VARIOUS

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WASHINGTON CITY

Washington is the paradise of paradoxes,—a city of magnificent distances, but of still more magnificent discrepancies. Anything may be affirmed of it, everything denied. What it seems to be it is not; and although it is getting to be what it never was, it must always remain what it now is. It might be called a city, if it were not alternately populous and uninhabited; and it would be a wide-spread village, if it were not a collection of hospitals for decayed or callow politicians. It is the hybernating-place of fashion, of intelligence, of vice,—a resort without the attractions of waters either mineral or salt, where there is no bathing and no springs, but drinking in abundance and gambling in any quantity. Defenceless, as regards walls, redoubts, moats, or other fortifications, it is nevertheless the Sevastopol of the Republic, against which the allied army of Contractors and Claim-Agents incessantly lay siege. It is a great, little, splendid, mean, extravagant, poverty-stricken barrack for soldiers of fortune and votaries of folly.

Scattered helter-skelter over an immense surface, cut up into scalene triangles, the oddity of its plan makes Washington a succession of surprises which never fail to vex and astonish the stranger, be he ever so highly endowed as to the phrenological bump of locality. Depending upon the hap-hazard start the ignoramus may chance to make, any particular house or street is either nearer at hand or farther off than the ordinary human mind finds it agreeable to believe. The first duty of the new-comer is to teach his nether extremities to avoid instinctively the hypothenuse of the street-triangulation, and the last lesson the resident fails to learn is which of the shortcuts from point to point is the least lengthy. Beyond a doubt, the corners of the streets were constructed upon a cold and brutal calculation of the greatest possible amount of oral sin which disappointed haste and irritated anxiety are capable of committing; nor is any relief to the tendency to profanity thus engendered afforded by the inexcusable nomenclature of the streets and avenues,—a nomenclature in which the resources of the alphabet, the arithmetic, the names of all the States of the Union, and the Presidents as well, are exhausted with the most unsystematic profligacy. A man not gifted with supernatural acuteness, in striving to get from Brown's Hotel to the General Post-Office, turns a corner and suddenly finds himself nowhere, simply because he is everywhere,—being at the instant upon three separate streets and two distinct avenues. And, as a further consequence of the scalene arrangement of things, it happens that the stranger in Washington, however civic his birth and education may have been, is always unconsciously performing those military evolutions styled marching to the right or left oblique, —acquiring thereby, it is said, that obliquity of the moral vision—which sooner or later afflicts every human being who inhabits this strange, lop-sided city-village.

So queer, indeed, is Washington City in every aspect, that one newly impressed by its incongruities is compelled to regard Swift's description of Lilliputia and Sydney Smith's account of Australia as poor attempts at fun. For, leaving out of view the pigmies of the former place, whose like we know is never found in Congress, what is there in that Australian bird with the voice of a jackass to excite the feeblest interest in the mind of a man who has listened to the debates on Kansas? or what marvel is an amphibian with the bill of a duck to him who has gazed aghast at the intricate anatomy of the bill of English? It is true that the ignorant Antipodes, with a total disregard of all

theories of projectiles, throw their boomerangs behind their backs in order to kill an animal that stands or runs before their faces, or skim them along the ground when they would destroy an object flying overhead. And these feats seem curious. But an accomplished "Constitutional Adviser" can perform feats far more surprising with a few lumps of coal or a number of ships-knees, which are but boomerangs of a larger growth. Another has invented the deadliest of political missiles, (in their recoil,) shaped like mules and dismantled forts, while a third has demolished the Treasury with a simple miscalculation. Still more astonishing are the performances of an eminent functionary who encourages polygamy by intimidation, purchases redress for national insult by intercepting his armies and fleets with an apology in the mouth of a Commissioner, and elevates the Republic in the eyes of mankind by conquering at Ostend even less than he has lost at the Executive Mansion.

In truth, the list of Washington anomalies is so extensive and so various, that no writer with a proper regard for his own reputation or his readers' credulity would dare enumerate them one by one. Without material injury to the common understanding, a few may be mentioned; but respect for public opinion would urge that the enormous whole be summed up in the comparatively safe and respectful assertion, that the one only absolutely certain thing in Washington is the absence of everything that is at all permanent. The following are some of the more obnoxious astonishments of the place.

Traversing a rocky prairie inflated with hacks, you arrive late in the afternoon at a curbed boundary, too fatigued in body and too suffocated with dust to resent the insult to your common-sense implied in the announcement that you have merely crossed what is called an Avenue. Recovered from your fatigue, you ascend the steps of a marble palace, and enter but to find it garrisoned by shabby regiments armed with quills and steel pens. The cells they inhabit are gloomy as dungeons, but furnished like parlors. Their business is to keep everybody's accounts but their own. They are of all ages, but of a uniformly dejected aspect. Do not underrate their value. Mr. Bulwer has said, that, in the hands of men entirely great, the pen is mightier than the sword. Suffer yourself to be astonished at their numbers, but permit yourself to withdraw from their vicinity without questioning too closely their present utility or future destination. No personal affront to the public or the nineteenth century is intended by the superfluity of their numbers or the inadequacy of their capacities. Their rapid increase is attributable not to any incestuous breeding in-and-in among themselves, but to a violent seduction of the President and the Heads of Department by importunate Congressmen; and you may rest assured that this criminal multiplication fills nobody with half so much righteous indignation and virtuous sorrow as the clerks themselves. Emerging from the palace of quill-drivers, a new surprise awaits you. The palace is surmounted by what appear to be gigantic masts and booms, economically, but strongly rigged, and without any sails. In the distance, you see other palaces rigged in the same manner. The effect of this spectacle is painful in the extreme. Standing dry-shod as the Israelites were while crossing the Red Sea, you nevertheless seem to be in the midst of a small fleet of unaccountable sloops of the Saurian period. You question whether these are not the fabulous "Ships of State" so often mentioned in the elegant oratory of your country. You observe that these ships are anchored in an ocean of pavement, and your no longer trustworthy eyes search vainly for their helms. The nearest approach to a rudder is a chimney or an unfinished pillar; the closest resemblance to a pilot is a hod-carrying workman clambering up a gangway. Dismissing the nautical hypothesis, your next effort to relieve your perplexity results in the conjecture that the prodigious masts and booms may be nothing more than curious gibbets, the cross-pieces to which, conforming rigidly to the Washington rule of contrariety, are fastened to the bottom instead of the top of the upright. Your theory is, that the destinies of the nation are to be hanged on these monstrous gibbets, and you wonder whether the laws of gravitation will be complaisant enough to turn upside down for the accommodation of the hangman, whoever he may be. It is not without pain that you are forced at last to the commonplace belief that these remarkable mountings of the Public Buildings are neither masts nor booms, but simply derricks,—mechanical contrivances for the lifting of very heavy weights. It is some consolation, however, to be told that the weakness of these derricks has never been proved

by the endeavor to elevate by means of them the moral character of the inhabitants of Washington. Content yourself, after a reasonable delay for natural wonderment, to leave the strange scene. This shipping-like aspect of the incomplete Departments is only a nice architectural tribute to the fact that the population of Washington is a floating population. This you will not be long in finding out. The oldest inhabitants are here to-day and gone tomorrow, as punctually, if not as poetically, as the Arabs of Mr. Longfellow. A few remain,—parasitic growths, clinging tenaciously to the old haunts. Like tartar on the teeth, they are proof against the hardest rubs of the tooth-brush of Fortune.

As with the people, so with the houses. Though they retain their positions, seldom abandoning the ground on which they were originally built, they change almost hourly their appearance and their uses,—insomuch that the very solids of the city seem fluid, and even the stables are mutable,—the horse-house of last week being an office for the sale of patents, or periodicals, or lottery-tickets, this week, with every probability of becoming an oyster-cellar, a billiard-saloon, a cigar-store, a barber's shop, a bar-room, or a faro-bank, next week. And here is another astonishment. You will observe that the palatial museums for the temporary preservation of fossil or fungous penmen join walls, virtually, with habitations whose architecture would reflect no credit on the most curious hamlet in tide-water Virginia. To your amazement, you learn that all these houses, thousands in number, are boarding-houses. Of course, where everybody is a stranger, nobody keeps house. It would be pardonable to suppose, that, out of so many boarding-houses, some would be in reality what they are in name. Nothing can be farther from the fact. These houses contain apartments more or less cheerless and badly furnished, according to the price (always exorbitant, however small it may be) demanded for them, and are devoted exclusively to the storage of empty bottles and demijohns, to large boxes of vegetable- and flower-seeds, to great piles of books, speeches, and documents not yet directed to people who will never read them, and to an abominable odor of boiling cabbages. This odor steals in from a number of pitch-dark tunnels and shafts, misnamed passages and staircases, in which there are more books, documents, and speeches, other boxes of seeds, and a still stronger odor of cabbages. The piles of books are traps set here for the benefit of the setters of broken legs and the patchers of skinless shins, and the noisome odors are propagated for the advantage of gentlemen who treat diseases of the larynx and lungs.

It would appear, then, that the so-called boarding-houses are, in point of fact, private gift-book stores, or rather, commission-houses for the receiving and forwarding of a profusion of undesirable documents and vegetations. You may view them also in the light of establishments for the manufacture and distribution of domestic perfumery, payment for which is never exacted at the moment of its involuntary purchase, but is left to be collected by a doctor,—who calls upon you during the winter, levies on you with a lancet, and distrains upon your viscera with a compound cathartic pill.

It is claimed, that, in addition to the victims who pay egregious rents for boarding-house beds in order that they may have a place to store their documents and demi-johns, there are other permanent occupants of these houses. As, for example, Irish chambermaids, who subtract a few moments from the morning half-hour given to drinking the remnants of your whiskey, and devote them to cleaning up your room. Also a very strange being, peculiar to Washington boarding-houses, who is never visible at any time, and is only heard stumbling up-stairs about four o'clock in the morning. Also beldames of incalculable antiquity,—a regular allowance of one to each boarding-house,—who flit noiselessly and unceasingly about the passages and up and down the stairways, admonishing you of their presence by a ghostly sniffle, which always frightens you, and prevents you from running into them and knocking them down. For these people, it is believed, a table is set in the houses where the boarders proper flatter their acquaintances that they sleep. It must be so, for the entire male population is constantly eating in the oyster-cellars. Indeed, if ocular evidence may be relied on, the best energies of the metropolis are given to the incessant consumption of "half a dozen raw," or "four fried and a glass of ale." The bar-rooms and eating-houses are always full or in the act of becoming full. By a fatality so unerring that it has ceased to be wonderful, it happens that you can never enter a

Washington restaurant and find it partially empty, without being instantly followed by a dozen or two of bipeds as hungry and thirsty as yourself, who crowd up to the bar and destroy half the comfort you derive from your lunch or your toddy.

But, although, everybody is forever eating oysters and drinking ale in myriads of subterranean holes and corners, nobody fails to eat at other places more surprising and original than any you have yet seen. In all other cities, people eat at home or at a hotel or an eating-house; in Washington they eat at bank. But they do not eat money,—at least, not in the form of bullion, or specie, or notes. These Washington banks, unlike those of London, Paris, and New York, are open mainly at night and all night long, are situated invariably in the second story, guarded as jealously as any seraglio, and admit nobody but strangers,—that is to say, everybody in Washington. This is singular. Still more singular is the fact, that the best food, served in the most exquisite manner, and (with sometimes a slight variation) the choicest wines and cigars, may be had at these banks free of cost, except to those who choose voluntarily to remunerate the banker by purchasing a commodity as costly and almost as worthless as the articles sold at ladies' fairs,—upon which principle, indeed, the Washington banks are conducted. The commodity alluded to is in the form of small discs of ivory, called "chips" or "cheeks" or "shad" or "skad," and the price varies from twenty-five cents to a hundred dollars per "skad."

