Stowe Harriet Beecher

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Содержание

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PREFACE

During the passage of this story through The Christian Union, it has been repeatedly taken for granted by the public press that certain of the characters are designed as portraits of really existing individuals.

They are not. The supposition has its rise in an imperfect consideration of the principles of dramatic composition. The novel-writer does not profess to paint *portraits* of any individual men and women in his personal acquaintance. Certain characters are required for the purposes of his story. He conceives and creates them, and they become to him real living beings, acting and speaking in ways of their own. But on the other hand, he is guided in this creation by his knowledge and experience of men and women, and studies individual instances and incidents only to assure himself of the possibility and probability of the character he creates. If he succeeds in making the character real and natural, people often are led to identify it with some individual of their acquaintance. A slight incident, an anecdote,

a paragraph in a paper, often furnishes the foundation of such a character; and the work of drawing it is like the process by which Professor Agassiz from one bone reconstructs the whole form of an unknown fish. But to apply to any single living person such delineation is a mistake, and might be a great wrong both to the author and to the person designated.

For instance, it being the author's purpose to show the embarrassment of the young champion of progressive principles, in meeting the excesses of modern reformers, it came in her way to paint the picture of the modern emancipated young woman of advanced ideas and free behavior. And this character has been mistaken for the portrait of an *individual*, drawn from actual observation. On the contrary, it was not the author's intention to draw an individual, but simply to show the type of a class. Facts as to conduct and behavior similar to those she has described are unhappily too familiar to residents of New York. But in this as in other cases the author has simply used isolated facts in the construction of a dramatic character suited to the design of the story. If the readers of to-day will turn back to Miss Edgeworth's *Belinda*, they will find that this style of manners, these assumptions and mode of asserting them, are no new things. In the character of Harriet Freke, Miss Edgeworth vividly portrays the manners and sentiments of the modern emancipated women of our times, who think themselves

"Ne'er so sure our passion to create,

As when they touch the brink of all we hate."

Certainly the author knows no original fully answering to the character of Mrs. Cerulean, though she has heard such an one described; and, doubtless, there are traits in her equally attributable to all fair enthusiasts who mistake the influence of their own personal charms and fascinations over the other sex, for real superiority of intellect.

There are happily several young women whose vigorous self-sustaining career, in opening paths of usefulness alike for themselves and others, are like that of Ida Van Arsdel; and the true experiences of a lovely New York girl first suggested the character of Eva; yet both of them are, in execution, strictly imaginary paintings, adapted to the story. In short, some real character, or, in many cases, some two or three, furnish the germs, but the germs only, out of which new characters are developed.

In close: The author wishes to dedicate this Story to the many dear, bright young girls whom she is so happy as to number among her choicest friends. No matter what the critics say of it, if *they* like it; and she hopes from them, at least, a favorable judgment.

H. B. S

Twin-Mountain House, N.H.

October, 1871.

CHAPTER I.
THE AUTHOR DEFINES HIS POSITION

It appears to me that the world is returning to its second childhood, and running mad for Stories. Stories! Stories! Stories! everywhere; stories in every paper, in every crevice, crack and corner of the house. Stories fall from the pen faster than leaves of autumn, and of as many shades and colorings. Stories blow over here in whirlwinds from England. Stories are translated from the French, from the Danish, from the Swedish, from the German, from the Russian. There are serial stories for adults in the *Atlantic*, in the *Overland*, in the *Galaxy*, in *Harper's*, in *Scribner's*. There are serial stories for youthful pilgrims in *Our Young Folks*, the *Little Corporal*, "*Oliver Optic*," the *Youth's Companion*, and very soon we anticipate newspapers with serial stories for the nursery. We shall have those charmingly illustrated magazines, the *Cradle*, the *Rocking Chair*, the *First Rattle*, and the *First Tooth*, with successive chapters of "Goosy Goosy Gander," and "Hickory Dickory Dock," and "Old Mother Hubbard," extending through twelve, or twenty-four, or forty-eight numbers.

I have often questioned what Solomon would have said if he had lived in our day. The poor man, it appears, was somewhat *blasé* with the abundance of literature in his times, and remarked

that much study was weariness to the flesh. Then, printing was not invented, and "books" were all copied by hand, in those very square Hebrew letters where each letter is about as careful a bit of work as a grave-stone. And yet, even with all these restrictions and circumscriptions, Solomon rather testily remarked, "Of making many books there is no end!" What would he have said had he looked over a modern publisher's catalogue?

It is understood now that no paper is complete without its serial story, and the spinning of these stories keeps thousands of wheels and spindles in motion. It is now understood that whoever wishes to gain the public ear, and to propound a new theory, must do it in a serial story. Hath any one in our day, as in St. Paul's, a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation – forthwith he wraps it up in a serial story, and presents it to the public. We have prison discipline, free-trade, labor and capital, woman's rights, the temperance question, in serial stories. We have Romanism and Protestantism, High Church, and Low Church and no Church, contending with each other in serial stories, where each side converts the other, according to the faith of the narrator.

We see that this thing is to go on. Soon it will be necessary that every leading clergyman should embody in his theology a serial story, to be delivered from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday. We look forward to announcements in our city papers such as these: The Rev. Dr. Ignatius, of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, will begin a serial romance, to be entitled "St. Sebastian and

the Arrows," in which he will embody the duties, the trials, and the temptations of the young Christians of our day. The Rev. Dr. Boanerges, of Plymouth Rock Church, will begin a serial story, entitled "Calvin's Daughter," in which he will discuss the distinctive features of Protestant theology. The Rev. Dr. Cool Shadow will go on with his interesting romance of "Christianity a Dissolving View," – designed to show how everything is, in many respects, like everything else, and all things lead somewhere, and everything will finally end somehow, and that therefore it is important that everybody should cultivate general sweetness, and have the very best time possible in this world.

By the time all these romances get to going, the system of teaching by parables, and opening one's mouth in dark sayings, will be fully elaborated. *Pilgrim's Progress* will be no where. The way to the celestial city will be as plain in everybody's mind as the way up Broadway – and so much more interesting! Finally all science and all art will be explained, conducted, and directed by serial stories, till the present life and the life to come shall form only one grand romance. This will be about the time of the Millennium.

