table to get a view of the corpse, all leaning forward, and holding their hats and hands behind them, as if they were tied there. The tall men looked on, while those small in stature moved round and round, vainly endeavoring to find a gap in the crowd to peep through.

The usual form of selecting and empanelling the jury was gone through with, and the Coroner commenced to examine the witnesses. Mr. Cheyleigh was first sworn.

"Mr. Cheyleigh," said the Coroner, walking his chair backward on the two hind legs a step or two, to gaze better at Mr. Cheyleigh through a pair of very broad rimmed silver specs, "will you please to state all you know about the finding of this body."

Mr. Cheyleigh came forward very gravely, and proceeded to relate his knowledge of the affair with a declamatory style, and with such long words that I did not know whether he meant to confuse the Coroner by using language above his two-syllable comprehension, or was acting under the common impulse of human nature to display proficiency in any department which has not been attained by those listening.

"The first information," he began, with a salutatory wave of his hand, "which I received of the discovery of the bodies was imparted to me by my son and his friend. Immediately on receipt of this intelligence I took the large boat, and with some of my negroes we rapidly made the transit of the Sound. Their report of the melancholy catastrophe was unhappily confirmed, for in close proximity to the water's edge lay this body. Edward and Frank brought the little girl over with them when they came for me, and Mrs. Cheyleigh has succeeded in resuscitating her. The man had apparently been inanimate for a period of some length, as his flesh had undergone considerable contraction from contact with the water – at least was contracted around the bones and features; the body proper was very much distended. He had been tied by one hand to the door of a ship's cabin, though the boys had cut the cord. I placed the body in the boat, and brought it where you now see it."

The Coroner moved his head up and down, slowly at first, then faster and in shorter spaces, till it came to rest, like a spring pendulum, as who should say:

"Just as I expected; all just as I expected;" and then, with a look of legal sagacity that would have adorned an Ellenborough, asked:

"Did you bring the door over with you?"

"I deemed that altogether unnecessary, but I took from the man's waist a pouch containing some money and one or two checks for large amounts on New York houses. I also found a very fine watch and chain; the upper lid of the watch bears a bouquet of diamonds and the initials H. V. R. Here is the watch and pouch."

He passed them to the Coroner, who examined every part as minutely as if he were identifying stolen property, and having satisfied himself that the articles did not belong to him, passed them on to the others, who each examined them in the same critical way.

"What, then, Mr. Cheyleigh," resumed the Coroner, after they had all finished their tedious examination of the articles, and returned them to Mr. C., "do you think was the cause of his death?"

"Strangulation, sir, from the influx of water into the larynx, and the consequent exclusion of air."

"Exactly – exactly, Mr. Cheyleigh; that will do, sir. Did you say your son found the bodies?"

"He and two of his friends."

"We can examine him, then?"

"Certainly, sir."

Ned was a little confused as he came forward, and kept passing his hand nervously over his tumbled hair. The Coroner assumed a mild, patronizing air, and said:

"Well, my son, what can you tell us of this affair?" Ned swallowed once or twice, and began:

"After the storm, John Smith, Frank Paning and myself thought we would go over to the banks and take a view of the ocean. When we got over the sky was fair, but the – "

"Never mind about the sky, my son," interrupts the Coroner, "just tell what you know about the dead man."

"Well," resumed Ned, with a long breath, and another swallow, "John Smith saw them first, and we all ran to them and tried to move the man, but found him rather heavy, we then cut the cords, and lifted up the little girl – "

"Stop! stop! don't tell about the girl, let us hear about the man."

"I don't know anything particular about him, except that he was dead."

"How was he lying when you found him?"

"His feet were in the water and his face was in the sand. One arm was doubled under him so, and the other – the one tied to the door knob – was stretched out so."

Ned here attempted to assume a descriptive attitude.

"Did the knot appear to have been tied by himself or somebody else?"

"It was a slip knot, and could have been fastened by himself."