It is expected that every person who opens an account at bank by eating a supper there shall buy a number of "shad," but not with the view of taking them home to show to his wife and children. Yet it is not an uncommon thing for persons of a stingy and ungrateful disposition to spend most of their time in these benevolent institutions without ever spending so much as a dollar for "shad," but eating, drinking, and smoking, and particularly drinking, to the best of their ability. This reprehensible practice is known familiarly in Washington as "bucking ag'inst the sideboard," and is thought by some to be the safest mode of doing business at bank.

The presiding officer is never called President. He is called "Dealer,"—perhaps from the circumstance of his dealing in ivory,—and is not looked up to and worshipped as the influential man of banking-houses is generally. On. the contrary, he is for the most part condemned by his best customers, whose heart's desire and prayer are to break his bank and ruin him utterly.

Seeing the multitude of boarding-houses, oyster-cellars, and ivory-banks, you may suppose there are no hotels in Washington. You are mistaken. There are plenty of hotels, many of them got up on the scale of magnificent distances that prevails everywhere, and somewhat on the maritime plan of the Departments. Outwardly, they look like colossal docks, erected for the benefit of hacks, large fleets of which you will always find moored under their lee, safe from the monsoon that prevails on the open sea of the Avenue. Inwardly, they are labyrinths, through whose gloomy mazes it is impossible to thread your way without the assistance of an Ariadne's clue in the shape of an Irishman panting under a trunk. So obscure and involved are the hotel-interiors, that it would be madness for a stranger to venture in search of his room without the guidance of some one far more familiar with the devious course of the narrow clearings through the forest of apartments than the landlord himself. Now and then a reckless and adventurous proprietor undertakes to make a day's journey alone through his establishment. He is never heard of afterwards,—or, if found, is discovered in a remote angle or loft, in a state of insensibility from bewilderment and starvation. If it were not for an occasional negro, who, instigated by charitable motives or love of money, slouches about from room to room with an empty coal-scuttle as an excuse for his intrusions, a gentleman stopping at a Washington hotel would be doomed to certain death. In fact, the lives of all the guests hang upon a thread, or rather, a wire; for, if the bell should fail to answer, there would be no earthly chance of getting into daylight again. It is but reasonable to suppose that the wires to many rooms have been broken in times past, and it is well known in Washington that these rooms are now tenanted by skeletons of hapless travellers whose relatives and friends never doubted that they had been kidnapped or had gone down in the Arctic.

The differential calculus by which all Washington is computed obtains at the hotels as elsewhere, with this peculiarity,—that the differences are infinitely great, instead of infinitely small.

While the fronts are very fine, showy, and youthful as the Lecompton Constitution, the rears are coarse, common, and old as the Missouri Compromise. The furniture in the rooms that look upon Pennsylvania Avenue is as fresh as the dogma of Squatter Sovereignty; that in all other rooms dates back to the Ordinance of '87. Some of the apartments exhibit a glaring splendor; the rest show beds, bureaus, and washstands which hard and long usage has polished to a sort of newness. Specimens of ancient pottery found on these washstands are now in the British Museum, and are reckoned among the finest of Layard's collections at Nineveh.

The dining rooms are admirable examples of magnificent distance. The room is long, the tables are long, the kitchen is a long way off, and the waiters a long time going and coming. The meals are long,—so long that there is literally no end to them; they are eternal. It is customary to mark certain points in the endless route of appetite with mile-stones named breakfast, dinner, and supper; but these points have no more positive existence than the imaginary lines and angles of the geometrician. Breakfast runs entirely through dinner into supper, and dinner ends with coffee, the beginning of breakfast. Estimating the duration of dinner by the speed of an ordinary railroad-train, it is twenty miles from soup to fish, and fifty from turkey to nuts. But distance, however magnificent, does not lend enchantment to a meal. The wonder is that the knives and forks are not made to correspond in length with the repasts,—in which case the latter would be pitchforks, and the former John-Brown pikes.

The people of Washington are as various, mixed, dissimilar, and contrasted as the edifices they inhabit. Within the like area, which is by no means a small one, the same number of dignitaries can be found nowhere else on the face of the globe,—nor so many characters of doubtful reputation. If the beggars of Dublin, the cripples of Constantinople, and the lepers of Damascus should assemble in Baden-Baden during a Congress of Kings, then Baden-Baden would resemble Washington. Presidents, Senators, Honorables, Judges, Generals, Commodores, Governors, and the Ex's of all these, congregate here as thick as pick-pockets at a horse-race or women at a wedding in church. Add Ambassadors, Plenipotentiaries, Lords, Counts, Barons, Chevaliers, the great and small fry of the Legations, Captains, Lieutenants, Claim-Agents, Negroes, Perpetual-Motion-Men, Fire-Eaters, Irishmen, Plug-Uglies, Hoosiers, Gamblers, Californians, Mexicans, Japanese, Indians, and Organ-Grinders, together with females to match all varieties of males, and you have vague notion of the people of Washington.

It is an axiom in physics, that a part cannot be greater than the whole; and it will be recollected, that, after Epistemon had his head sewed on, he related a tough story about the occupations of the mighty dead, and swore, that, in the course of his wanderings among the damned, he found Cicero kindling fires, Hannibal selling egg-shells, and Julius Caesar cleaning stoves. The story holds good in regard to the mighty personages in Washington, but the axiom does not. Men whose fame fills the land, when they are at home or spouting about the country, sink into insignificance when they get to Washington. The sun is but a small potato in the midst of the countless systems of the sidereal heavens. In like manner, the majestic orbs of the political firmament undergo a cruel lessening of diameter as they approach the Federal City. The greatest of men ceases to be great in the presence of hundreds of his peers, and the multitude of the illustrious dwindle into individual littleness by reason of their superabundance. And when it comes to occupations, it will hardly be denied that the stranger who beholds a Senator "coppering on the ace," or a Congressman standing in a bar-room with a lump of mouldy cheese in one hand and a glass of "pony whiskey" in the other, or a Judge of the Supreme Court wriggling an ugly woman through the ridiculous movements of the polka in a hotel-parlor, must experience sensations quite as confounding as any Epistemon felt in Kingdom Come.

In spite of numberless receptions, levees, balls, hops, parties, dinners, and other reunions, there is, properly speaking, no society in Washington. Circles are said to exist, but, like that in the vortex of the whirlpool, they are incessantly changing. Divisions purely arbitrary may be made in

any community. Hence the circles of Washington society may be represented sciagraphically in the following diagram.

The Circle of the Mudsill includes Negroes, Clerks, Irish Laborers, Patent and other Agents, Hackmen, Faro-Dealers, Washerwomen, and Newspaper-Correspondents. In the Hotel Circle, the Newest Strangers, Harpists, Members of Congress, Concertina-Men, Provincial Judges, Card-Writers, College-Students, Unprotected Females, "Star" and "States" Boys, Stool-Pigeons, Contractors, Sellers of Toothpicks, and Beau Hickman, are found. The Circle of the White House embraces the President, the Cabinet, the Chiefs of Bureaus, the Embassies, Corcoran and Riggs, formerly Mr. Forney, and until recently George Sanders and Isaiah Rynders. The little innermost circle is intended to represent a select body of residents, intense exclusives, who keep aloof from the other circles and hold them all in equal contempt. This circle is known only by report; in all probability it is a myth. It is worthy of remark that the circles of the White House and the Hotels rise higher and sink lower than that of the Mudsill, but whether this is a fact or a mere necessity of the diagram is not known.

Society, such as it is, in the metropolis, is indulgent to itself. It intermeddles not, asks no impertinent questions, and transacts its little affairs in perfect peace and quietude. Vigilant as the Inquisition in matters political, it is deaf and blind, but not dumb, as to all others. It dresses as it pleases, drinks as much as it chooses, eats indiscriminately, sleeps promiscuously, gets up at all hours of the day, and does as little work as possible. Its only trouble is that "incomparable grief" to which Panurge was subject, and "which at that time they called lack of money." In truth, the normal condition of Washington society is, to use a vernacular term, "busted." It is not an isolated complaint. Everybody is "busted." No matter what may be the state of a man's funds when he gets to Washington, no matter how long he stays or how soon he leaves, to this "busted" complexion must he come at last. He is in Rome; he must take the consequences. Shall he insult the whole city with his solvency? Certainly not. He abandons his purse and his conscience to the madness of the hour, and, in generous emulation of the prevailing recklessness and immorality, dismisses every scruple and squanders his last cent. Then, and not till then, does he feel himself truly a Washington-man, able to look anybody in the face with the serene pride of an equal, and without the mortification of being accused or even suspected of having in all the earth a dollar that he can call his own.

Where morals are loose, piety is seldom in excess. But there are a half-dozen of churches in Washington, besides preaching every Sunday in the House of Representatives. The relative size and cost of the churches, as compared with the Public Buildings, indicates the true object of worship in Washington. Strange to say, the theatre is smaller than the churches. Clerical and dramatic entertainments cannot compete with the superior attractions of the daily rows in Congress and the nightly orgies at the faro-banks. Heaven is regarded as another Chihuahua or Sonora, occupied at present by unfriendly Camanches, but destined to be annexed some day. In the mean time, a very important election is to come off in Connecticut or Pennsylvania. That must be attended to immediately. Such is piety in Washington.

The list of the unique prodigies of Washington is without limit. But marvels heaped together cease to be marvellous, and of all places in the world a museum is the most tiresome. So, amid the whirl and roar of winter-life in Washington, when one has no time to read, write, or think, and scarcely time to eat, drink, and sleep, when the days fly by like hours, and the brain reels under the excitement of the protracted debauch, life becomes an intolerable bore. Yet the place has an intense fascination for those who suffer most acutely from the *tedium vitae* to which every one is more or less a prey; and men and women who have lived in Washington are seldom contented elsewhere. The moths return to the flaming candle until they are consumed.

In conclusion, it must be admitted that Washington is the Elysium of oddities, the Limbo of absurdities, an imbroglio of ludicrous anomalies. Planned on a scale of surpassing grandeur, its architectural execution is almost contemptible. Blessed with the name of the purest of men, it has the

reputation of Sodom. The seat of the law-making power, it is the centre of violence and disorder which disturb the peace and harmony of the whole Republic,—the chosen resort for duelling, clandestine marriages, and the most stupendous thefts. It is a city without commerce and without manufactures; or rather, its commerce is illicit, and its manufacturers are newspaper-correspondents, who weave tissues of fiction out of the warp of rumor and the web of prevarication. The site of the United States Treasury, it is the home of everything but affluence. Its public buildings are splendid, its private dwellings generally squalid. The houses are low, the rents high; the streets are broad, the crossings narrow; the hacks are black, the horses white; the squares are triangles, except that of the Capitol, which is oval; and the water is so soft that it is hard to drink it, even with the admixture of alcohol. It has a Monument that will never be finished, a Capitol that is to have a dome, a Scientific Institute which does nothing but report the rise and fall of the thermometer, and two pieces of Equestrian Statuary which it would be a waste of time to criticize. It boasts a streamlet dignified with the name of the river Tiber, and this streamlet is of the size and much the appearance of a vein in a dirty man's arm. It has a canal, but the canal is a mud-puddle during one half the day and an empty ditch during the other. In spite of the labors of the Smithsonian Institute, it has no particular weather. It has the climates of all parts of the habitable globe. It rains, hails, snows, blows, freezes, and melts in Washington, all in the space of twenty-four hours. After a fortnight of steady rain, the sun shines out, and in half an hour the streets are filled with clouds of dust. Property in Washington is exceedingly sensitive, the people alarmingly callous. The men are fine-looking, the women homely. The latter have plain faces, but magnificent busts and graceful figures. The former have an imposing presence and an empty pocket, a great name and a small conscience. Notwithstanding all these impediments and disadvantages, Washington is progressing rapidly. It is fast becoming a large city, but it must always remain a deserted village in the summer. Its destiny is that of the Union. It will be the greatest capital the world ever saw, or it will be "a parched place in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited," and "every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and wag his head."