Meanwhile, I have been furnishing a story for the *Christian Union*, and I chose the subject which is in everybody's mind and mouth, discussed on every platform, ringing from everybody's tongue, and coming home to every man's business and bosom, to wit:

My Wife and I

I trust that Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton, and all the prophetesses of our day, will remark the humility and propriety of my title. It is not I and My Wife – oh no! It is My Wife and I. What am I, and what is my father's house, that I should go before my wife in anything?

"But why specially for the *Christian Union?*" says Mr. Chadband. Let us in a spirit of Love inquire.

Is it not evident why, O beloved? Is not that firm in human nature which stands under the title of My Wife and I, the oldest and most venerable form of Christian union on record? Where, I ask, will you find a better one? – a wiser, a stronger, a sweeter, a more universally popular and agreeable one?

To be sure, there have been times and seasons when this ancient and respectable firm has been attacked as a piece of old fogyism, and various substitutes for it proposed. It has been said that "My Wife and I" denoted a selfish, close corporation inconsistent with a general, all-sided diffusive, universal benevolence; that My Wife and I, in a millennial community, had no particular rights in each other more than any of the thousands of the brethren and sisters of the human race. They have said, too, that My Wife and I, instead of an indissoluble unity, were only temporary partners, engaged on time, with the liberty of giving three months' notice, and starting

off to a new firm.

It is not thus that we understand the matter.

My Wife and I, as we understand it, is the sign and symbol of more than any earthly partnership or union – of something sacred as religion, indissoluble as the soul, endless as eternity – the symbol chosen by Almighty Love to represent his redeeming, eternal union with the soul of man.

A fountain of eternal youth gushes near the hearth of every household. Each man and woman that have loved truly, have had their romance in life – their poetry in existence.

So I, in giving my history, disclaim all other sources of interest. Look not for trap-doors, or haunted houses, or deadly conspiracies, or murders, or concealed crimes, in this history, for you will not find one. You shall have simply and only the old story – old as the first chapter of Genesis – of Adam stupid, desolate, and lonely without Eve, and how he sought and how he found her.

This much, on mature consideration I hold to be about the sum and substance of all the romances that have ever been written, and so long as there are new Adams and new Eves in each coming generation, it will not want for sympathetic listeners.

So I, Harry Henderson – a plain Yankee boy from the mountains of New Hampshire, and at present citizen of New York – commence my story.

My experiences have three stages.

First, My child-wife, or the experiences of childhood.

Second, My shadow-wife, or the dreamland of the future.

Third, my real wife, where I saw her, how I sought and found her.

In pursuing a story simply and mainly of love and marriage, I am reminded of the saying of a respectable serving man of European experiences, who speaking of his position in a noble family said it was not so much the wages that made it an object as "*the things it enabled a gentleman to pick up.*" So in our modern days as we have been observing, it is not so much the story, as the things it gives the author a chance to say. The history of a young American man's progress toward matrimony, of course brings him among the most stirring and exciting topics of the day, where all that relates to the joint interests of man and woman has been thrown into the arena as an open question, and in relating our own experiences, we shall take occasion to keep up with the spirit of this discussing age in all these matters.

CHAPTER II.
MY CHILD-WIFE

The Bible says it is not good for man to be alone. This is a truth that has been borne in on my mind, with peculiar force, from the earliest of my recollection. In fact when I was only seven years old I had selected my wife, and asked the paternal consent.

You see, I was an unusually lonesome little fellow, because I belonged to the number of those unlucky waifs who come into this mortal life under circumstances when nobody wants or expects them. My father was a poor country minister in the mountains of New Hampshire with a salary of six hundred dollars, with nine children. I was the tenth. I was not expected; my immediate predecessor was five years of age, and the gossips of the neighborhood had already presented congratulations to my mother on having "done up her work in the forenoon," and being ready to sit down to afternoon leisure.

Her well-worn baby clothes were all given away, the cradle was peaceably consigned to the garret, and my mother was now regarded as without excuse if she did not preside at the weekly prayer-meeting, the monthly Maternal Association, and the Missionary meeting, and perform besides regular pastoral visitations among the good wives of her parish.

No one, of course, ever thought of voting her any little extra

salary on account of these public duties which absorbed so much time and attention from her perplexing domestic cares – rendered still more severe and onerous by my father's limited salary. My father's six hundred dollars, however, was considered by the farmers of the vicinity as being a princely income, which accounted satisfactorily for everything, and had he not been considered by them as "about the smartest man in the State," they could not have gone up to such a figure. My mother was one of those gentle, soft-spoken, quiet little women who, like oil, permeate every crack and joint of life with smoothness.

With a noiseless step, an almost shadowy movement, her hand and eye were every where. Her house was a miracle of neatness and order – her children of all ages and sizes under her perfect control, and the accumulations of labor of all descriptions which beset a great family where there are no servants, all melted away under her hands as if by enchantment.

She had a divine magic too, that mother of mine; if it be magic to commune daily with the supernatural. She had a little room all her own, where on a stand always lay open the great family Bible, and when work pressed hard and children were untoward, when sickness threatened, when the skeins of life were all crossways and tangled, she went quietly to that room, and kneeling over that Bible, took hold of a warm, healing, invisible hand, that made the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.

"Poor Mrs. Henderson – another boy!" said the gossips on the day that I was born. "What a shame! poor woman. Well, I wish

her joy!"

But she took me to a warm bosom and bade God bless me! All that God sent to her was treasure. "Who knows," she said cheerily to my father, "this may be our brightest."

"God bless him," said my father, kissing me and my mother, and then he returned to an important treatise which was to reconcile the decrees of God with the free agency of man, and which the event of my entrance into this world had interrupted for some hours. The sermon was a perfect success I am told, and nobody that heard it ever had a moment's further trouble on that subject.

As to me, my outfit for this world was of the scantest-a few yellow flannel petticoats and a few slips run up from some of my older sisters cast off white gowns, were deemed sufficient.

The first child in a family is its poem – it is a sort of nativity play, and we bend before the young stranger, with gifts, "gold, frankincense and myrrh." But the tenth child in a poor family is *prose*, and gets simply what is due to comfort. There are no superfluities, no fripperies, no idealities about the tenth cradle.

As I grew up I found myself rather a solitary little fellow in a great house, full of the bustle and noise and conflicting claims of older brothers and sisters, who had got the floor in the stage of life before me, and who were too busy with their own wants, schemes and plans, to regard me.