"Did he lie as if the water had washed him up, or somebody had placed him there?"

"I think he was thrown up by the waves, sir."

"You didn't see any tracks or boat marks about?"

"No, sir."

"That will do. I don't think it is worth while to examine anymore witnesses. Gentlemen, you can make up your verdict."

We accordingly left the room, while twelve good citizens endeavored most earnestly to ascertain what they already knew – the manner of the dead man's death.

When we got out we found Horace waiting for Frank and myself with the carriage and horses.

We packed up our valises, made Ned promise to come to see us, left a kiss for our little foundling, and were soon rolling towards home.

Father and mother were as much interested in my news as I could have desired, and as I dwelt upon the beauty of the little girl and her lonely condition, I saw by the tear in mother's eye, and the serious shade on father's face, that I had made an impression. After recounting all in as vivid terms as I could command, I begged father to adopt her, offering as arguments many facts which he perhaps knew as well as I: that he was able to do it; that she would not be a great expense; that she would be company for mother when I was away; that I wanted a sister just like her, and would love and care for her tenderly, and wound up by declaring I would rather starve than have her sent to the Orphan Asylum.

"Well, well, don't be so impatient, my son," said father, relapsing into a smile, "even if I were inclined to adopt your suggestion there are many preliminaries to be arranged. I must see Cheyleigh, as she is now under his charge, and I must write to her friends in Cuba, where you say she came from. Then, perhaps, she may not be willing to come and live with us. You will have to restrain your eagerness till your mother and I consult about what is best to be done."

I was obliged to rest content with this. I went down town in the afternoon and recited to every acquaintance I met our wonderful adventure. The sun was nearly down when I was interrupted in the midst of my narrative by a servant, who came to tell me that there was a lady at home who wished to see me. I wound up my story and hurried home, wondering who it could be. To my utter surprise and pleasure I found Lulie Mayland in the sitting room, looking prettier and brighter than ever. She smiled delightfully when I pressed her hand and said, with a little blush:

"It's strange, isn't it, for a lady to call on a gentleman? but you must excuse me now. Pa has just returned from the Sound and has been telling me about the little girl you found. My curiosity was so excited I determined to come to see you and learn all about it, as you would not call and tell me. Promise me you won't think strange of it."

"Oh, Lulie, the bare idea of such formality between old friends!" I said, taking a seat near her.

"Well, we will not deem it a breach of form for the sake of old times."

"What a pity it is," said I, half musing, "that people grow older and colder in their natures. We were so happy as children. Do you remember the day in the nursery, long ago?"

"Yes, I believe I do; but tell me about your Sound adventure now, I am all impatience to hear that."

I detailed minutely every circumstance connected with the affair, and dwelt particularly upon the little girl's superb beauty, hoping thereby to raise a spark of envy in Lulie's heart, for I was piqued at her only believing to remember about the nursery scene. As I pictured to her the wavy black hair, the gazelle like eyes and chiselled features of Carlotta, I thought I detected a glance towards the opposite mirrors, where her own tumbled curls and merry blue eyes were reflected. When I had concluded she sat for some time in thought, then softly said:

"No father – no mother – no home!"

I knew then that envy found no room in a heart so full of pity and love.

"What is to be done with her?" she said, at length.

"I don't know; I am trying to get father to adopt her, and I think he is half inclined to do so."

"Oh, that would be splendid," she said, brightening at the thought; "I could see her so often, and we would be such dear friends. Do beg Col. Smith to bring her here."

"You may rest assured I will do my utmost, if it is only to get you over here sometimes, as you now have to make formal explanations for a single visit."

"Indeed, I expect you have other motives for your petition. Somebody's heart, perhaps, aids somebody's lips in begging."

"Never!" I said, with great emphasis; "she is truly lovely, but there is only one heart in the world I care to – "

"I am very much obliged to you, Johnnie, for your narration," she said, rising to go, "it has interested me very much."