MIDSUMMER AND MAY

Spring at last stole placidly into summer, and Marguerite, who was always shivering in the house, kept the company in a whirl of out-door festivals.

"We have not lived so, Roger," said Mrs. McLean, "since the summer when you went away. We all follow the caprice of this child as a ship follows the little compass-needle."

And she made room for the child beside her in the carriage; for Mr. Raleigh was about driving them into town,—an exercise which had its particular charm for Marguerite, not only for the glimpse it afforded of the gay, bustling inland-city-life, but for opportunities of securing the reins and of occasioning panics. Lately, however, she had resigned the latter pleasure, and sat with quiet propriety by Mrs. McLean. Frequently, also, she took long drives alone or with one of the children, holding the reins listlessly, and ranging the highway unobservantly for miles around.

Mrs. Purcell declared the girl was homesick; Mrs. Heath doubted if the climate agreed with her: she neither denied nor affirmed their propositions.

Mr. Heath came and went from the city where her father was, without receiving any other notice than she would have bestowed on a peaceful walking-stick; his attentions to her during his visits were unequivocal; she accepted them as nonchalantly as from a waiter at table. On the occasion of his last stay, there had been a somewhat noticeable change in his demeanor: he wore a trifle of quite novel assurance; his supreme bearing was not mitigated by the restless sparkle of his eye; and in addressing her his compliments, he spoke as one having authority.

Mrs. Laudersdale, so long and so entirely accustomed to the reception of homage that it cost her no more reflection than an imperial princess bestows on the taxes that produce her tiara, turned slowly from the apparent apathy thus induced on her modes of thought, passivity lost in a gulf of anxious speculation, while she watched the theatre of events with a glow, like wine in lamplight, that burned behind her dusky eyes till they had the steady penetration of some wild creature's. She may have wondered if Mr. Raleigh's former feeling were yet alive; she may have wondered if Marguerite had found the spell that once she found, herself; she may have been kept in thrall by ignorance if he had ever read that old confessing note of hers: whatever she thought or hoped or dreaded, she said nothing, and did nothing.

Of all those who concerned themselves in the affair of Marguerite's health and spirits, Mr. Raleigh was the only one who might have solved their mystery. Perhaps the thought of wooing the child whose mother he had once loved was sufficiently repugnant to him to overcome the tenderness which every one was forced to feel for so beautiful a creation. I have not said that Marguerite was this, before, because, until brought into contrast with her mother, her extreme loveliness was too little positive to be felt; now it was the evanescent shimmer of pearl to the deep perpetual fire of the carbuncle. Softened, as she became, from her versatile cheeriness, she moved round like a moonbeam, and frequently had a bewildered grace, as if she knew not what to make of herself. Mr. Raleigh, from the moment in which he perceived that she no longer sought his company, retreated into his own apartments, and was less seen by the others than ever.

Returning from the drive on the morning of Mrs. McLean's last recorded remark, Mr. Raleigh, who had remained to give the horses in charge to a servant, was about to pass, when the *tableau* within the drawing-room caught his attention and altered his course. He entered, and flung his gloves down on a table, and threw himself on the floor beside Marguerite and the children. She appeared to be revisited by a ray of her old sunshine, and had unrolled a giant parcel of candied sweets, which their mother would have sacrificed on the shrine of jalap and senna, the purchase of a surreptitious moment, and was now dispensing the brilliant comestibles with much ill-subdued glee. One mouth, that had bitten off the head of a checkerberry chanticleer, was convulsed with the acidulous tickling of sweetened laughter, till the biter was bit and a metamorphosis into the animal of attack seemed

imminent; at the hands of another a warrior in barley-sugar was experiencing the vernacular for defeat with reproving haste and gravity; and there was yet another little omnivorous creature that put out both hands for indiscriminate snatching, and made a spectacle of himself in a general plaster of gum-arabic-drop and brandy-smash.

"Contraband?" said Mr. Raleigh.

"And sweet as stolen fruit," said Marguerite. "Ursule makes the richest comfits, but not so innumerable as these. Mamma and I owe our sweet-tooth and honey-lip to bits of her concoction."

"Mrs. Purcell," asked Mr. Raleigh, as that lady entered, "is this little banquet no seduction to you?"

"What are you doing?" she replied.

"Drinking honey-dew from acorns."

"Laudersdale as ever!" ejaculated she, looking over his shoulder. "I thought you had 'no sympathy with'"–

"But I 'like to see other folks take'"–

"Their sweets, in this case. No, thank you," she continued, after this little rehearsal of the past. "What are you poisoning all this brood for?"

"Mrs. Laudersdale eats sweetmeats; they don't poison her," remonstrated Katy.

"Mrs. Laudersdale, my dear, is exceptional."

Katy opened her eyes, as if she had been told that the object of her adoration was Japanese.

"It is the last grain that completes the transformation, as your story-books have told; and one day you will see her stand, a statue of sugar, and melt away in the sun. To be sure, the whole air will be sweetened, but there will be no Mrs. Laudersdale."

"For shame, Mrs. Purcell!" cried Marguerite. "You're not sweet-tempered, or you'd like sweet dainties yourself. Here are nuts swathed in syrup; you'll have none of them? Here are health and slumber and idle dreams in a chocolate-drop. Not a chocolate? Here are dates; if you wouldn't choose the things in themselves, truly you would for their associations? See, when you take up one, what a picture follows it: the plum that has swung at the top of a palm and crowded into itself the glow of those fierce noon-suns; it has been tossed by the sirocco, it has been steeped in reeking dew; there was always stretched above it the blue intense tent of a heaven full of light,—always below and around, long level reaches of hot shining sand; the phantoms of waning desert moons have hovered over it, swarthy Arab chiefs have encamped under it; it has threaded the narrow streets of Damascus—that city the most beautiful—on the backs of gaunt gray dromedaries; it has crossed the seas,—and all for you, if you take it, this product of desert freedom, torrid winds, and fervid suns!"

"I might swallow the date," said Mrs. Purcell, "but Africa would choke me."

Mr. Raleigh had remained silent for some time, watching Marguerite as she talked. It seemed to him that his youth was returning; he forgot his resolves, his desires, and became aware of nothing in the world but her voice. Just before she concluded, she grew conscious of his gaze, and almost at once ceased speaking; her eyes fell a moment to meet it, and then she would have flashed them aside, but that it was impossible; lucid lakes of light, they met his own; she was forced to continue it, to return it, to forget all, as he was forgetting, in that long look.

"What is this?" said Mrs. Purcell, stooping to pick up a trifle on the matting.

"*C'est à moi!*" cried Marguerite, springing up suddenly, and spilling all the fragments of the feast, to the evident satisfaction of the lately neglected guests.

"Yours?" said Mrs. Purcell with coolness, still retaining it. "Why do you think in French?"

"Because I choose!" said Marguerite, angrily. "I mean—How do you know that I do?"

"Your exclamation, when highly excited or contemptuously indifferent, is always in that tongue."

"Which am I now?"

"Really, you should know best. Here is your bawble"; and Mrs. Purcell tossed it lightly into her hands, and went out.

It was a sheath of old morocco. The motion loosened the clasp, and the contents, an ivory oval and a cushion of faded silk, fell to the floor. Mr. Raleigh bent and regathered them; there was nothing for Marguerite but to allow that he should do so. The oval had reversed in falling, so that he did not see it; but, glancing at her before returning it, he found her face and neck dyed deeper than the rose. Still reversed, he was about to relinquish it, when Mrs. McLean passed, and, hearing the scampering of little feet as they fled with booty, she also entered.

"Seeing you reminds me, Roger," said she. "What do you suppose has become of that little miniature I told you of? I was showing it to Marguerite the other night, and have not seen it since. I must have mislaid it, and it was particularly valuable, for it was some nameless thing that Mrs. Heath found among her mother's trinkets, and I begged it of her, it was such a perfect likeness of you. Can you have seen it?"

"Yes, I have it," he replied. "And haven't I as good a right to it as any?"

He extended his arm for the case which Marguerite held, and so touching her hand, the touch was more lingering than it needed to be; but he avoided looking at her, or he would have seen that the late color had fled till the face was whiter than marble.

"Your old propensities," said Mrs. McLean. "You always will be a boy. By the way, what do you think of Mary Purcell's engagement? I thought she would always be a girl."

"Ah! McLean was speaking of it to me. Why were they not engaged before?"

"Because she was not an heiress."

Mr. Raleigh raised his eyebrows significantly.

"He could not afford to marry any but an heiress," explained Mrs. McLean.

Mr. Raleigh fastened the case and restored it silently.

"You think that absurd? You would not marry an heiress?"

Mr. Raleigh did not at once reply.

"You would not, then, propose to an heiress?"

"No."

As this monosyllable fell from his lips, Marguerite's motion placed her beyond hearing. She took a few swift steps, but paused and leaned against the wall of the gable for support, and, placing her hand upon the sun-beat bricks, she felt a warmth in them which there seemed to be neither in herself nor in the wide summer-air.

Mrs. Purcell came along, opening her parasol.

"I am going to the orchard," said she; "cherries are ripe. Hear the robins and the bells! Do you want to come?"

"No," said Marguerite.

"There are bees in the orchard, too,—the very bees, for aught I know, that Mr. Raleigh used to watch thirteen years ago, or their great-grand-bees,—they stand in the same place."

"You knew Mr. Raleigh thirteen years ago?" she asked, glancing up curiously.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Very well."

"How much is very well?"

"He proposed to me. Smother your anger; he didn't care for me; some one told him that I cared for him."

"Did you?"

"This is what the Inquisition calls applying the question?" asked Mrs. Purcell. "Nonsense, dear child! he was quite in love with somebody else."

"And that was–?"

"He supposed your mother to be a widow. Well, if you won't come, I shall go alone and read my 'L'Allegro' under the boughs, with breezes blowing between the lines. I can show you some little field-mice like unfledged birds, and a nest that protrudes now and then glittering eyes and cleft fangs."

Marguerite was silent; the latter commodity was *de trop*. Mrs. Purcell adjusted her parasol and passed on.

Here, then, was the whole affair. Marguerite pressed her hands to her forehead, as if fearful some of the swarming thoughts should escape; then she hastened up the slope behind the house, and entered and hid herself in the woods. Mr. Raleigh had loved her mother. Of course, then, there was not a shadow of doubt that her mother had loved him. Horrible thought! and she shook like an aspen, beneath it. For a time it seemed that she loathed him,—that she despised the woman who had given him regard. The present moment was a point of dreadful isolation; there was no past to remember, no future to expect; she herself was alone and forsaken, the whole world dark, and heaven blank. But that could not be forever. As she sat with her face buried in her hands, old words, old looks, flashed on her recollection; she comprehended what long years of silent suffering the one might have endured, what barren yearning the other; she saw how her mother's haughty calm might be the crust on a lava-sea; she felt what desolation must have filled Roger Raleigh's heart, when he found that she whom he had loved no longer lived, that he had cherished a lifeless ideal,—for Marguerite knew from his own lips that he had not met the same woman whom he had left.