I was all very well so long as I kept within the limits of babyhood. They said I was the handsomest baby ever pertaining

to the family establishment, and as long as that quality and condition lasted I was made a pet of. My sisters curled my golden locks and made me wonderful little frocks, and took me about to show me. But when I grew bigger, and the golden locks were sheared off and replaced by straight light hair, and I was inducted into jacket and pantaloons, cut down by Miss Abia Ferkin from my next brother's last year's suit, outgrown – then I was turned upon the world to shift for myself. Babyhood was over, and manhood not begun – I was to run the gauntlet of boyhood.

My brothers and sisters were affectionate enough in their way, but had not the least sentiment, and as I said before they had each one their own concerns to look after. My eldest brother was in college, my next brother was fitting for college in a neighboring academy, and used to walk ten miles daily to his lessons and take his dinner with him. One of my older sisters was married, the two next were handsome lively girls, with a retinue of beaux, who of course took up a deal of their time and thoughts. The sister next before me was four years above me on the lists of life, and of course looked down on me as a little boy unworthy of her society. When her two or three chattering girl friends came to see her and they had their dolls and their baby houses to manage, I was always in the way. They laughed at my awkwardness, criticised my nose, my hair, and my ears to my face, with that feminine freedom by which the gentler sex joy to put down the stronger one when they have it at advantage. I used often to retire from their society swelling with impotent wrath, at their free comments. "I won't

play with you," I would exclaim. "Nobody wants you," would be the rejoinder. "We've been wanting to be rid of you this good while."

But as I was a stout little fellow, my elders thought it advisable to devolve on me any such tasks and errands as interfered with their comfort. I was sent to the store when the wind howled and the frost bit, and my brothers and sisters preferred a warm corner. "He's only a boy, he can go, or he can do or he can wait," was always the award of my sisters.

My individual pursuits, and my own little stock of interests, were of course of no account. I was required to be in a perfectly free, disengaged state of mind, and ready to drop every thing at a moment's warning from any of my half dozen seniors. "Here Hal, run down cellar and get me a dozen apples," my brother would say, just as I had half built a block house. "Harry, run up stairs and get the book I left on the bed – Harry, run out to the barn and get the rake I left there – Here, Harry, carry this up garret – Harry, run out to the tool shop and get that" – were sounds constantly occurring – breaking up my private cherished little enterprises of building cob-houses, making mill dams and bridges, or loading carriages, or driving horses. Where is the mature Christian who could bear with patience the interruptions and crosses in his daily schemes, that beset a boy?

Then there were for me dire mortifications and bitter disappointments. If any company came and the family board was filled and the cake and preserves brought out, and gay

conversation made my heart bound with special longings to be in at the fun, I heard them say, "No need to set a plate for Harry – he can just as well wait till after." I can recollect many a serious deprivation of mature life, that did not bring such bitterness of soul as that sentence of exclusion. Then when my sister's admirer, Sam Richards, was expected, and the best parlor fire lighted, and the hearth swept, how I longed to sit up and hear his funny stories, how I hid in dark corners, and lay off in shadowy places, hoping to escape notice and so avoid the activity of the domestic police. But no, "Mamma, mustn't Harry go to bed?" was the busy outcry of my sisters, desirous to have the deck cleared for action, and superfluous members finally disposed of.

Take it for all in all – I felt myself, though not wanting in the supply of any physical necessity, to be somehow, as I said, a very lonesome little fellow in the world. In all that busy, lively, gay, bustling household I had no mate.

"I think we must send Harry to school," said my mother, gently, to my father, when I had vented this complaint in her maternal bosom. "Poor little fellow, he is an odd one! – there isn't exactly any one in the house for him to mate with!"

So to school I was sent, with a clean checked apron, drawn up tight in my neck, and a dinner basket, and a brown towel on which I was to be instructed in the wholesome practice of sewing. I went, trembling and blushing, with many an apprehension of the big boys who had promised to thrash me when I came; but the very first day I was made blessed in the vision of my little

child-wife, Susie Morril.

Such a pretty, neat little figure as she was! I saw her first standing in the school-room door. Her cheeks and neck were like wax; her eyes clear blue; and when she smiled, two little dimples flitted in and out on her cheeks, like those in a sunny brook. She was dressed in a pink gingham frock, with a clean white apron fitted trimly about her little round neck. She was her mother's only child, and always daintily dressed.

"Oh, Susie dear," said my mother, who had me by the hand, "I've brought a little boy here to school, and will be a mate for you."

How affably and graciously she received me – the little Eve – all smiles and obligingness and encouragement for the lumpish, awkward Adam. How she made me sit down on a seat by her, and put her little white arm cosily over my neck, as she laid the spelling-book on her knee, saying – "*I* read in Baker. Where do you read?"

Friend, it was Webster's Spelling-book that was their text-book, and many of you will remember where "Baker" is in that literary career. The column of words thus headed was a mile-stone on the path of infant progress. But my mother had been a diligent instructress at home, and I an apt scholar, and my breast swelled as I told little Susie that I had gone beyond Baker. I saw "respect mingling with surprise" in her great violet eyes; my soul was enlarged – my little frame dilated, as turning over to the picture of the "old man who found a rude boy on one of his trees

stealing apples," I answered her that I had read there!

"Why-*ee!*" said the little maiden; "only think, girls – he reads in readings!"

I was set up and glorified in my own esteem; two or three girls looked at me with evident consideration.

"Don't you want to sit on our side?" said Susie, engagingly. "I'll ask Miss Bessie to let you, 'cause she said the big boys always plague the little ones." And so, as she was a smooth-tongued little favorite, she not only introduced me to the teacher, but got me comfortably niched, beside her dainty self on the hard, backless seat, where I sat swinging my heels, and looking for all the world like a rough little short-tailed robin, just pushed out of the nest, and surveying the world with round, anxious eyes. The big boys quizzed me, made hideous faces at me from behind their spelling-books, and great hulking Tom Halliday threw a spit ball that lodged on the wall just over my head, by way of showing his contempt for me; but I looked at Susie, and took courage. I thought I never saw anything so pretty as she was. I was never tired with following the mazes of her golden curls. I thought how dainty and nice and white her pink dress and white apron were; and she wore a pair of wonderful little red shoes; her tiny hands were so skillful and so busy! She turned the hem of my brown towel, and basted it for me so nicely, and then she took out some delicate ruffling that was her school work, and I admired her bright, fine needle and fine thread, and the waxen little finger crowned with a little brass thimble, as she sewed away

with an industrious steadiness. To me the brass was gold, and her hands were pearl, and she was a little fairy princess! – yet every few moments she turned her great blue eyes on me, and smiled and nodded her little head knowingly, as much as to bid me be of good cheer, and I felt a thrill go right to my heart, that beat delightedly under the checked apron.