"The obligation is mine," I said, with a profound bow, "for your kind attention. 'Twas really a pleasure to talk with such a listener."

I escorted her home, and sat with her some time on the stoop, and felt more than ever that I was completely her slave. She seemed to have thrown around me an inflexible chain, one which I could not bend to get nearer her heart, and one which I could not break to get away. Every word of her conversation was so chosen that, while it kept alive my hopes, it did not satisfy them, and yet she skilfully permitted no word of love making to pass between us; all was carried on by innuendo;

and, when I bade her good evening, I felt convinced that she did not love me, but dreaded to wound me by the disclosure.

CHAPTER IX

"John, I saw Cheyleigh in town to-day, and we have arranged all the matters about bringing up your sister, as I suppose you will call her, to live with us. Your mother and yourself must go down for her in the carriage the day after to-morrow." Thus spoke father, as he pushed his chair back from the tea table, about a week after my return from the Sound.

I deemed it dignified only to say, "Yes, sir."

"My dear," he continued, addressing mother, and taking a cigar from his case, "you have some clothing getting ready for her, have you not? As she didn't bring her baggage on the door I presume her wardrobe is scanty, so much so that she can exclaim, with the fallen Cardinal:

'My robe,
And my integrity to Heaven, is all
I dare now call mine own.'"

"Oh, Col. Smith," said mother, reproachfully, "do not jest at her misfortunes."

"Not jesting, my dear, not jesting; but, since poor Wolsey's time, I suppose she is the only one who could boast any integrity, when limited to a single robe. However, we have not proved her yet – Wolsey may still be alone."

"That is worse than jesting," returned mother, with a smile the good Samaritan might have worn, "you are blotting her with suspicion before you have ever seen her."

"We will assume, then, for your good hearted sake," said father, blowing out the words on each side of the cigar he was lighting, "that she is an angel, and let her prove her wings."

"I am sure that she will," said mother, as she rang her table bell for the servants to clear off the tea things.

The next day was one of preparation, and the room intended for Carlotta was fixed up like a fairy bower. The morning after, mother and I were whirling rapidly toward the Sound in our open carriage, the top thrown back to catch the fresh breeze. What a pleasure was such a drive on such a morning, with such horses, through such scenery, on such an errand!

Neither of us spoke, but leaned upon the side cushions of the carriage, listening to the rapid trample of the horses' feet and the singing of the wheels over the level roads as we flashed along; now through slim, quiet woods, where the sunshine drove away the shade from half the ground; now through thick luxuriant trees, grouping themselves with dense foliage-curtains around dark unrippled pools, where Artemis could have bathed with perfect modesty, and from which, now, a lonely heron, startled by our wheels, slowly rose with his blue noiseless wings; now through a swampy hollow, where the laurel poured from its white cups exquisite perfume, and now through the solemn forests, where the patriarch oaks waved their gray moss-hair, and the towering pines stretched their broad arms benignly over all, as if to invoke a blessing from the blue heavens above.

At last Mervue, as Mr. Cheyleigh's place was called, with its long avenue of oaks, came in view, and in a few moments our horses, lathered with foam, were prancing with unspent fire at the door. Mrs. Cheyleigh, Ned and two of the children, with Carlotta, met us at the steps. Mrs. Cheyleigh had told her of our coming, and her great speaking eyes were turned inquiringly upon us. Mother did not wait for introduction or salutation, but rushed forward and clasped her in her arms. Carlotta seemed in an instant to sound the depths of mother's tender love, and her first touch was an electric flow of sympathy. Throwing her arms around mother's neck she burst into convulsive sobbing. It touched every one present. Mrs. Cheyleigh wept; Ned turned into the house with his handkerchief to his face, while I, trying to hide my emotion, was ruthlessly plucking and snapping the tendrils of a jasmine that was clambering over the sides of the porch – little Sue Cheyleigh, in the artless curiosity