She started up, wondering what had led her upon this train of thought, why she had pursued it, and what reason she had for the pain it gave her. A step rustled among the distant last-year's leaves; there in the shadowy wood, where she did not dream of concealing her thoughts, where it seemed that all Nature shared her confidence, this step was like a finger laid on the hidden sore. She paused, a glow rushed over her frame, and her face grew hot with the convicting flush. Consternation, bitter condemnation, shame, impetuous resolve, swept over her in one torrent, and she saw that she had a secret which every one might touch, and, touching, cause to sting. She hurried onward through the wood, unconscious how rapidly or how far her heedless course extended. She sprang across gaps at which she would another time have shuddered; she clambered over fallen trees, penetrated thickets of tangled brier, and followed up the shrunken beds of streams, till suddenly the wood grew thin again, and she emerged upon an open space,—a long lawn, where the grass grew rank and tall as in deserted graveyards, and on which the afternoon sunshine lay with most dreary, desolate emphasis. Marguerite had scarcely comprehended herself before; now, as she looked out on the utter loneliness of the place, all joyousness, all content, seemed wiped from the world. She leaned against a tree where the building rose before her, old and forsaken, washed by rains, beaten by winds. A blind slung open, loose on a broken hinge; the emptiness of the house looked through it like a spirit. The woodbine seemed the only living thing about it,—the woodbine that had swung its clusters, heavy as grapes of Eshcol, along one wall, and, falling from support, had rioted upon the ground in masses of close-netted luxuriance.

Standing and surveying the silent scene of former gayety, a figure came down the slope, crushing the grass with lingering tread, checked himself, and, half-reversed, surveyed it with her. Her first impulse was to approach, her next to retreat; by a resolution of forces she remained where she was. Mr. Raleigh's position prevented her from seeing the expression of his face; from his attitude seldom was anything to be divined. He turned with a motion of the arm, as if he swung off a burden, and met her eye. He laughed, and drew near.

"I am tempted to return to that suspicion of mine when I first met you, Miss Marguerite," said he. "You take shape from solitude and empty air as easily as a Dryad steps from her tree."

"There are no Dryads now," said Marguerite, sententiously.

"Then you confess to being a myth?"

"I confess to being tired, Mr. Raleigh."

Mr. Raleigh's manner changed, at her petulance and fatigue, to the old air of protection, and he gave her his hand. It was pleasant to be the object of his care, to be with him as at first, to renew their former relation. She acquiesced, and walked beside him.

"You have had some weary travel," he said, "and probably not more than half of it in the path."

And she feared he would glance at the rents in her frock, forgetting that they were not sufficiently infrequent facts to be noticeable.

"He treats me like a child," she thought. "He expects me to tear my dress! He forgets, that, while thirteen years were making a statue of her, they were making a woman of me!" And she snatched away her hand.

"I have the boat below," he said, without paying attention to the movement. "You took the longest way round, which, you have heard, is the shortest way home. You have never been on the lake with me." And he was about to assist her in.

She stepped back, hesitating.

"No, no," he said. "It is very well to think of walking back, but it must end in thinking. You have no impetus now to send you over another half-dozen miles of wood-faring, no pique to sting, Io."

And before she could remonstrate, she was lifted in, the oars had flashed twice, and there was deep water between herself and shore. She was in reality too much fatigued to be vexed, and she sat silently watching the spaces through which they glanced, and listening to the rhythmic dip of the oars. The soft afternoon air, with its melancholy sweetness and tinge of softer hue, hung round them; the water, brown and warm, was dimpled with the flight of myriad insects; they wound among the islands, a path one of them knew of old. From the shelving rocks a wild convolvulus drooped its twisted bells across them, a sweet-brier snatched at her hair in passing, a sudden elder-tree shot out its creamy panicles above, they ripped up drowsy beds of folded lily-blooms.

Mr. Raleigh, suddenly lifting one oar, gave the boat a sharp curve and sent it out on the open expanse; it seemed to him that he had no right thus to live two lives in one. Still he wished to linger, and with now and then a lazy movement they slipped along. He leaned one arm on the upright oar, like a river-god, and from the store of boat-songs in his remembrance sang now and then a strain. Marguerite sat opposite and rested along the side, content for the moment to glide on as they were, without a reference to the past in her thought, without a dream of the future. Peach-bloom fell on the air, warmed all objects into mellow tint, and reddened deep into sunset. Tinkling cow-bells, where the kine wound out from pasture, stole faintly over the lake, reflected dyes suffused it and spread around them sheets of splendid color, outlines grew ever dimmer on the distant shores, a purple tone absorbed all brilliance, the shadows fell, and, bright with angry lustre, the planet Mars hung in the south and struck a spear, redder than rubies, down the placid mirror. The dew gathered and lay sparkling on the thwarts as they touched the garden-steps, and they mounted and traversed together the alleys of odorous dark. They entered at Mr. Raleigh's door and stepped thence into the main hall, where they could see the broad light from the drawing-room windows streaming over the lawn beyond. Mrs. Laudersdale came down the hall to meet them.

"My dear Rite," she said, "I have been alarmed, and have sent the servants out for you. You left home in the morning, and you have not dined. Your father and Mr. Heath have arrived. Tea is just over, and we are waiting for you to dress and go into town; it is Mrs. Manton's evening, you recollect."

"Must I go, mamma?" asked Marguerite, after this statement of facts. "Then I must have tea first. Mr. Raleigh, I remember my wasted sweetmeats of the morning with a pang. How long ago that seems!"

In a moment her face told her regret for the allusion, and she hastened into the dining-room.

Mr. Raleigh and Marguerite had a merry tea, and Mrs. Purcell came and poured it out for them.

"Quite like the days when we went gypsying," said she, when near its conclusion.

"We have just come from the Bawn, Miss Marguerite and I," he replied.

"You have? I never go near it. Did it break your heart?"

Mr. Raleigh laughed.

"Is Mr. Raleigh's heart such a delicate organ?" asked Marguerite.

"Once, you might have been answered negatively; now, it must be like the French banner, _percé, troué, criblé,"—

"Pray, add the remainder of your quotation," said he,—"*sans peur et sans reproche*."

"So that a trifle would reduce it to flinders," said Mrs. Purcell, without minding his interruption.

"Would you give it such a character, Miss Rite?" questioned Mr. Raleigh lightly.

"I? I don't see that you have any heart at all, Sir."

"I swallow my tea and my mortification."

"Do you remember your first repast at the Bawn?" asked Mrs. Purcell.

"Why not?"

"And the jelly like molten rubies that I made? It keeps well." And she moved a glittering dish toward him.

"All things of that summer keep well," he replied.

"Except yourself, Mr. Raleigh. The Indian jugglers are practising upon us, I suspect. You are no more like the same person who played sparkling comedy and sang passionate tragedy than this bamboo stick is like that willow wand."

"I wish I could retort, Miss Helen," he replied. "I beg your pardon!"

She was silent, and her eye fell and rested on the sheeny damask beneath. He glanced at her keenly an instant, then handed her his cup, saying,—

"May I trouble you?"

She looked up again, a smile breaking over the face wanner than youth, but which the hour's gayety had flushed to a forgetfulness of intervening years, extended her left hand for the cup, still gazing and smiling.

Various resolves had flitted through Marguerite's mind since her entrance. One, that she would yet make Mr. Raleigh feel her power, yielded to shame and self-contempt, and she despised herself for a woman won unwooed. But she was not sure that she was won. Perhaps, after all, she did not care particularly for Mr. Raleigh. He was much older than she; he was quite grave, sometimes satirical; she knew nothing about him; she was slightly afraid of him. On the whole, if she consulted her taste, she would have preferred a younger hero; she would rather be the Fornarina for a Raffaello; she had fancied her name sweetening the songs of Giraud Riquier, the last of the Troubadours; and she did not believe Beatrice Portinari to be so excellent among women, so different from other girls, that her name should have soared so far aloft with that escutcheon of the golden wing on a field azure. "But they say that there cannot be two epic periods in a nation's literature," thought Marguerite hurriedly; "so that a man who might have been Homer once will be nothing but a gentleman now." And at this point, having decided that Mr. Raleigh was fully worth unlimited love, she added to her resolves a desire for content with whatever amount of friendly affection he chose to bestow upon her. And all this, while sifting the sugar over her raspberries. Nevertheless, she felt, in the midst of her heroic content, a strange jealousy at hearing the two thus discuss days in which she had no share, and she watched them furtively, with a sharp, hateful suspicion dawning in her mind. Now, as Mrs. Purcell's eyes met Mr. Raleigh's, and her hand was still extended for the cup, Marguerite fastened her glance on its glittering ring, and said abruptly,—

"Mrs. Purcell, have you a husband?"

Mrs. Purcell started and withdrew her hand, as if it had received a blow, just as Mr. Raleigh relinquished the cup, so that between them the bits of pictured porcelain fell and splintered over the equipage.

"Naughty child!" said Mrs. Purcell. "See now what you've done!"

"What have I to do with it?"

"Then you haven't any bad news for me? Has any one heard from the Colonel? Is he ill?"

"Pshaw!" said Marguerite, rising and throwing down her napkin.

She went to the window and looked out.

"It is time you were gone, little lady," said Mr. Raleigh.

She approached Mrs. Purcell and passed her hand down her hair.

"What pretty soft hair you have!" said she. "These braids are like carved gold-stone. May I dress it with sweet-brier to-night? I brought home a spray."

"Rite!" said Mrs. Laudersdale sweetly, at the door; and Rite obeyed the summons.

In a half-hour she came slowly down the stairs, untwisting a long string of her mother's abandoned pearls, great pear-shaped things full of the pale lustre of gibbous moons. She wore a dress of white samarcand, with a lavish ornament like threads and purfiles of gold upon the bodice, and Ursule followed with a cloak. As she entered the drawing-room, the great bunches of white azalea, which her mother had brought from the swamps, caught her eye; she threw down the pearls, and broke off rapid dusters of the queenly flowers, touching the backward-curling hyacinthine petals, and caressingly passing her finger down the pale purple shadow of the snowy folds. Directly afterward she hung them in her breezy hair, from which, by natural tenure, they were not likely to fall, bound them over her shoulders and in her waist.

"See! I stand like Summer," she said, "wrapped in perfume; it is intoxicating."

Just then two hands touched her, and her father bent his face over her. She flung her arms round him, careless of their fragile array, kissed him on both cheeks, laughed, and kissed him again. She did not speak, for he disliked French, and English sometimes failed her.

"Here is Mr. Heath," her father said.

She partly turned, touched that gentleman's hand with the ends of her fingers, and nodded. Her father whispered a brief sentence in her ear.

"*Jamais, Monsieur, jamais!*" she exclaimed; then, with a quick gesture of deprecation, moved again toward him; but Mr. Laudersdale had coldly passed to make his compliments to Mrs. Heath.

"You are not in toilet?" said Marguerite, following him, but speaking with Mr. Raleigh.

"No,—Mrs. Purcell has been playing for me a little thing I always liked,—that sweet, tuneful afternoon chiding of the Miller and the Torrent."

She glanced at Mrs. Purcell, saw that her dress remained unaltered, and commenced pulling out the azaleas from her own.

"I do not want to go," she murmured. "I need not! Mamma and Mrs. McLean have already gone in the other carriage."

"Come, Marguerite," said Mr. Laudersdale, approaching her, as Mr. Heath and his mother disappeared.

"I am not going," she replied, quickly.

"Not going? I beg your pardon, my dear, but you are!" and he took her hand.

She half endeavored to withdraw it, threw a backward glance over her shoulder at the remaining pair, and, led by her father, went out.