"Please, ma'am," said Susan, glibly, "mayn't Henry go out to play with the girls? The big boys are so rough."

And Miss Bessie smiled, and said I might; and I was a blessed little boy from that moment. In the first recess Susie instructed me in playing "Tag," and "Oats, peas, beans, and barley, O," and in "Threading the needle," and "Opening the gates as high as high as the sky, to let King George and his court pass by" – in all which she was a proficient, and where I needed a great deal of teaching and encouraging.

But when it came to more athletic feats, I could distinguish myself. I dared jump off from a higher fence than she could, and covered myself with glory by climbing to the top of a five-railed gate, and jumping boldly down; and moreover, when a cow appeared on the green before the school-house door, I marched up to her with a stick and ordered her off, with a manly stride and a determined voice, and chased her with the utmost vigor quite out of sight. These proceedings seemed to inspire Susie with a certain respect and confidence. I could read in "readings," jump off from high fences, and wasn't afraid of cows! These were manly accomplishments!

The school-house was a long distance from my father's, and I used to bring my dinner. Susie brought hers also, and many a delightful picnic have we had together. We made ourselves a house under a great button-ball tree, at whose foot the grass was short and green. Our house was neither more nor less than a square, marked out on the green turf by stones taken from the wall. I glorified myself in my own eyes and in Susie's, by being able to lift stones twice as heavy as she could, and a big flat one, which nearly broke my back, was deposited in the centre of the square, as our table. We used a clean pocket-handkerchief for a table-cloth; and Susie was wont to set out our meals with great order, making plates and dishes out of the button-ball leaves. Under her direction also, I fitted up our house with a pantry, and a small room where we used to play wash dishes, and set away what was left of our meals. The pantry was a stone cupboard, where we kept chestnuts and apples, and what remained of our cookies and gingerbread. Susie was fond of ornamentation, and stuck bouquets of golden rod and aster around in our best room, and there we received company, and had select society come to see us. Susie brought her doll to dwell in this establishment, and I made her a bedroom and a little bed of milkweed-silk to lie on. We put her to bed and tucked her up when we went into school – not without apprehension that those savages, the big boys, might visit our Eden with devastation. But the girls' recess came first, and we could venture to leave her there taking a nap till our play-time came; and when the girls went in Susie rolled her nursling

in a napkin and took her safely into school, and laid her away in a corner of her desk, while the dreadful big boys were having their yelling war-whoop and carnival outside.

"How nice it is to have Harry gone all day to school," I heard one of my sisters saying to the other. "He used to be so in the way, meddling and getting into everything" – "And listening to everything one says," said the other, "Children have such horridly quick ears. Harry always listens to what we talk about."

"I think he is happier now, poor little fellow," said my mother. "He has somebody now to play with." This was the truth of the matter.

On Saturday afternoons, I used to beg of my mother to let me go and see Susie; and my sisters, nothing loth, used to brush my hair and put on me a stiff, clean, checked apron, and send me trotting off, the happiest of young lovers.

How bright and fair life seemed to me those Saturday afternoons, when the sun, through the picket-fences, made golden-green lines on the turf – and the trees waved and whispered, and I gathered handfuls of golden-rod and asters to ornament our house, under the button-wood tree!

Then we used to play in the barn together. We hunted for hens' eggs, and I dived under the barn to dark places where she dared not go; and climbed up to high places over the hay-mow, where she trembled to behold me – bringing stores of eggs, which she received in her clean white apron.

This daintiness of outfit excited my constant admiration. I

wore stiff, heavy jackets and checked aprons, and was constantly, so my sisters said, wearing holes through my knees and elbows for them to patch; but little Susie always appeared to me fresh and fine and untumbled; she never dirtied her hands or soiled her dress. Like a true little woman, she seemed to have nerves through all her clothes that kept them in order. This nicety of person inspired me with a secret, wondering reverence. How could she always be so clean, so trim, and every way so pretty, I wondered? Her golden curls always seemed fresh from the brush, and even when she climbed and ran, and went with me into the barn-yard, or through the swamp and into all sorts of compromising places, she somehow picked her way out bright and unsoiled.

But though I admired her ceaselessly for this, she was no less in admiration of my daring strength and prowess. I felt myself a perfect Paladin in her defense. I remember that the chip-yard which we used to cross, on our way to the barn, was tyrannized over by a most loud-mouthed and arrogant old turkey-cock, that used to strut and swell and gobble and chitter greatly to her terror. She told me of different times when she had tried to cross the yard alone, how he had jumped upon her and flapped his wings, and thrown her down, to her great distress and horror. The first time he tried the game on me, I marched up to him, and by a dexterous pass, seized his red neck in my hand, and confining his wings down with my arm, walked him ingloriously out of the yard.

How triumphant Susie was, and how I swelled and exulted to her, telling her what I would do to protect her under every supposable variety of circumstances! Susie had confessed to me of being dreadfully afraid of "bears," and I took this occasion to tell her what I would do if a bear should actually attack her. I assured her that I would get father's gun and shoot him without mercy – and she listened and believed. I also dilated on what I would do if robbers should get into the house; I would, I informed her, immediately get up and pour shovelfuls of hot coal down their backs – and wouldn't they have to run? What comfort and security this view of matters gave us both! What bears and robbers were, we had no very precise idea, but it was a comfort to think how strong and adequate to meet them in any event I was.

Sometimes, of a Saturday afternoon, Susie was permitted to come and play with me. I always went after her, and solicited the favor humbly at the hands of her mother, who, after many washings and dressings and cautions as to her clothes, delivered her up to me, with the condition that she was to start for home when the sun was half an hour high. Susie was very conscientious in watching, but for my part I never agreed with her. I was always sure that the sun was an hour high, when she set her little face dutifully homeward. My sisters used to pet her greatly during these visits. They delighted to twine her curls over their fingers, and try the effects of different articles of costume on her fair complexion. They would ask her, laughing, would she be my little wife, to which she always answered with a grave affirmative.

Yes, she was to be my wife; it was all settled between us. But when? I didn't see why we must wait till we grew up. She was lonesome when I was gone, and I was lonesome when she was gone. Why not marry her now, and take her home to live with me? I asked her and she said she was willing, but mamma never would spare her. I said I would get my mamma to ask her, and I knew she couldn't refuse, because my papa was the minister.