of childhood, walking around to look at my eyes, in order to discover whether I was crying or not. The first paroxysm of grief over, mother gently released Carlotta, and Mrs. Cheyleigh, with that half hoarse tone which always succeeds tears, invited us in. Carlotta grasped mother tightly by the hand and we followed Mrs. Cheyleigh into the house. Having now an opportunity to observe her closely, I found that Carlotta was not such a little girl as I had supposed – being, in fact, nearly as old and as large as Lulie. Mother, Mrs. C. and the children taking seats in the large, cool sitting room, Ned and myself went out to the stables to see about the horses. When I returned to the sitting room I found mother and Carlotta alone – Mrs. Cheyleigh having excused herself for a short time to attend to domestic affairs. Mother was sitting near an open window, gently stroking Carlotta's head, which lay confidingly in her lap. They were talking, and, not wishing to interrupt, I took my seat quietly near them.

"And you are willing to come with us and be our child?" mother said, bending over her.

"If you all are willing to take me," said Carlotta, "I will try to deserve your love."

"We love you already, my darling child, and will love you more and more each day."

"I believe you, and trust you, ma'am; but oh! my father, my dear, dead father! how I wish that I were with you in the ground!" and the poor child broke down into sobbing.

"Hush, dear," said mother, gently; "do not speak so; God has seen fit to spare you – "

"I know He has, but I wish He had not; 'twould be far sweeter than life to lie by father's side, though it is cold. But oh!" she continued, raising up her head to look in mother's face, and taking her hand, "I am so ungrateful to you; you are so good to offer me a home, and yet I shrink from going where I have no right to go, except the right of your kindness."

"That shall be the surest right of all," said mother, kissing her forehead; "but you must not feel dependent. We do not take you because we pity you, but because we want just such a daughter to live with and love us."

"Then, will you promise me, ma'am, if you ever tire of me, that you will send me away? You can do it without unkindness, because papa had a great deal of money, and you can pay some one to take care of me. Will you promise me?"

"Yes, dear, I will promise you to send you away whenever we get tired of you. But, in the meantime, I do not want you to feel humble in our home, as if you were a charity child. Col. Smith has examined your father's papers, and finds that you are possessed of considerable wealth. He has written to your father's agent, who was named in the papers, and to the American Consul at Havana. He will probably go to Cuba himself next month, to see about the appointment of a guardian and the settlement of your estate. Have you no relatives at all there?"

"I have a cousin, who lives on the other side of the island, but I have not seen him since I was a very little child. Mother was an orphan, like myself, and came from Spain to Cuba with an old uncle, who died after she was married to papa. We had many acquaintances, but no relatives anywhere in the island except the cousin I have spoken of. I have heard papa speak of having relatives in New Orleans, but I do not know their names."

"Well, you are composed now; try to remain so. Do not give up to those sad feelings when you feel them coming on."

"I do struggle hard, Mrs. Smith, to keep from crying; but whenever I commence thinking about the evening of the storm – and I cannot help thinking about it – I remember how happy papa and I were sitting together in our state room, and, though the wind had been high for a day or two, we felt so secure, for the steamer was thought to be the strongest one on the line. I remember so well his holding me by the hand, and saying:

"'I think the wind is lulling, Lottie, bird; we will be safe to-morrow.' And then came that terrible cry that the ship was sinking; and we ran together out on the deck, only to find the crew in a panic, and the storm wilder than ever. Papa dragged me back to the cabin, tore off the door, tied me to it, and – Oh! I cannot, cannot think of it without crying. Do not blame me, I cannot help it." And her eyes filled again, and her lip quivered with suppressed feeling.

"Dear child, you know I do not blame you; only try by every means to keep your mind from reverting to the painful scene. I will not offer consolation now, for I well know how deceitful it sounds to the bereaved to hear those who are not, quoting scripture passages to recommend resignation and submission. The beautiful sacred words are meant as a sympathy, not as a teaching. When your lips are lifted farther from this cup of gall we will go together to the Fount of Life and drink its sweet waters."