Marguerite did her best to forget the vexation, was very affable with her father, and took no notice of any of Mr. Heath's prolonged remarks. The drive was at best a tiresome one, and she was already half-asleep when the carriage stopped. The noise and light, and the little vanities of the dressing-room, awakened her, and she descended prepared for conquest. But, after a few moments, it all became weariness, the air was close, the flowers faded, the music piercing. The toilets did not attract nor the faces interest her. She danced along absent and spiritless, when her eye, raised dreamily, fell on an object among the curtains and lay fascinated there. It was certainly Mr. Raleigh: but so little likely did that seem, that she again circled the room, with her eyes bent upon that point, expecting it to vanish. He must have come in the saddle, unless a coach had returned for him and Mrs. Purcell,—yes, there was Mrs. Purcell,—and she wore that sweet-brier fresh-blossoming in the

light. With what ease she moved!—it must always have been the same grace;—how brilliant she was! There,—she was going to dance with Mr. Raleigh. No? Where, then? Into the music-room!

The music-room lay beyond an anteroom of flowers and prints, and was closed against the murmur of the parlors by great glass doors. Marguerite, from her position, could see Mr. Raleigh seated at the piano, and Mrs. Purcell standing by his side; now she turned a leaf, now she stooped, and their hands touched upon the keys. Marguerite slipped alone through the dancers, and drew nearer. There were others in the music-room, but they were at a distance from the piano. She entered the anteroom and sat shadowed among the great fragrant shrubs. A group already stood there, eating ices and gayly gossiping. Mr. Laudersdale and Mr. Manton sauntered in, their heads together, and muttering occult matters of business, whose tally was kept with forefinger on palm.

"Where is Raleigh?" asked Mr. Manton, looking up. "He can tell us."

"At his old occupation," answered a gentleman from beside Mrs. Laudersdale, "flirting with forbidden fruit."

"An alliterative amusement," said Mrs. Laudersdale.

"You did not know the original Raleigh?" continued the gentleman. "But he always took pleasure in female society; yet, singularly enough, though fastidious in choice, it was only upon the married ladies that he bestowed his platonisms. I observe the old Adam still clings to him."

"He probably found more liberty with them," remarked Mrs. Laudersdale, when no one else replied.

"Without doubt he took it."

"I mean, that, where attentions are known to intend nothing, one is not obliged to measure them, or to calculate upon effects."

"Of the latter no one can accuse Mr. Raleigh!" said Mr. Laudersdale, hotly, forgetting himself for once.

Mrs. Laudersdale lifted her large eyes and laid them on her husband's face.

"Excuse me! excuse me!" said the gentleman, with natural misconception. "I was not aware that he was a friend of yours." And taking a lady on his arm, he withdrew.

"Nor is he!" said Mr. Laudersdale, in lowest tones, replying to his wife's gaze, and for the first time intimating his feeling. "Never, never, can I repair the ruin he has made me!"

Mrs. Laudersdale rose and stretched out her arm, blindly.

"The room is quite dark," she murmured; "the flowers must soil the air.

Will you take me up-stairs?"

Meanwhile, the unconscious object of their remark was turning over a pile of pages with one hand, while the other trifled along the gleaming keys.

"Here it is," said he, drawing one from the others, and arranging it before him,—a *gondel-lied*.

There stole from his fingers the soft, slow sound of lapsing waters, the rocking on the tide, the long sway of some idle weed. Here a jet of tune was flung out from a distant bark, here a high octave flashed like a passing torch through night-shadows, and lofty arching darkness told in clustering chords. Now the boat fled through melancholy narrow ways of pillared pomp and stately beauty, now floated off on the wide lagoons alone with the stars and sea. Into this broke the passion of the gliding lovers, deep and strong, giving a soul to the whole, and fading away again, behind its wild beating, —with the silence of lapping ripple and dipping oar.

Mrs. Purcell, standing beside the player, laid a careless arm across the instrument, and bent her face above him like a flower languid with the sun's rays. Suddenly the former smile suffused it, and, as the gondel-lied fell into a slow floating accompaniment, she sang with a swift, impetuous grace, and in a sweet, yet thrilling voice, the Moth Song. The shrill music and murmur from the parlors burst all at once in muffled volume upon the melody, and, turning, they both saw Marguerite standing in the doorway, like an angry wraith, and flitting back again. Mrs. Purcell laughed, but took up the

thread of her song again where it was broken, and carried it through to the end. Then Mr. Raleigh tossed the gondel-lied aside, and rising, they continued their stroll.

"You have more than your share of the good things of life, Raleigh," said Mr. McLean, as the person addressed poured out wine for Mrs. Purcell. "Two affairs on hand at once? You drink deep. Light and sparkling,—thin and tart,—isn't it Solomon who forbids mixed drink?"

"I was never the worse for claret," replied Mr. Raleigh, bearing away the glittering glass.

The party from the Lake had not arrived at an early hour, and it was quite late when Mr. Raleigh made his way through ranks of tireless dancers, toward Marguerite. She had been dancing with a spirit that would have resembled joyousness but for its reckless *abandon*. She seemed to him then like a flame, as full of wilful sinuous caprice. At the first he scarcely liked it, but directly the artistic side of his nature recognized the extreme grace and beauty that flowed through every curve of movement. Standing now, the corn-silk hair slightly disordered and still blown about by the fan of some one near her, her eyes sparkling like stars in the dewdrops of wild wood-violets, warm, yet weary, and a flush deepening her cheek with color, while the flowers hung dead around her, she held a glass of wine and watched the bead swim to the brim. Mr. Raleigh approached unaware, and startled her as he spoke.

"It is *au gré du vent*, indeed," he said,—"just the white fluttering butterfly,—and now that the wings are clasped above this crimson blossom, I have a chance of capture." And smiling, he gently withdrew the splendid draught.

"*Buvez, Monsieur*," she said; "*c'est le vin de la vie!*"

"Do you know how near daylight it is?" he replied. "Mrs. Laudersdale fainted in the heat, and your father took her home long ago. The Heaths went also; and the carriage has just returned for the only ones of us that are left, you and me."

"Is it ready now?"

"Yes."

"So am I."

And in a few moments she sat opposite him in the coach, on their way home.

"It wouldn't be possible for me to sit on the box and drive?" she asked.

"I should like it, in this wild starlight, these flying clouds, this breath of dawn."

Meeting no response, she sank into silence. No emotion can keep one awake forever, and, after all her late fatigue, the roll of the easy vehicle upon the springs soon soothed her into a dreamy state. Through the efforts at wakefulness, she watched the gleams that fell within from the carriage-lamps, the strange shadows on the roadside, the boughs tossing to the wind and flickering all their leaves in the speeding light; she watched, also, Mr. Raleigh's face, on which, in the fitful flashes, she detected a look of utter weariness.

"*Monsieur*," she exclaimed, "*il faut que je vous gêne!*"

"Immensely," said Mr. Raleigh with a smile; "but, fortunately, for no great time."

"We shall be soon at home? Then I must have slept."

"Very like. What did you dream?"

"Oh, one must not tell dreams before breakfast, or they come to pass, you know."

"No,—I am uninitiated in dream-craft. Mr. Heath"–

"*Monsieur*," she cried, with sudden heat, "*il me semble que je comprends les Laocoons! J'en suis de même!*"

As she spoke, she fell, struck forward by a sudden shock, the coach was rocking like a boat, and plunging down unknown gulfs. Mr. Raleigh seized her, broke through the door, and sprang out.

"*Qu'avez vous?*" she exclaimed.

"The old willow is fallen in the wind," he replied.

"*Quel dommage* that we did not see it fall!"

"It has killed one of the horses, I fear," he continued, measuring, as formerly, her terror by her levity. "Capua! is all right? Are you safe?"

"Yah, massa!" responded a voice from the depths, as Capua floundered with the remaining horse in the thicket at the lake-edge below. "Yah, massa,—nuffin harm Ol' Cap in water; spec he born to die in galluses; had nuff chance to be in glory, ef 'twasn't. I's done beat wid dis yer pony, anyhow, Mass'r Raleigh. Seems, ef he was a 'sect to fly in de face of all creation an' pay no 'tention to his centre o' gravity, he might walk up dis yer hill!"

Mr. Raleigh left Marguerite a moment, to relieve Capua's perplexity. Through the remaining darkness, the sparkle of stars, and wild fling of shadows in the wind, she could but dimly discern the struggling figures, and the great creature trampling and snorting below. She remembered strange tales out of the "Arabian Nights," "Bellerophon and the Chimaera," "St. George and the Dragon"; she waited, half-expectant, to see the great talon-stretched wings flap up against the slow edge of dawn, where Orion lay, a pallid monster, watching the planet that flashed like some great gem low in a crystalline west, and she stepped nearer, with a kind of eager and martial spirit, to do battle in turn.

"Stand aside, Una!" cried Mr. Raleigh, who had worked in a determined characteristic silence, and the horse's head, sharp ear, and starting eye were brought to sight, and then his heaving bulk.

"All right, massa!" cried Capua, after a moment's survey, as he patted the trembling flanks. "Pretty tough ex'cise dat! Spect Massam Clean be mighty high,—his best cretur done about killed wid dat tree;—feared he show dis nigger a stick worf two o' dat!"

"We had like to have finished our dance on nothing," said Mr. Raleigh now, looking back on the splintered wheels and panels. "Will you mount? I can secure you from falling."

"Oh, no,—I can walk; it is only a little way."

"Reach home like Cinderella? If you had but one glass slipper, that might be; but in satin ones it is impossible." And she found herself seated aloft before quite aware what had happened.

Pacing along, they talked lightly, with the gayety natural upon excitement,—Capua once in a while adding a cogent word. As they opened the door, Mr. Raleigh paused a moment.

"I am glad," he said, "that my last day with you has been crowned by such adventures. I leave the Lake at noon."

She hung, listening, with a backward swerve of figure, and regarding him in the dim light of the swinging hall-lamp, for the moment half-petrified. Suddenly she turned and seized his hand in hers,—then threw it off.

"*Cher ami*," she murmured hastily, in a piercing whisper, like some articulate sigh, "*si tu m'aimes, dis moi!*"

The door closed in the draught, the drawing-room door opened, and Mr. Laudersdale stepped out, having been awaiting their return. Mr. Raleigh caught the flash of Marguerite's eye and the crimson of her cheek, as she sprang forward up the stairs and out of sight.

The family did not breakfast together the next day, as politeness chooses to call the first hour after a ball, and Mr. Raleigh was making some arrangements preliminary to his departure, in his own apartments, at about the hour of noon. The rooms which he had formerly occupied Mrs. McLean had always kept closed, in a possibility of his return, and he had found himself installed in them upon his arrival. The library was today rather a melancholy room: the great book-cases did not enliven it; the grand-piano, with its old dark polish, seemed like a coffin, the sarcophagus of unrisen music; the oak panelling had absorbed a richer hue with the years than once it wore; the portrait of his mother seemed farther withdrawn from sight and air; Antinoüs took a tawnier tint in his long reverie. The Summer, past her height, sent a sad beam, the signal of decay, through the half-open shutters, and it lay wearily on the man who sat by the long table, and made more sombre yet the faded carpet and cumbrous chair.

There was a tap on the door. Mr. Raleigh rose and opened it, and invited Mr. Laudersdale in. The latter gentleman complied, took the chair resigned by the other, but after a few words became quiet. Mr. Raleigh made one or two attempts at conversation, then, seeing silence to be his visitor's whim, suffered him to indulge it, and himself continued his writing. Indeed, the peculiar relations

existing between these men made much conversation difficult. Mr. Laudersdale sat with his eyes upon the floor for several minutes, and his countenance wrapped in thought. Rising, with his hands behind him, he walked up and down the long room, still without speaking.

"Can I be of service to you, Sir?" asked the other, after observing him.

"Yes, Mr. Raleigh, I am led to think you can,"—still pacing up and down, and vouchsafing no further information.

At last, the monotonous movement ended, Mr. Laudersdale stood at the window, intercepting the sunshine, and examined some memoranda.