I turned the matter over and over in my mind, and thought sometime when I could find my mother alone, I would introduce the subject. So one evening, as I sat on my little stool at my mother's knees, I thought I would open the subject, and began:

"Mamma, why do people object to early marriages?"

"Early marriages?" said my mother, stopping her knitting, looking at me, while a smile flashed over her thin cheeks: "what's the child thinking of?"

"I mean, why can't Susie and I be married now? I want her here. I'm lonesome without her. Nobody wants to play with me in this house, and if she were here we should be together all the time."

My father woke up from his meditation on his next Sunday's sermon, and looked at my mother, smiling. A gentle laugh rippled her bosom.

"Why, dear," she said, "don't you know your father is a poor man, and has hard work to support his children now? He couldn't afford to keep another little girl."

I thought the matter over, sorrowfully. Here was the pecuniary

difficulty, that puts off so many desiring lovers, meeting me on the very threshold of life.

"Mother," I said, after a period of mournful consideration, "I wouldn't eat but just half as much as I do now, and I'd try not to wear out my clothes, and make 'em last longer." My mother had very bright eyes, and there was a mingled flash of tears and laughter in them, as when the sun winks through rain drops. She lifted me gently into her lap and drew my head down on her bosom.

"Some day, when my little son grows to be a man, I hope God will give him a wife he loves dearly. 'Houses and lands are from the fathers; but a good wife is of the Lord,' the Bible says."

"That's true, dear," said my father, looking at her tenderly; "nobody knows that better than I do."

My mother rocked gently back and forward with me in the evening shadows, and talked with me and soothed me, and told me stories how one day I should grow to be a good man – a minister, like my father, she hoped – and have a dear little house of my own.

"And will Susie be in it?"

"Let's hope so," said my mother. "Who knows?"

"But, mother, ain't you sure? I want you to say it will be certainly."

"My little one, only our dear Father could tell us that," said my mother. "But now you must try and learn fast, and become a good strong man, so that you can take care of a little wife."

CHAPTER III.
OUR CHILD-EDEN

My mother's talk aroused all the enthusiasm of my nature. Here was a motive, to be sure. I went to bed and dreamed of it. I thought over all possible ways of growing big and strong rapidly – I had heard the stories of Samson from the Bible. How did he grow so strong? He was probably once a little boy like me. "Did he go for the cows, I wonder," thought I – "and let down very big bars when his hands were little, and learn to ride the old horse bare-back, when his legs were very short?" All these things I was emulous to do; and I resolved to lift very heavy pails full of water, and very many of them, and to climb into the mow, and throw down great armfulls of hay, and in every possible way to grow big and strong.

I remember the next day after my talk with my mother was *Saturday*, and I had leave to go up and spend it with Susie.

There was a meadow just back of her mother's house, which we used to call the mowing lot. It was white with daisies, yellow with buttercups, with some moderate share of timothy and herds grass intermixed. But what was specially interesting to us was, that, down low at the roots of the grass, and here and there in moist, rich spots, grew wild strawberries, large and juicy, rising on nice high stalks, with three or four on a cluster. What joy there

was in the possession of a whole sunny Saturday afternoon to be spent with Susie in this meadow! To me the amount of happiness in the survey was greatly in advance of what I now have in the view of a three weeks' summer excursion.

When, after multiplied cautions and directions, and careful adjustment of Susie's clothing, on the part of her mother, Susie was fairly delivered up to me; when we had turned our backs on the house and got beyond call, then our bliss was complete. How carefully and patronizingly I helped her up the loose, mossy, stone wall, all hedged with a wilderness of golden-rod, ferns, raspberry bushes, and asters! Down we went through this tangled thicket, into such a secure world of joy, where the daisied meadow received us to her motherly bosom, and we were sure nobody could see us.

We could sit down and look upward, and see daisies and grasses nodding and bobbing over our heads, hiding us as completely as two young grass birds; and it was such fun to think that nobody could find out where we were! Two bob-o-links, who had a nest somewhere in that lot, used to mount guard in an old apple tree, and sit on tall, bending twigs, and say, "Chack! chack! chack!" and flutter their black and white wings up and down, and burst out into most elaborate and complicated babbles of melody. These were our only associates and witnesses. We thought that they knew us, and were glad to see us there, and wouldn't tell anybody where we were for the world. There was an exquisite pleasure to us in this sense of utter isolation – of being

hid with each other where nobody could find us.

We had worlds of nice secrets peculiar to ourselves. Nobody but ourselves knew where the "thick spots" were, where the ripe, scarlet strawberries grew; the big boys never suspected them, we said to one another, nor the big girls; it was our own secret, which we kept between our own little selves. How we searched, and picked, and chatted, and oh'd and ah'd to each other, as we found wonderful places, where the strawberries passed all belief!

But profoundest of all our wonderful secrets were our discoveries in the region of animal life. We found, in a tuft of grass overshadowed by wild roses, a grass bird's nest. In vain did the cunning mother creep yards from the cherished spot, and then suddenly fly up in the wrong place; we were not to be deceived. Our busy hands parted the lace curtains of fern, and, with whispers of astonishment, we counted the little speckled, bluegreen eggs. How round and fine and exquisite, past all gems polished by art, they seemed; and what a mystery was the little curious smooth-lined nest in which we found them! We talked to the birds encouragingly. "Dear little birds," we said, "don't be afraid; nobody but we shall know it;" and then we said to each other, "Tom Halliday never shall find this out, nor Jim Fellows." They would carry off the eggs and tear up the nest; and our hearts swelled with such a responsibility for the tender secret, that it was all we could do that week to avoid telling it to everybody we met. We informed all the children at school that we knew something that they didn't – something that we

never should tell! – something *so* wonderful! – something that it would be wicked to tell of – for mother said so; for be it observed that, like good children, we had taken our respective mothers into confidence, and received the strictest and most conscientious charges as to our duty to keep the birds' secret.

In that enchanted meadow of ours grew tall, yellow lilies, glowing as the sunset, hanging down their bells, six or seven in number, from high, graceful stalks, like bell towers of fairy land. They were over our heads sometimes, as they rose from the grass and daisies, and we looked up into their golden hearts spotted with black, with a secret, wondering joy.

"Oh, don't pick them, they look too pretty," said Susie to me once when I stretched up my hand to gather one of these. "Let's leave them to be here when we come again! I like to see them wave."