Mrs. Cheyleigh now returned to the room, and the conversation, ceasing between mother and Carlotta, became general. So many and varied were the topics to be discussed that the morning passed rapidly away; dinner came on, and the afternoon siesta, in hammocks swung in the verandas, where the sea breeze came cool and refreshing, was enjoyed, when the sinking sun reminded us that it was time to order the carriage.

When Carlotta came to tell Mrs. C. good-bye, and thank her for her kindness, she had nearly lost control of herself again, but, with an effort, she kept her tears back and entered the carriage. The shadows which had been hiding from the sun all day around the roots of the trees were now stretching out at great length, and spreading into all kinds of fantastic shapes, though they still kept the trees between them and the glaring eye they dreaded so much. The scenery through which we passed was all drowsiness, instead of the vivacity of the morning. The sun had gone down and the twilight was fading when we stopped at our door. Father and Lulie Mayland were standing on the stoop, waiting for us. Father took Carlotta in his arms out of the carriage and pressed her to him tenderly, while I was helping mother out. Lulie was then presented to her, and, after a kiss and embrace, they went up the steps hand-in-hand, as fast friends as if they had known and loved each other from their birth. We went into the dining room, where early summer tea was already laid. Carlotta did not wish anything, and mother withdrew in a short time with her. After the silence that succeeded, for a few seconds, their retirement, father said (and I knew by the twinkle in his eye he was enjoying the thorns on which I sat):

"Lulie," sighting at her with one eye through his iced tea, "I am afraid you will have a powerful rival in Carlotta. You must secure all your beaux with double chains or she will steal them away. I think one is proving recreant already, if I may judge from the glances of admiration he lavished upon her just now at the table."

My face was crimson, and the consciousness that it was so made the hue only deeper. To be teased about the girl I loved, before her face, by father, too, was the very climax of embarrassment to me. I glanced at Lulie, and found her not in the least disconcerted.

"Oh, John is so fickle," she replied, laughing, "that I can never count on him for more than a day or two. If he deserts me, however, I shall not be desolate, as I have several others under my thumb, you know."

Embarrassment is very much increased by being contrasted with coolness and ease, and mine received a tenfold impulse from Lulie's light way of treating the matter.

"Really," continued father, "you are quite a belle; but I am surprised that John should have withdrawn so easily from the contest. I thought you had more perseverance, my son. Surely, you did not encourage him, Lulie?"

"Yes, indeed I did, but he was not to be caught, and I have given him up as a hopeless case."

I vainly endeavored to swallow my confusion with large gulps of tea; the tea somehow slipped by and left the confusion sticking in my throat, but I managed to jerk out the words:

"If you ever gave any encouragement I did not know it."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed father. "Very good, my son, very good. But suppose she were to offer encouragement now, would you come back? Try him once more, Lulie. I would enjoy the courtship very much."

"I am willing," she said, demurely; but I thought I detected a smile towards father, as if they were in conspiracy.

"Now, John," continued father, "she says she is ready, and will return a favorable answer. How will you commence? Don't blurt out 'I love you!' as that would be unexpected and sudden; come to it gradually, and the slower you are in getting to the point the surer will your answer be 'Yes.'"

I could stand it no longer, but rose from the table and walked from the room, not, however, before hearing Lulie say:

"I don't quite agree with you, Col. Smith. I can't bear a slow courting fellow. If he loves much it won't take him long to tell it. There! you have run John off. I like him ever so much, only he is very timid."

I went out and sat on the stoop in no pleasant frame of mind. I was provoked with father for teasing me; I was provoked with myself for being teased, and I was provoked with Lulie for not being teased.

"She cannot love me or she would not treat the matter so lightly," I soliloquized, grinding white circles on the brown stone with my boot heel. "She thinks me timid, too; I'll prove my boldness the first opportunity I get."