"Yes, Mr. Raleigh," he resumed, with all his courtly manner, upon close of the examination, "I am in hopes that you may assist me in a singular dilemma."

"I shall be very glad to do so."

"Thank you. This is the affair. About a year ago, being unable to make my usual visit to my daughter and her grandmother, I sent there in my place our head clerk, young Heath, to effect the few transactions, and also to take a month's recreation,—for we were all overworked and exhausted by the crisis. The first thing he proceeded to do was to fall in love with my daughter. Of course he did not mention this occurrence to me, on his return. When my daughter arrived at New York, I was again detained, myself, and sent her to this place under his care. He lingered rather longer than he should have done, knowing the state of things; but I suspected nothing, for the idea of a clerk's marriage with the heiress of the great Martinique estate never entered my mind; moreover, I have regarded her as a child; and I sent him back with various commissions at several times,—once on business with McLean, once to obtain my wife's signature to some sacrifice of property, and so on. I really beg your pardon, Mr. Raleigh; it is painful to another, I am aware, to be thrust upon family confidences"–

"Pray, Sir, proceed," said Mr. Raleigh, wheeling his chair about.

"But since you are in a manner connected with the affair, yourself"–

"You must be aware, Mr. Laudersdale, that my chief desire is the opportunity you afford me."

"I believe so. I am happy to afford it. On the occasion of Mr. Heath's last visit to this place, Marguerite drew attention to a coin whose history you heard, and the other half of which Mrs. Purcell wore. Mr. Heath obtained the fragment he possessed through my wife's aunt, Susanne Le Blanc; Mrs. Purcell obtained hers through her grandmother, Susan White. Of course, these good people were not slow to put the coin and the names together; Mr. Heath, moreover, had heard portions of the history of Susanne Le Blanc, when in Martinique.

"On resuming his duties in the counting-house, after this little incident, one day, at the close of business-hours, he demanded from me the remnants of this history with which he might be unacquainted. When I paused, he took up the story and finished it with ease, and—and poetical justice, I may say, Mr. Raleigh. Susanne was the sister of Mrs. Laudersdale's father, though far younger than he. She met a young American gentleman, and they became interested in each other. Her brother designed her for a different fate,—the governor of the island, indeed, was her suitor,—and forbade their intercourse. There were rumors of a private marriage; her apartments were searched for any record, note, or proof, unsuccessfully. If there were such, they had been left in the gentleman's hands for better concealment. It being supposed that they continued to meet, M. Le Blanc prevailed upon the governor to arrest the lover on some trifling pretence and send him out of the island. Shortly afterward, as he once confessed to his wife, he caused a circumstantial account of the death and funeral obsequies of each to reach the other. Immediately he urged the governor's suit again, and when she continued to resist, he fixed the wedding-day, himself, and ordered the *trousseau*. Upon this, one evening, she buried the box of trinkets at the foot of the oleanders, and disappeared the next, and no trace of her was found.

"When I reached this point, young Heath turned to me with that impudently nonchalant drawl of his, saying,—

"'And her property, Sir?'

"'That,' I replied innocently, 'which comprised half the estate, and which she would have received, on attaining the requisite age, was inherited by her brother, upon her suicide.'

"'Apparent suicide, you mean,' said he; and thereupon took up the story, as I have said, matched date to date and person to person, and informed me that exactly a fortnight from the day of Mademoiselle Susanne Le Blanc's disappearance, a young lady took rooms at a hotel in a Southern city, and advertised for a situation as governess, under the name of Susan White. She gave no references, spoke English imperfectly, and had difficulty in obtaining one; finally, however, she was successful, and after a few years married into the family of her employer, and became the mother of Mrs. Heath. The likeness of Mrs. Purcell, the grandchild of Susan White, to Susanne Le Blanc, was so extraordinary, a number of years ago, that, when Ursule, my daughter's nurse, first saw her, she fainted with terror. My wife, you are aware, was born long after these events. This governess never communicated to her husband any more specific circumstance of her youth than that she had lived in the West Indies, and had left her family because they had resolved to marry her,—as she might have done, had she not died shortly after her daughter's birth. Among her few valuables were found this half-coin of Heath's, and a miniature, which his mother recently gave your cousin, but which, on account of its new interest, she has demanded again; for it is probably that of the ancient lover, and bearing, as it does, a very striking resemblance to yourself, you have pronounced it to be undoubtedly that of your uncle, Reuben Raleigh, and wondered how it came into the possession of Mrs. Heath's mother. Now, as you may be aware, Reuben Raleigh was the name of Susanne Le Blanc's lover."

"No,—I was not aware."

Mr. Laudersdale's countenance, which had been animated in narration, suddenly fell.

"I was in hopes," he resumed,—"I thought,—my relation of these occurrences may have been very confused; but it is as plain as daylight to me, that Susanne Le Blanc and Susan White are one, and that the property of the first is due to the heirs of the last."

"Without doubt, Sir."

"The same is plain, to the Heaths. I am sure that Marguerite will accept our decision in the matter,—sure that no daughter of mine would retain a fraudulent penny; for retain it she could, since there is not sufficient proof in any court, if we chose to contest; but it will beggar her."

"How, Sir? Beggar her to divide her property?"

"It is a singular division. The interest due on Susanne's moiety swells it enormously. Add to this, that, after M. Le Blanc's death, Madame Le Blanc, a much younger person, did not so well understand the management of affairs, the property depreciated, and many losses were encountered, and it happens that the sum due Mrs. Heath covers the whole amount that Marguerite possesses."

"Now, then, Sir?" exclaimed Mr. Raleigh, interrogatively.

"Now, then, Mrs. Heath requests my daughter's hand for her son, and offers to set off to him, at once, such sum as would constitute his half of her new property upon her decease, and allow him to enter our house as special partner."

"Ah!"

"This does not look so unreasonable. Last night he proposed formally to Marguerite, who is still ignorant of these affairs, and she refused him. I have urged her differently,—I can do no more than urge,—and she remains obdurate. To accumulate misfortunes, we escaped 1857 by a miracle. We have barely recovered; and now various disasters striking us,—the loss of the Osprey the first and chief of them,—we are to-day on the verge of bankruptcy. Nothing but the entrance of this fortune can save us from ruin."

"Unfortunate!" said Mr. Raleigh,—"most unfortunate! And can I serve you at this point?"

"Not at all, Sir," said Mr. Laudersdale, with sudden erectness. "No,—I have but one hope. It has seemed to me barely possible that your uncle may have communicated to you events of his early life,—that you may have heard, that there may have been papers telling of the real fate of Susanne Le Blanc."

"None that I know of," said Mr. Raleigh, after a pause. "My uncle was a very reserved person. I often imagined that his youth had not been without its passages, something to account for his unvarying depression. In one letter, indeed, I asked him for such a narration. He promised to give it to me shortly,—the next mail, perhaps. The next mail I received nothing; and after that he made no allusion to the request."

"Indeed? Indeed? I should say,—pardon me, Mr. Raleigh,—that your portion of the next mail met with some accident. Your servants could not explain it?"

"There is Capua, who was major-domo. We can inquire," said Mr. Raleigh, with a smile, rising and ringing for that functionary.

On Capua's appearance, the question was asked, if he had ever secretly detained letter or paper of any kind.

"Lors, massa! I alwes knew 'twould come to dis!" he replied. "No, massa, neber!" shaking his head with repeated emphasis.

"I thought you might have met with some accident, Capua," said his master.

"Axerden be –, beg massa's parden; but such s'picions poison any family's peace, and make a feller done forgit hisself."

"Very well," said Mr. Raleigh, who was made to believe by this vehemence in what at first had seemed a mere fantasy. "Only remember, that, if you could assure me that any papers had been destroyed, the assurance would be of value."

"'Deed, Mass Roger? Dat alters de case," said Capua, grinning. "Dere's been a good many papers 'stroyed in dis yer house firs' an' last."

"Which in particular?"

"Don' rekerlek, massa, it's so long ago."

"But make an effort."

"Well, Massa Raleigh,—'pears to me I *do* remember suthin',—I do b'lieve—yes, dis's jist how 'twas. Spect I might as well make a crean breast ob it. I's alwes had it hangin' roun' my conscious; do'no' but I's done grad to git rid ob it. Alwes spected massa 'd be 'xcusin' Cap o' turnin' tief."

"That is the last accusation I should make against you, Capua."

"But dar I stan's convicted."

"Out with it, Capua!" said Mr. Laudersdale, laughing.

"Lord! Massa Lausdel! how you do scare a chile! Didn' know mass'r was dar. See, Mass Roger, dis's jist how 'twas. Spec you mind dat time when all dese yer folks lib'd acrost de lake dat summer, an' massa was possessed to 'most lib dar too? Well, one day, massa mind Ol' Cap's runnin' acrost in de rain an' in great state ob excitement to tell him his house done burnt up?"

"Yes. What then?"

"Dat day, massa, de letters had come from Massa Reuben out in Indy, an' massa's pipe kinder 'tracted Cap's 'tention, an' so he jist set down in massa's chair an' took a smoke. Bimeby Cap thought,—'Ef massa come an' ketch him!'—an' put down de pipe an' went to work, and bimeby I smelt mighty queer smell, massa, 'bout de house, made him tink Ol' Nick was come hissef for Ol' Cap, an' I come back into dis yer room an' Massa Reuben's letters from Indy was jist most done burnt up, he cotched 'em in dese yer ol' brack han's, Mass Roger, an' jist whipt 'em up in dat high croset."

And having arrived at this confusion in his personal pronouns, Capua mounted nimbly on pieces of furniture, thrust his pocket-knife through a crack of the wainscot, opened the door of a small unseen closet, and, after groping about and inserting his head as Van Amburgh did in the lion's mouth, scrambled down again with his hand full of charred and blackened papers, talking glibly all the while.

"Ef massa'd jist listen to reason," he said, "'stead o' flyin' into one ob his tantrums, I might sprain de matter. You see, I knew Mass Roger'd feel so oncomforble and remorseful to find his ol' uncle's letters done 'stroyed, an 'twas all by axerden, an' couldn' help it noways, massa, an' been done sorry eber since, an' wished dar warn't no letters dis side de Atlantic nor torrer, ebery day I woke."

After which plea, Capua awaited his sentence.

"That will do,—it's over now, old boy," said Mr. Raleigh, with his usual smile.

"Now, massa, you a'n't gwine"–

"No, Capua, I'm going to do nothing but look at the papers."

"But massa's"–

"You need not be troubled,—I said, I was not."

"But, massa,—s'pose I deserve a thrashing?"

"There's no danger of your getting it, you blameless Ethiop!"

Upon which pacific assurance, Capua departed.

The two gentlemen now proceeded to the examination of these fragments. Of the letters nothing whatever was to be made. From one of them dropped a little yellow folded paper that fell apart in its creases. Put together, it formed a sufficiently legible document, and they read the undoubted marriage-certificate of Susanne Le Blanc and Reuben Raleigh.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Laudersdale, after a moment. "I am sorry, instead of a fortune, to give them a bar-sinister."

"Your daughter is ignorant?—your wife?"

"Entirely. Will you allow me to invite them in here? They should see this paper."

"You do not anticipate any unpleasant effect?"

"Not the slightest Marguerite has no notion of want or of pride.

Her first and only thought will be—*sa cousine Hélène*." And Mr.

Laudersdale went out.

Some light feet were to be heard pattering down the stairs, a mingling of voices, then Mr. Laudersdale passed on, and Marguerite tapped, entered, and closed the door.

"My father has told me something I but half understand," said she, with her hand on the door. "Unless I marry Mr. Heath, I lose my wealth? What does that signify? Would all the mines of Peru tempt me?"