And so we left the tallest of them; but I was not forbidden to gather handfuls of the less wonderful specimens that grew only one or two on a stalk. Our bouquets of flowers increased with our strawberries.

Through the middle of this meadow chattered a little brook, gurgling and tinkling over many-colored pebbles, and here and there collecting itself into a miniature waterfall, as it pitched over a broken bit of rock. For our height and size, the waterfalls of this little brook were equal to those of Trenton, or any of the medium cascades that draw the fashionable crowd of grown-up people; and what was the best of it was, it was *our* brook, and *our*

waterfall. *We* found them, and we verily believed nobody else but ourselves knew of them.

By this waterfall, as I called it, which was certainly a foot and a half high, we sat and arranged our strawberries when our baskets were full, and I talked with Susie about what my mother had told me.

I can see her now, the little crumb of womanhood, as she sat, gaily laughing at me. "*She* didn't care a bit," she said. *She* had just as lief wait till I grew to be a man. Why, we could go to school together, and have Saturday afternoons together. "Don't you mind it, Hazzy Dazzy," she said, coming close up to me, and putting her little arms coaxingly round my neck; "we love each other, and it's ever so nice now."

I wonder what the reason is that it is one of the first movements of affectionate feeling to change the name of the loved one. Give a baby a name, ever so short and ever so musical, where is the mother that does not twist it into some other pet name between herself and her child. So Susie, when she was very loving, called me Hazzy, and sometimes would play on my name, and call me Hazzy Dazzy, and sometimes Dazzy, and we laughed at this because it was between us; and we amused ourselves with thinking how surprised people would be to hear her say Dazzy, and how they would wonder who she meant. In like manner, I used to call her Daisy when we were by ourselves, because she seemed to me so neat and trim and pure, and wore a little flat hat on Sundays just like a daisy.

"I'll tell you, Daisy," said I, "just what I'm going to do – I'm going to grow strong as Sampson did."

"Oh, but how can you?" she suggested, doubtfully.

"Oh, I'm going to run and jump and climb, and carry ever so much water for Mother, and I'm to ride on horseback and go to mill, and go all round on errands, and so I shall get to be a man fast, and when I get to be a man I'll build a house all on purpose for you and me – I'll build it all myself; it shall have a parlor and a dining-room and kitchen, and bed-room, and well-room, and chambers" —

"And nice closets to put things in," suggested the little woman.

"Certainly, ever so many – just where you want them, there I'll put them," said I, with surpassing liberality. "And then, when we live together, I'll take care of you – I'll keep off all the lions and bears and panthers. If a bear should come at *you*, Daisy, I should tear him right in two, just as Sampson did."

At this vivid picture, Daisy nestled close to my shoulder, and her eyes grew large and reflective. "We shouldn't leave poor Mother alone," said she.

"Oh, no; she shall come and live with us," said I, with an exalted generosity. "I will make her a nice chamber on purpose, and *my* mother shall come, too."

"But she can't leave your father, you know."

"Oh, father shall come, too – when he gets old and can't preach any more. I shall take care of them all."

And my little Daisy looked at me with eyes of approving

credulity, and said I was a brave boy; and the bobolinks chittered and chattered applause as they sung and skirmished and whirled up over the meadow grasses; and by and by, when the sun fell low, and looked like a great golden ball, with our hands full of lilies, and our baskets full of strawberries, we climbed over the old wall, and toddled home.

After that, I remember many gay and joyous passages in that happiest summer of my life. How, when autumn came, we roved through the woods together, and gathered such stores of glossy brown chestnuts. What joy it was to us to scuff through the painted fallen leaves and send them flying like showers of jewels before us! How I reconnoitered and marked available chestnut trees, and how I gloried in being able to climb like a cat, and get astride high limbs and shake and beat them, and hear the glossy brown nuts fall with a rich, heavy thud below, while Susie was busily picking up at the foot of the tree. How she did flatter me with my success and prowess! Tom Halliday might be a bigger boy, but he could never go up a tree as I could; and as for that great clumsy Jim Fellows, she laughed to think what a figure he would make, going out on the end of the small limbs, which would be sure to break and send him bundling down. The picture which Susie drew of the awkwardness of the big boys often made us laugh till the tears rolled down our cheeks. To this day I observe it as a weakness of my sex that we all take it in extremely good part when the pretty girl of our heart laughs at other fellows in a snug, quiet way, just between one's dear self and herself

alone. We encourage our own dear little cat to scratch and claw the sacred memories of Jim or Tom, and think that she does it in an extremely cunning and diverting way – it being understood between us that there is no malice in it – that "Jim and Tom are nice fellows enough, you know – only that somebody else is so superior to them," etc.

Susie and I considered ourselves as an extremely forehanded, well-to-do partnership, in the matter of gathering in our autumn stores. No pair of chipmonks in the neighborhood conducted business with more ability. We had a famous cellar that I dug and stoned, where we stored away our spoils. We had chestnuts and walnuts and butternuts, as we said, to last us all winter, and many an earnest consultation and many a busy hour did the gathering and arranging of these spoils cost us.

Then, oh, the golden times we had when father's barrels of new cider came home from the press! How I cut and gathered and selected bunches of choice straws, which I took to school and showed to Susie, surreptitiously, at intervals, during school exercises, that she might see what a provision of bliss I was making for Saturday afternoons. How Susie was sent to visit us on these occasions, in leather shoes and checked apron, so that we might go in the cellar; and how, mounted up on logs on either side of a barrel of cider, we plunged our straws through the foamy mass at the bung-hole, and drew out long draughts of sweet cider! I was sure to get myself dirty in my zeal, which she never did; and then she would laugh at me and patronize me, and wipe me

up in a motherly sort of way. "How *do* you always get so dirty, Harry?" she would say, in a truly maternal tone of reproof. "How *do* you keep so clean?" I would say, in wonder; and she would laugh, and call me her dear, dirty boy. She would often laugh at me, the little elf, and make herself distractingly merry at my expense, but the moment she saw that the blood was getting too high in my cheeks, she would stroke me down with praises, as became a wise young daughter of Eve.

Besides all this, she had her little airs of moral superiority, and used occasionally to lecture me in the nicest manner. Being an only darling, she herself was brought up in the strictest ways in which little feet could go; and the nicety of her conscience was as unsullied as that of her dress. I was hot tempered and heady, and under stress of great provocation would come as near swearing as a minister's son could possibly do. When the big boys ravaged our house under the tree, or threw sticks at us, I used to stretch every permitted limit, and scream, "Darn you!" and "Confound you!" with a vigor and emphasis that made it almost equal to something a good deal stronger.