Father and Lulie now came out and sat down, but no further allusion was made to the dining room topic. We spoke of our intended trip to the plantation near Goldsboro', and Lulie agreed, if her pa was willing, to go up and spend the remainder of the summer with us, as it would be very pleasant for her to be with Carlotta. After talking for some time of the pleasures of the country, Lulie rose to go, and I, of course, accompanied her.

So far from proving my boldness I walked by her side in awkward silence till she spoke.

"Why did you let your father tease you so to-night, Johnnie?"

"He didn't tease me," I returned, with Munchausen mendacity. "I didn't care a straw for what he said, only I did not choose to be spoken of so before a lady."

"I'll wager Frank Paning would not have been disconcerted," she said. "He has more self-possession than any one I ever saw."

"I don't care what in the thunder Frank Paning has; I don't want to be like him," I said, savagely.

"I did not intend to offend you, sir; I am obliged to you for your escort thus far, but, since you are so incensed, will need your services no farther," she said, very quietly, taking her hand from my arm.

"I beg a thousand pardons, Lulie; I was rude and hasty, but so many constant allusions to Paning irritate me beyond measure. He must be very dear to you from the repeated mention of his name."

"Oh, no, that does not follow at all. I think very well of him, as he is attentive and kind; but here we are at our gate; won't you come in?"

"Thanks! not to-night. Let me ask pardon again, Lulie, for my very harsh words on the way."

"Do not mention it; 'tis forgotten with me. Good night!"

My feelings, as I walked homeward, were very much mingled. There was always pleasure and pain in being with Lulie. Young as she was she already possessed consummate skill in swaying the feelings – now by some bewitching word or look raising your hopes, then dashing them to earth by some sarcasm, or worse, an allusion to some other favorite. She had reduced her game to a science, and always pitted special rivals against each other. Frank was sure to be my thorn. A single remark, evincing a preference for him, was enough to disturb my equanimity for an evening. So, in my thoughts this evening there was pain, yet a sweet pleasure, too, in the reflection that, in our retired country seat up in Wayne, I would have her all to myself; that I could see her every day, and talk as long and freely as I chose, with all the adjuncts and concomitants of love – woods, birds, brooks, bowers, meadows and moonshine.

Just as I reached our gate I met Frank Paning himself, hurrying up street to his home.

"Hello, John!" he said, lightly, as we stopped, "where have you been? Over to the Doc's, I suppose. I am getting jealous. Lulie must be looked to."

"There is no danger," I replied; "you are certainly the idol there."

"Oh, you tell me that to blind me, but I know a thing or two. By the way, how is our little foundling. I heard to-day that your folks had brought her here to raise up as a wife for you. I suppose you wish to train her up to suit you, so she will not have to learn your ways after marriage."

"You heard a most infamous falsehood, then, and you can tell your informant I said so," I replied, the blood rushing to my face.

"Well, don't get mad about it; I was only joking. I want to call on her; when will she receive company?"

"Not in a year or two," I said, emphatically. "She is going up the country next week, and will not return till the fall, when she will commence school, and be closely occupied with her studies."

"I see it is plain you fear rivals. I will not trouble you."

Before I could reply he was gone.

CHAPTER X

The morning is misty and damp, as father, mother, Carlotta, Lulie and I stand under the great shed at the dépôt, waiting for the car doors to be unlocked. It is very early, and nobody seems stirring except those immediately connected with the train about to start. There are a dozen or more people standing in groups, waiting on the same event as ourselves. They all yawn a great deal, rub their eyes, wish they were back in bed, and wonder how long before the brakesman comes to open the car doors. The train itself lies on the track like a great headless serpent (for the engine has not yet been put on), whose red and yellow sides are full of latticed eyes. At last the brakesman, in a blue coat, striped shirt and glazed cap, comes along, whistling the last popular ballad, unlocks the door with a rattle, and shouts "Walk in, ladies and gentlemen."