Mr. Raleigh remained leaning against the corner of the bookcase. She advanced and stood at the foot of the table, nearly opposite him. Her lips were glowing as if the fire of her excitement were fanned by every breath; her eyes, half hidden by the veiling lids, seemed to throw a light out beneath them and down her cheek. She wore a mantle of swan's down closely wrapped round her, for she had complained ceaselessly of the chilly summer.

"Mr. Raleigh," she said, "I am poorer than you are, now. I am no longer an heiress."

At this moment, the door opened again and Mrs. Laudersdale entered. At a step she stood in the one sunbeam; at another, the shutters blew together, and the room was left in semi-darkness, with her figure gleaming through it, outlined and starred in tremulous evanescent light. For an instant both Marguerite and Mr. Raleigh seemed to be half awe-struck by the radiant creature shining out of the dark; but directly, Marguerite sprang back and stripped away the torrid nasturtium-vine which her mother had perhaps been winding in her hair when her husband spoke with her, and whose other end, long and laden with fragrant flame, still hung in her hand and along her dress. Laughing, Marguerite in turn wound it about herself, and the flowers, so lately plucked from the bath of hot air, where they had lain steeping in sun, flashed through the air a second, and then played all their faint spirit-like luminosity about their new wearer. She seemed sphered in beauty, like the Soul of Morning in some painter's fantasy, with all great stars blossoming out in floral life about her, colorless, yet brilliant in shape and light. It was too much; Mr. Raleigh opened the window and let in the daylight again, and a fresh air that lent the place a gayer life. As he did so, Mr. Laudersdale entered, and with him Mr. Heath and his mother. Mr. Laudersdale briefly recapitulated the facts, and added,—

"Communicating my doubts to Mr. Raleigh, he has kindly furnished me with the marriage-certificate of his uncle and Mademoiselle Le Blanc. And as Mr. Reuben Raleigh was living within thirteen years, you perceive that your claims are invalidated."

There was a brief silence while the paper was inspected.

"I am still of opinion that my grandmother's second marriage was legal," replied Mr. Heath; "yet I should be loath to drag up her name and subject ourselves to a possibility of disgrace. So, though the estate is ours, we can do without it!"

Meanwhile, Marguerite had approached her father, and was patching together the important scraps.

"What has this to do with it?" said she. "You admitted before this discovery—did you not?—that the property was no longer mine. These people are Aunt Susanne's heirs still, if not legally, yet justly. I will not retain a *sous* of it! My father shall instruct my lawyer, Mrs. Heath, to make all necessary transfers to yourself. Let us wish you good-morning!" And she opened the door for them to pass.

"Marguerite! are you mad?" asked her father, as the door closed.

"No, father,—but honest,—which is the same thing," she responded, still standing near it.

"True," he said, in a low tone like a groan. "But we are ruined."

"Ruined? Oh, no! You are well and strong. So am I. I can work. I shall get much embroidery to do, for I can do it perfectly; the nuns taught me. I have a thousand resources. And there is something my mother can do; it is her great secret; she has played at it summer after summer. She has moulded leaves and flowers and twined them round beautiful faces in clay, long enough; now she shall carve them in stone, and you will be rich again!"

Mrs. Laudersdale sat in a low chair while Marguerite spoke, the nasturtium-vine dinging round her feet like a gorgeous snake, her hands lying listlessly in her lap, and her attitude that of some queen who has lost her crown, and is totally bewildered by this strange conduct on the part of circumstances. All the strength and energy that had been the deceits of manner were utterly fallen away, and it was plain, that, whatever the endowment was which Marguerite had mentioned, she could only play at it. She was but a woman, sheer woman, with the woman's one capability, and the exercise of that denied her.

Mr. Laudersdale remained with his eyes fixed on her, and lost, it seemed, to the presence of others.

"The disgrace is bitter," he murmured. "I have kept my name so proudly and so long! But that is little. It is for you I fear. I have stood in your sunshine and shadowed your life, dear!—At least," he continued, after a pause, "I can place you beyond the reach of suffering. I must finish my lonely way."

Mrs. Laudersdale looked up slowly and met his earnest glance.

"Must I leave you?" she exclaimed, with a wild terror in her tone. "Do you mean that I shall go away? Oh, you need not care for me,—you need never love me,—you may always be cold,—but I must serve you, live with you, die with you!" And she sprang forward with outstretched arms.

He caught her before her foot became entangled in the long folds of her skirt, drew her to himself, and held her. What he murmured was inaudible to the others; but a tint redder than roses are swam to her cheek, and a smile broke over her face like a reflection in rippling water. She held his arm tightly in her hand, and erect and proud, as it were with a new life, bent toward Roger Raleigh.

"You see!" said she. "My husband loves me. And I,—it seems at this moment that I have never loved any other than him!"

There came a quick step along the matting, the handle of the door turned in Marguerite's resisting grasp, and Mrs. Purcell's light muslins swept through. Mr. Raleigh advanced to meet her,—a singular light upon his face, a strange accent of happiness in his voice.

"Since you seem to be a part of the affair," she said in a low tone, while her lip quivered with anger and scorn, "concerning which I have this moment been informed, pray, take to Mr. Lauderdale my brother's request to enter the house of Day, Knight, and Company, from this day."

"Has he made such a request?" asked Mr. Raleigh.

"He shall make it!" she murmured swiftly, and was gone.

That night a telegram flashed over the wires, and thenceforth, on the great financial tide, the ship Day, Knight, and Company lowered its peak to none.

The day crept through until evening, deepening into genuine heat, and Marguerite sat waiting for Mr. Raleigh to come and bid her farewell. It seemed that his plans were altered, or possibly he was gone, and at sunset she went out alone. The cardinals that here and there showed their red caps above the bank, the wild roses that still lined the way, the grapes that blossomed and reddened and ripened year after year ungathered, did not once lift her eyes. She sat down, at last, on an old fallen trunk cushioned with moss, half of it forever wet in the brook that babbled to the lake, and waited for the day to quench itself in coolness and darkness.

"Ah!" said Mr. Raleigh, leaping from the other side of the brook to the mossy trunk, "is it you? I have been seeking you, and what sprite sends you to me?"

"I thought you were going away," she said, abruptly.

"That is a broken paving-stone," he answered, seating himself beside her, and throwing his hat on the grass.

"You asked me, yesterday, if I confessed to being a myth," she said, after a time. "If I should go back to Martinique, I should become one in your remembrance,—should I not? You would think of me just as you would have thought of the Dryad yesterday, if she had stepped from the tree and stepped back again?"

"Are you going to Martinique?" he asked, with a total change of face and manner.

"I don't know. I am tired of this; and I cannot live on an ice-field. I had such life at the South! It is 'as if a rose should shut and be a bud again.' I need my native weather, heat and sea."

"How can you go to Martinique?"

"Oh, I forgot!"

Mr. Raleigh did not reply, and they both sat listening to the faint night-side noises of the world.

"You are very quiet," he said at last, ceasing to fling waifs upon the stream.

"And you could be very gay, I believe."

"Yes. I am full of exuberant spirits. Do you know what day it is?"

"It is my birthday."

"It is *my* birthday!"

"How strange! The Jews would tell you that this sweet first of August was the birthday of the world.

> ""Tis like the birthday of the world,
> When earth was born in bloom,'"—

she sang, but paused before her voice should become hoarse in tears.

"Do you know what you promised me on my birthday? I am going to claim it."

"The present. You shall have a cast which I had made from one of my mother's fancies or bas-reliefs,—she only does the front of anything,—a group of fleurs-de-lis whose outlines make a child's face, my face."

"It is more than any likeness in stone or pencil that I shall ask of you."

"What then?"

"You cannot imagine?"

"*Monsieur*" she whispered, turning toward him, and blushing in the twilight, "*est ce que c'est moi?*"

There came out the low west-wind singing to itself through the leaves, the drone of a late-carousing honey-bee, the lapping of the water on the shore, the song of the wood-thrush replete with the sweetness of its half-melody; and ever and anon the pensive cry of the whippoorwill fluted across the deepening silence that summoned all these murmurs into hearing. A rustle like the breeze in the

birches passed, and Mrs. Purcell retarded her rapid step to survey the woods-people who rose out of the shade and now went on together with her. It seemed as if the loons and whippoorwills grew wild with sorrow that night, and after a while Mrs. Purcell ceased her lively soliloquy, and as they walked they listened. Suddenly Mr. Raleigh turned. Mrs. Purcell was not beside him. They had been walking on the brook-edge; the path was full of gaps and cuts. With a fierce shudder and misgiving, he hurriedly retraced his steps, and searched and called; then, with the same haste, rejoining Marguerite, gained the house, for lanterns and assistance. Mrs. Purcell sat at the drawing-room window.

"*Comment?*" cried Marguerite, breathlessly.

"Oh, I had no idea of walking in fog up to my chin," said Mrs. Purcell; "so I took the short cut."

"You give me credit for the tragic element," she continued, under her breath, as Mr. Raleigh quietly passed her. "That is old style. To be sure, I might as well die there as in the swamps of Florida. Purcell is ordered to Florida. Of course, I am ordered too!" And she whirled him the letter which she held.

Other letters had been received with the evening-mail, and one that made Mr. Raleigh's return in September imperative occasioned some discussion in the House of Laudersdale. The result that that gentleman secured one more than he had intended in the spring; and if you ever watch the shipping-list, the arrival of the Spray-Plough at Calcutta, with Mr. and Mrs. Raleigh among the passengers, will be seen by you as soon as me.

Later in the evening of this same eventful day, as Mr. Raleigh and Marguerite sat together in the moonlight that flooded the great window, Mrs. Laudersdale passed them and went down the garden to the lake. She wore some white garment, as in her youth, and there was a dreamy sweetness in her eye and an unspoken joy about her lips. Mr. Raleigh could not help thinking it was a singular happiness, this that opened before her; it seemed to be like a fruit plucked from the stem and left to mature in the sunshine by itself, late and lingering, never sound at heart. She floated on, with the light in her dusky eyes and the seldom rose on her cheek,—floated on from moonbeam to moonbeam,—and the lovers brought back their glances and gave them to each other. For one, life opened a labyrinth of warmth and light and joy; for the other, youth was passed, destiny not to be appeased: if his affection enriched her, the best he could do was to bestow it; in his love there would yet be silent reservations.

"Mr. Raleigh," said Marguerite, "did you ever love my mother?"

"Once I thought I did."

"And now?"

"Whereas I was blind, now I see."

"Listen! Mrs. Purcell is singing in the drawing-room."

"Through lonely summers, where the roses blow
Unsought, and shed their tangled sweets,
I sit and hark, or in the starry dark,
Or when the night-rain on the hill-side beats.

"Alone! But when the eternal summers flow
And refluent drown in song all moan,
Thy soul shall waste for its delight, and haste
Through heaven. And I shall be no more alone!"

"What a voice she sings with to-night!" said Marguerite. "It is stripped of all its ornamental disguises,—so slender, yet piercing!"

"A needle can pain like a sword-blade. There goes the moon in clouds.

Hark! What was that? A cry?" And he started to his feet.

"No," she said,—"it is only the wild music of the lake, the voices of shadows calling to shadows."

"There it is again, but fainter; the wind carries it the other way."

"It is a desolating wind."

"And the light on the land is like that of eclipse!"

He stooped and raised her and folded her in his arms.

"I have a strange, terrible sense of calamity, *Mignonné!*" he said.

"Let it strike, so it spare you!"

"Nothing can harm us," she replied, clinging to him. "Even death cannot come between us!"

"Marguerite!" said Mr. Laudersdale, entering, "where is your mother?"

"She went down to the lake, Sir."

"She cannot possibly have gone out upon it!"

"Oh, she frequently does; and so do we all."