On such occasions Susie would listen pale and frightened, and, when reason came back to me, gravely lecture me, and bring me into the paths of virtue. She used to rehearse to me the teachings of her mother about all manner of good things.

I have her image now in my mind, looking so crisp and composed and neat in her sobriety, repeating, for my edification, the hymn which contained the good child's ideal in those days:

"Oh, that it were my chief delight
To do the things I ought,
Then let me try with all my might
To mind what I am taught.

Whene'er I'm told, I'll freely bring
Whatever I have got,
And never touch a pretty thing,
When mother tells me not.

If she permits me, I may tell
About my little toys,
But if she's busy or unwell,
I must not make a noise."

I can hear now the delicious lisp of my little saint, and see the gracious gravity of her manner. To my mind, she was unaccountably well established in the ways of virtue, and I listened to her little lectures with a secret reverence.

Susie was especially careful in the observation of Sunday, and as that is a point where children are apt to be particularly weak, she would exhort me to rigorous exactitude.

I kept it, first, by thinking that I should see *her* at church, and by growing very precise about my Sunday clothes, whereat my sisters winked at each other and laughed slyly. Then at church we sat in great square pews adjoining to each other. It was my pleasure to peep through the slats at Susie. She was wonderful to

behold then, all in white, with a profusion of blue ribbons and her little flat hat over her curls – and a pair of dainty blue shoes peeping out from her dress.

She informed me that little girls never must think about their clothes in meeting, and so I supposed she was trying to be entirely absorbed from earthly vanities, unconscious of the fixed and earnest stare with which I followed every movement.

Human nature is but partially sanctified, however, in little saints as well as grown up ones, and I noticed that occasionally, probably by accident, the great blue eyes met mine, and a smile, almost amounting to a sinful giggle, was with difficulty choked down. She was, however, a most conscientious little puss and recovered herself in a moment, and looked gravely upward at the minister, not one word of whose sermon could she by any possibility understand, severely devoting herself to her religious duties, till exhausted nature gave way. The little lids would close over the eyes like blue pimpernel before a shower, – the head would drop and nod, till finally the mother would dispense the little Christian from further labors, by laying her head on her lap and drawing her feet up comfortably upon the seat, to sleep out to the end of the sermon.

When winter came on I beset my older brother to make me a sled. Sleds, such as every boy in Boston or New York now rejoices in, were blessings in our parts unknown; our sled was of rough, domestic manufacture.

My brother, laughing, asked if my sled was intended to draw

Susie on, and on my earnest response in the affirmative he amused himself with painting it in colors, red and blue, most glorious to behold.

My soul was magnified within me when I first started with this stylish establishment to wait on Susie.

What young fellow does not exult in a smart team when he has a girl whom he wants to dazzle? Great was my joy and pride when I first stopped at Susie's and told her to hurry on her things, for I had come to draw her to school!

What a pretty picture she made in her little blue knit hood and mittens, her bright curls flying and cheeks glowing with the keen winter air! There was a long hill on the way to school, and seated on the sled behind her, I careered gloriously down with exultation in my breast, while a stream of laughter floated on the breeze behind us. That was a winter of much coasting down hill, of red cheeks and red noses, of cold toes, which we never minded, and of abundant jollity. Susie, under her mother's careful showing, knit me a pair of red mittens, warming to the heart and delightful to the eyes; and I piled up wood and carried water for Mother, and by vigorous economy earned money enough to buy Susie a great candy heart as big as my two hands, that had the picture of two doves tied together by a blue ribbon on one side, and on the other two very red hearts skewered together by an arrow.

No work of art ever gave greater and more unmingled delight. Susie gave it a prominent place in her baby-house, – and though it was undeniably sweet, as certain little nibbling trials on its edges

had proved, yet the artistic sense was stronger than the palate, and the candy heart was kept to be looked at and rejoiced in.

Susie's mother was an intimate and confidential friend of my mother, and a most docile and confiding sheep of my father's flock. She regarded her minister's family, and all that belonged to it, as something set apart and sacred. My mother had imparted to her the little joke of my matrimonial wishes, and the two matrons had laughed over it together, and then sighed, and said, "Ah! well, stranger things have happened." Susie's mother told how she used to know her husband when he was a little boy, and what if it should be! and then they strayed on to the general truth that this was a world of uncertainty, and we never can tell what a day may bring forth.

Our little idyl, too, was rather encouraged by my brothers and sisters, who made a pet and plaything of Susie, and diverted themselves by the gravity and honesty with which we devoted ourselves to each other. Oh! dear ignorant days – sweet little child-Eden – why could it not last?

But it could not. It was fleeting as the bobolink's song, as the spotted yellow lilies, as the grass and daisies. My little Daisy was too dear to the angels to be spared to grow up in our coarse world.

The winter passed and spring came, and Susie and I rejoiced in the first bluebird, and found blue and white violets together, and went to school together, till the heats of summer came on. Then a sad epidemic began to linger around in our mountains, and to be heard of in neighboring villages, and my poor Daisy

was scorched by its breath.

I remember well our last afternoon together in the meadow, where, the year before, we had gathered strawberries. We went down into it in high spirits; the strawberries were abundant, and we chatted and picked together gaily, till Daisy began to complain that her head ached and her throat was sore. I sat her down by the brook, and wet her curls with the water, and told her to rest there, and let me pick for her. But pretty soon she called me. She was crying with pain. "Oh! Hazzy, dear, I must go home," she said. "Take me to Mother." I hurried to help her, for she cried and moaned so that I was frightened. I began to cry, too, and we came up the steps of her mother's house sobbing together.

When her mother came out the little one suppressed her tears and distress for a moment, and turning, threw her arms around my neck and kissed me. "Don't cry any more, Hazzy," she said; "we'll see each other again."

Her mother took her up in her arms and carried her in, and I never saw my little baby-wife again on this earth! Not where the daisies and buttercups grew; nor where the golden lilies shook their bells, and the bobolinks trilled; not in the school-room, with its many child-voices; not in the old square pew in church – never, never more that trim little maiden form, those violet blue eyes, those golden curls of hair, were to be seen on earth!