We crowd in and select our seats on the side from the sun, if it should come out. Father turns over the seat in front, that it may face the other one, lays his shawl in the corner, hangs up the basket containing our lunch, sits down, pulls off his glove with his teeth, thrusts his hand under his duster, draws out and looks at his watch, shuts it with a snap, and says indistinctly, through the fingers of his glove:

"It will be fifteen minutes before we start."

People continue to arrive and crowd in, singly and in parties. The individuals consist of a very fat old gentleman, with a broad hat soiled around the band, a duster too short by six inches for his long black coat, and a large red bandanna handkerchief, worn altogether in his hand; a fancy dressed young gentleman, who looks in the door a moment and concludes to finish his cigar upon the platform, with one foot lifted to the railing, where he can tap the heel of his boot with a leg-headed cane; a rather rough man with a very large moustache, who passes through the coach very often and slams the door very hard, gets between two seats to lean half way out of the window to tell some one, who is named Bill, "Hello!" and to ask "when will you be up?" lets down the window with a bang, and lolls across the seat with one foot hanging in the aisle; a middle aged maiden lady, dressed, of course, in black bombazine, with a green veil, a large basket with a scolloped top, a canary of yellow and black dignity in a white and green cage, furnished with seed, sand, and inconvenient water cups; an old lady under the care of the conductor, walking very slow, with a horn handled stick, a large flowered bandbox and a white cloth bag; she wears a dark fly bonnet, which she takes off when she sits down and displays a white cap, ruffled around her face, which is very much wrinkled, and has white, thin hairs about the chin; she shows a disposition to breathe hard, and to look around vacantly from the side seat at the end of the cars, where the conductor has placed her, and to talk to no one in particular with a voice like a cat-bird's with a bad cold.

The parties who enter are generally composed of tall, resigned looking gentlemen, burdened with innumerable boxes and bundles, patient and pale wives, in gray travelling dresses and lead colored veils, which they hold in one corner of their mouths, to show only one fourth of the face: sleepy looking, large boys, with badly fitting clothes, who stumble along the aisle behind their parents, as if they were still dreaming; smaller boys and girls following, holding each other by the hand, each in the fallacious belief that they are taking care of the other; and mulatto nurses, carrying in their arms very white headed babies, naturally lachrymose and nasally aqueous.

Having seen all these and many more come in, I raise the window. Everything is dripping with fog, and the moisture is trickling in little crooked streams down the sides of the coaches. The express wagon comes rattling down, and I can hear them unloading, with an occasional ejaculation bordering on the profane. Then I hear the bell of the engine as it comes out of the yard, and stews and hisses, backing down the track, nearer and nearer till it touches – then, with a loud clack-up of the coaches, everybody is jerked forward, the train glides back a foot or two, and it is coupled on. All is comparatively still now, and there is nothing to remind us of the immense power to which we

are attached, except the odor of the smoke, which is rolling in black masses along the roof of the shed, and the faint singing of the steam.

I take my head in and find everybody either dozing or staring stupidly out of the window. Father is reclining in his seat, mother is resting her cheek upon her hand, with closed eyes, and Carlotta and Lulie, finding it too damp to raise the window, have looked through the glass till their breath has dimmed it, and wiping it with their hands, have left the print of their fingers in circles on the pane.

William now brings father the checks for the baggage, the whistle sounds, the bell rings, a few loud coughs from the great monster that draws us, and we glide from under the roof, creep under the bridge, jog along the suburbs, rattle into full speed, and roar out of sight of the town; the last sign of which is a little negro, standing in the door of a hut on the embankment above, waving his rag of a hat, as if to wish us good speed. Trees fly by, fences like long serpents wriggle past, and the whole country becomes a passing panorama!

The sun rises, and, dispelling the fog, shines out bright and sultry. People, aroused by the stir, begin to talk. Children become thirsty. The lady opposite, with two little girls and a baby, tells the nurse to hand her the basket, and opening it to get out the silver mug, sends the nurse after water. The nurse totters down the coach, rocks backward and forward while drawing the water, and totters back, steadying herself by the arms of the seats, and spilling a little water at every step. The little camels gulp it down as if the cars were Sahara!