"But this high wind has risen since. The flaws"–And he went out hastily.

There flashed on Mr. Raleigh's mental sight a vision of the moonlit lake, one instant. A boat, upon its side, bending its white sail down the depths; a lifted arm wound in the fatal rope; a woman's form, hanging by that arm, sustained in the dark transparent tide of death; the wild wind blowing over, the moonlight glazing all. For that instant he remained still as stone; the next, he strode away, and dashed down to the lake-shore. It seemed as if his vision yet continued. They had already put out in boats; he was too late. He waited in ghastly suspense till they rowed home with their slow freight. And then his arm supported the head with its long, uncoiling, heavy hair, and lifted the limbs, round which the drapery flowed like a pall on sculpture, till another man took the burden from him and went up to the house with his dead.

* * * * *

When Mr. Raleigh entered the house again, it was at break of dawn. Some one opened the library-door and beckoned him in. Marguerite sprang into his arms.

"What if she had died?" said Mrs. Purcell, with her swift satiric breath, and folding a web of muslin over her arm. "See! I had got out the shroud. As it is, we drink *skål* and say grace at breakfast. The funeral baked-meats shall coldly furnish forth the marriage-feast. You men are all alike. *Le Roi est mort? Vive la Reine!*"

* * * * *

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend,—"If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch
Of the North-Church-tower, as a signal-light,—
One if by land, and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,

For the country-folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said good-night, and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somersett, British man-of-war:
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon, like a prison-bar,
And a huge, black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack-door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed to the tower of the church,
Up the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—
Up the light ladder, slender and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still,
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,—
A line of black, that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,

Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride,
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now gazed on the landscape far and near,
Then impetuous stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely, and spectral, and sombre, and still.

And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height,
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village-street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed that flies fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

It was twelve by the village-clock,
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river-fog,
That rises when the sun goes down.

It was one by the village-clock,
When he rode into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village-clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning-breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed

Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read
How the British regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farmyard-wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance, and not of fear,—
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beat of that steed,
And the midnight-message of Paul Revere.

A NIGHT UNDER GROUND

My dear Laura Matilda, have you ever worked your way under ground, like the ghost Hamlet, Senior? On the contrary, you confess, but a dim idea of that peculiar mode of progression abides in the well-ordered mansion of your mind?

Well, I do not wonder at it; you are civilized beyond the common herd; your mamma, careful of her own comfort and the beauty of her child, guards both. Your sunny summer-times go by in the shade of sylvan groves, or amid the whirl of Saratoga or Newport ball-rooms. I accept your ignorance; it is a pretty blossom in your maiden chaplet. For myself, I blush for my own familiarity with rough scenes chanced upon in wayward wanderings.

Let me tell you of a path among the "untrodden ways." Transport yourself with me.

Fancy a low, level, drowsy point of land, stretching out into the unbroken emerald green of Lake Superior, at the point where a narrow, yellowish river offers its tribute. The King of Lakes is exclusive; he disdains to blend his brilliant waters with those of the muddy river; a wavy line, distinctly and clearly defined, but seeming as if drawn by a trembling hand, undulates at their junction,—no democratic, union-seeking boundary, but the arbitrary line of division that separates the Sultan from the slave, the peer from the peasant.

Along this shore are scattered various buildings that seem to nod in the indolent sunshine of the bright, clear, quiet air of midsummer. One of these, differing from the rest in its more modern construction, is a spacious hotel that holds itself proudly erect, and from its summit the gay flag of my country floats flauntingly.

We must pass this by, and go down a plank-covered walk to reach the sandy-golden beach where the green waves dash with silent dignity, in these long calms of July. Before the hotel the river flows also sleepily; but both shores are vocal with ladies' laughter and the singing of young girls, the lively chatter of a party of pleasure-tourists.

The fine steamer that brought us to this point has gone,

> "Sailing out into the west,
> Out into the west, as the sun went down";

but no "weeping and wringing of hands" was there; we knew it must "come back to the town,"—that we are merely transient waifs cast upon this quiet beach, flitting birds of passage who have alighted in the porticos of the "Bigelow House," Ontonagon, Michigan.

A long, low flat-boat, without visible sails, steam-pipes, or oars,—a narrow river-craft, with a box-like cabin at one end, the whole rude in its *ensemble*, and uncivilized in its details,—is the object that meets the gaze of those who would curiously inspect the means by which the adventurous novelty-seeking portion of our party are to be conveyed up this Ontonagon river to the great copper-mines that form the inestimable wealth of that region. For the metallic attraction has proved magnetic to the fancies of a few. A mine is a mystery; and mysteries, to the female mind, are delights.

What is the boat to us but a means? If it seem prosaic, what care we? Have we escaped the French fashions of *à-la-mode* watering-places, to be fastidious amid wigwams and unpeopled shores?

We all know what it is to embark for a day's travel, but we do not all understand the charm of being stowed away like freight in a boat such as the one here faintly sketched; how seats are improvised; how umbrellas are converted into stationary screens, and awnings grow out of inspiration; how baskets are hidden carefully among carpet-bags, and camp-stools, and water-jugs, and stowed-in-shavings ice; how the long-suffering, patient ladies shelter themselves in the tiny, stifling cabin, while those of the merry, complexion-careless sort lounge in the daylight's glare, and one couple, fond of seclusion and sentiment, discover a good place for both, at the rudder-end.

There is an oar or two on board, it appears, as we push off in the early dawn; and these are employed for a mile or so at the mouth of the river; then the current begins to quicken in a narrower bed, and a group of sinewy men betake themselves to their poles, lazily at first, until–

But you do not know exactly what these implements are?

They are heavy, wooden, sharp-pointed poles, ten or twelve feet long. On either side of the boat runs a "walk," arranged as if a ladder were laid horizontally; but in reality the bars or rungs are firmly fastened to the walk, to be used as rests for the feet. Here the men, five on a side, march like a chain-gang, backward and forward; placing one end of the pole in the bed of the stream, resting the other in the hollow of the shoulder near the arm-pit, and bracing themselves by their feet against these bars, they pry the boat along.

Progression by such means is unavoidably slow; but no steamboat-race on our Western rivers, blind and reckless, boiler-defying and life-despising, ever produced more excitement than this same poling.

Wait till the current runs rapidly, fretting and seething in its angry haste, when for a moment's delay the boat must lose ground; when the poles are plunged into the rocky bed like harpoons into the back of an escaping whale; when the athletic forms of the men are bent forward until each prostrates himself in the exertion of his full powers; when not a false step—each step a run—can be hazarded; when that monotonous unanimity of labor is at its height, in which each boatman becomes possessed as if by a devil of strife; when their faces lose every gentle semblance of humanity, and become distorted to a simple expression of stubborn brute force; when the muscles of their arms are knitted, rope-like, and every nerve stretched to its utmost;—wait till you have seen all this, and you will confess that a woman's lazy life can know no harder toil than that of the mind's sympathetic coexertion,—that is, if she be excitable or impressible.

The stream is tortuous, erratic, shallow, and narrow. Sometimes, as we glide, always noiselessly, beneath the overhanging foliage and tangled vines along shore, what myriads of gayly winged insects—brilliant dragon-flies, mammoth gnats, preposterous mosquitoes—swarm about our heads, disturbed from their gambols by the laughter and songs aboard our moving craft!

Only one halt in our journey, and that to dine. Just above this point we pass the swiftest rapids on the route, where the river widens, and each side of the bank is beautiful in its wooded picturesqueness, while the waters rush, in foaming, surging, tumbling confusion, over the rugged rocks, or dart between them like a merry band of water-sprites chasing each other in gleesome frolic.

It seems a desecration of these rapids thus to subdue and triumph over them. They are as if placed there by Nature as a sportive check to man's further intrusion; and as the waters come hurrying down, led, as it were, by some Undine jealous for her realm, their murmurings seem to say, in playful, yet earnest remonstrance,—"Let our gambols divert you; we will hasten to you; but approach no nearer! Permit us to guard the sanctuary of our hidden sources, our beloved and holy solitudes!"

But vain appeal! Our men pole frantically onward, and so the day passes. By mid-afternoon their labors cease, and we come to anchor at the bank, having achieved seventeen miles in nine hours! Let those of us to whom lightning-express-trains have been slow grumble hereafter at their fifty miles an hour!

A country-wagon receives most of the ladies; the majority of their attendant cavaliers walk; of two horses, the side-saddled one has about one hundred pounds avoirdupois for his share, and, in spite of the lack of habit and equestrian "pomp and circumstance" generally, I cannot term it the most unpleasant three miles I ever travelled. The road is a wild, rugged ascent up a well-wooded hill-side. There is a tonic vigor in the atmosphere, which communicates itself irresistibly to one's mental state; the gladdened lungs inhale it eagerly, as a luxury. When one walks in this air, one seems to gain wings; to ride is to float at will.

Presently, at the top, a low village comes in sight; yelping curs start from wayside cabins; coarse, dull-featured women gape at half-opened doors or sit idly on rude steps; and the men we chance to

meet wear that cadaverous pallor inseparable from the mere idea of a miner. We do not regret that the pert dogs have imparted speed to our horses' heels;—a swift, exhilarating gallop brings us in sight of a large, comfortable house, perched like a bird-box in the hills; then others are discerned; and in a few more bounds, we are at the gate. Here, where all visitors to the Minnesota Mines are received and entertained, we prove *avant-couriers* of the slowly advancing wagon-load,—"the largest party of ladies ever met there," they tell us, as we forewarn our hosts of the band so boldly invading their copper-bound country.

Very soon we are rambling over the hills,—those of Nature's rearing, and others formed by the accumulation of refuse brought up from the mine. We discover and secure some fine specimens of the metal; sundry of the knowing ones, after mysterious interviews with rascally-looking miners, appear with curious bits of pure silver ore mingled with crystals of quartz and tinted with tiny specks of copper. These, being the most valuable curiosities of the region, are usually secreted by the miners for the purpose of private speculation.

We feel a reverence for this ground, so teeming with metallic wealth,—and yet a certain timorousness, as we remember that we walk on a crust, that beneath us are great caves and subterranean galleries.

This outer shell, this surface-knowledge of what lies below, does not content me. I have also a brave friend who shares my feeling. We agree, that, despite the interest of this crust, to know of the fruit beneath and not taste it is worse than aggravating; we grow reckless in our thirst for the forbidden knowledge.

We have entertained a little plot in our headstrong minds all the way, which we have hardly dared to name before. It is surely not feminine to look longingly on those ladders made for the descent of hardy miners only; visitors beneath the surface are rare; only gentlemen interested in seeing for themselves the richness of these vaunted mines have essayed the tour; even many of these failing to penetrate farther than the first level, and bravely owning their faint-heartedness. In spite of this, we feel our way cautiously. A descent is to be made this night, when the Captain of the Mine goes his nightly round of inspection; a gentleman, the head and front of our expedition, whom we shall call the "Colonel," proposes to accompany him.

Why may we not form an harmonious quartette? We have nerve; has it not been tested throughout the somewhat arduous journey of the preceding weeks? We have presence of mind; we are passable *gymnastes*.

In fact, viewing *Mon Amie* and me from our own point of view, than ourselves never did there exist two mortals more manifestly fashioned straight from the hand of Nature, and educated by previous physical culture and mental discipline for the performance of a feat at once perilous and daring, one unknown to the members of "our set," and which might have been thought impracticable by all who had known us only in the gas-light glare of Society, and the circumspection of crinoline's confining circle.

Does it matter by what cunning wiles of pretty pleading and downright demonstrations of the project's reasonableness we succeeded (for we did succeed) in being allowed to take our fates in our own hands or trust them to our own sure-footedness? I think not.

"For when a woman will, she will, you may depend on't."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.