The conductor staggers in and calls for tickets. Old gentlemen untie many-stringed pocket-books, old ladies open their reticules, and young gentlemen point to their hat bands. He passes out, and the whistle sounds. The brakes-man rushes to the wheel and gives a turn, then holds his cap on with one hand, and swings off by the railing to look ahead. Another whistle, another turn, and we grind into a small station, where we stop for a minute or two; then on and on we fly, faster for the short delay. The morning wears away, and we get out our luncheon. Broiled chicken and cold tongue! how they are associated with travelling! Their very odor is suggestive of the rattle of the train! We had scarce finished eating when the whistle sounded for Goldsboro'. We got off and found Aleck, one of the farm hands, waiting for us with the spring wagon, as Horace, he said, had not yet got up with the carriage. We all clambered up, and were soon rolling over a level, though dusty, road to our country place.

As the rattling wagon was not a very pleasant place for conversation, I had leisure to observe Carlotta, and to mark the effects of diversion on her beautiful face. Many traces of sadness were gone, and there was even brightness in her eyes. Such eyes I have never seen. There was a *velvet* expression about them, for to the soft rich effect of that fabric alone can I compare those orbs and their setting; and I thought, as I gazed at them, that the soul must be a rare one indeed that possessed such windows. She seemed trying to shake off reflections on her own misfortunes, and for others' sake, if not her own, to be cheerful. She sat next to mother, to whom she was already fondly attached, and whose tender heart fully reciprocated her love. Lulie was all gaiety, and father was undignified enough to be droll; some of his remarks even drawing a smile from Carlotta, though only such a smile a soul in serge can wear; a smile that seems begun in forgetfulness, and finished with repentance for its levity.

The afternoon was far advanced when we drove up the long avenue of trees that led to the house.

The place had been built by my great grandfather, and the house and all the premises were on the old style.

The great-house, as it was termed by the negroes, was a large two-story one, with narrow green blinds, a large wing extending back, and piazzas running almost all the way round. The chimneys were very broad, and were built half up with rock, then finished off with brick. The front porch had an arched roof over it, and was furnished with two stiff benches on each side. There was a magnificent grove in front, in one corner of which was a large pond or lake, on which a flock of geese were swimming. To the left of the house stood a large capacious kitchen, painted red, and behind and around the house were ranged the dairy, smoke house, &c., all of the same ruddy hue. Back of the

yard were the long rows of negro cabins, with their martin poles, and little gardens in front of them, and a few hundred yards off, in a small growth of trees, stood the house for the overseer, Mr. Bemby. As we drove up to the yard gate a large bull-dog, chained in his kennel, commenced barking furiously, and this brought yelping around the house half a dozen curs and hounds belonging to the negroes. These were followed in turn by a troop of little negroes, who ran to the gate, shouting in great glee:

"Yon's marster and mistis."

Then ensued a scuffle for the honor of opening the gate, and a shrill chorus of "How dye's" as we entered the yard. Mrs. Bemby came down the steps to meet us, and took us into the cool, large front room, where she aided mother and the girls to take off their bonnets and hats, then conducted them to their chambers. She soon returned to father and myself, with waiter and goblets of ice water.

"Col. Smith," she said, as she placed the water on the table, "Mrs. Smith said you've got her keys; and, Mister John, your room is ready whenever you wish to go up."

"Thank you, Mrs. Bemby," I replied, as father arose and went to mother's chamber, "I will wait here awhile, as it is the coolest place I have seen to-day." "I must go see about supper," she said, taking up the key basket and holding it against herself while she searched for a key; "don't, the niggers will get every thing wrong. I 'spected to move over to-day to our house, but Mr. Bemby, he was so busy a plowing, I couldn't get all the things away; so, if you find any of Ben's things in your room, let 'em stay till in the morning. It ingenerly takes me a fortnit to get straight when I come from home to the great'us, or from the great'us to home."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.