My Daisy's last kisses, with the fever throbbing in her veins, very nearly took me with her. From that time I have only

indistinct remembrances of going home crying, of turning with a strange loathing from my supper, of creeping up and getting into bed, shivering and burning, with a thumping and beating pain in my head.

The next morning the family doctor pronounced me a case of the epidemic (scarlet fever) which he said was all about among children in the neighborhood.

I have dim, hot, hazy recollections of burning, thirsty, head-achey days, when I longed for cold water, and could not get a drop, according to the good old rules of medical practice in those times. I dimly observed different people sitting up with me every night, and putting different medicines in my unresisting mouth; and day crept slowly after day, and I lay idly watching the rays of sunlight and flutter of leaves on the opposite wall.

One afternoon, I remember, as I lay thus listless, I heard the village bell strike slowly – six times. The sound wavered and trembled with long and solemn intervals of shivering vibration between. It was the numbering of my Daisy's little years on earth, – the announcement that she had gone to the land where time is no more measured by day and night, for there shall be no night there.

When I was well again I remember my mother told me that my little Daisy was in heaven, and I heard it with a dull, cold chill about my heart, and wondered that I could not cry.

I look back now into my little heart as it was then, and remember the paroxysms of silent pain I used to have at times,

deep within, while yet I seemed to be like any other boy.

I heard my sisters one day discussing whether I cared much for Daisy's death.

"He don't seem to, much," said one.

"Oh, children are little animals, they forget what's out of sight," said another.

But I did not forget, – I could not bear to go to the meadow where we gathered strawberries, – to the chestnut trees where we had gathered nuts, – and oftentimes, suddenly, in work or play, that smothering sense of a past, forever gone, came over me like a physical sickness.

When children grow up among older people and are pushed and jostled, and set aside in the more engrossing interests of their elders, there is an almost incredible amount of timidity and dumbness of nature, with regard to the expression of inward feeling, – and yet, often at this time the instinctive sense of pleasure and pain is fearfully acute. But the child has imperfectly learned language. His stock of words, as yet, consists only in names and attributes of outward and physical objects, and he has no phraseology with which to embody a mere emotional experience.

What I felt when I thought of my little playfellow, was a dizzying, choking rush of bitter pain and anguish. Children can feel this acutely as men and women, – but even in mature life this experience has no gift of expression.

My mother alone, with the divining power of mothers, kept an

eye on me. "Who knows," she said to my father, "but this death may be a heavenly call to him."

She sat down gently by my bed one night and talked with me of heaven, and the brightness and beauty there, and told me that little Susie was now a fair white angel.

I remember shaking with a tempest of sobs.

"But I want her *here*," I said. "I want to see her."

My mother went over all the explanations in the premises, – all that can ever be said in such cases, but I only sobbed the more.

"*I can't see her!* Oh mother, mother!"

That night I sobbed myself to sleep and dreamed a blessed dream.

It seemed to me that I was again in our meadow, and that it was fairer than ever before; the sun shone gaily, the sky was blue, and our great, golden lily stocks seemed mysteriously bright and fair, but I was wandering lonesome and solitary. Then suddenly my little Daisy came running to meet me in her pink dress and white apron, with her golden curls hanging down her neck. "Oh Daisy, Daisy!" said I running up to her. "Are you alive? – they told me that you were dead."

"No, Hazzy, dear, I am not dead, – never you believe that," she said, and I felt the clasp of her soft little arms round my neck. "Didn't I tell you we'd see each other again?"

"But they told me you were dead," I said in wonder – and I thought I held her off and looked at her, – she laughed gently at me as she often used to, but her lovely eyes had a mysterious

power that seemed to thrill all through me.

"I am not dead, dear Hazzy," she said. "We never die were I am – I shall love you always," and with that my dream wavered and grew misty as when clear water breaks an image into a thousand glassy rings and fragments.

I thought I heard lovely music, and felt soft, clasping arms, and I awoke with a sense of being loved and pitied, and comforted.

I cannot describe the vivid, penetrating sense of reality which this dream left behind it. It seemed to warm my whole life, and to give back to my poor little heart something that had been rudely torn away from it. Perhaps there is no reader that has not had experiences of the wonderful power which a dream often exercises over the waking hours for weeks after – and it will not appear incredible that after that, instead of shunning the meadow where we used to play, it was my delight to wander there alone, to gather the strawberries – tend the birds' nests, and lie down on my back in the grass and look up into the blue sky through an overarching roof of daisies, with a strange sort of feeling of society, as if my little Daisy were with me.

And is it not perhaps so? Right along side of this troublous life, that is seen and temporal, may lie the green pastures and the still waters of the unseen and eternal, and they who know us better than we know them, can at any time step across that little rill that we call Death, to minister to our comfort.

For what are these child-angels made, that are sent down to this world to bring so much love and rapture, and go from us in

such bitterness and mourning? If we believe in Almighty Love we must believe that they have a merciful and tender mission to our wayward souls. The love wherewith we love them is something the most utterly pure and unworldly of which human experience is capable, and we must hope that every one who goes from us to the world of light, goes holding an invisible chain of love by which to draw us there.

Sometimes I think I would never have had my little Daisy grow older on our earth. The little child dies in growing into womanhood, and often the woman is far less lovely than the little child. It seems to me that lovely and loving childhood, with its truthfulness, its frank sincerity, its pure, simple love, is so sweet and holy an estate that it would be a beautiful thing in heaven to have a band of heavenly children, guileless, gay and forever joyous – tender Spring blossoms of the Kingdom of Light. Was it of such whom he had left in his heavenly home our Saviour was thinking, when he took little children up in his arms and blessed them, and said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven?"

CHAPTER IV.
MY SHADOW-WIFE

My Shadow Wife! Is there then substance in shadow? Yea, there may be. A shadow – a spiritual presence – may go with us where mortal footsteps cannot go; walk by our side amid the roar of the city: talk with us amid the sharp clatter of voices; come to us through closed doors, as we sit alone over our evening fire; counsel, bless, inspire us; and though the figure cannot be clasped in mortal arms – though the face be veiled – yet this wife of the future may have a power to bless, to guide, to sustain and console. Such was the dream-wife of my youth.

Whence did she come? She rose like a white, pure mist from that little grave. She formed herself like a cloud-maiden from the rain and dew of those first tears.

When we look at the apparent recklessness with which great sorrows seem to be distributed among the children of the earth, there is no way to keep our faith in a Fatherly love, except to recognize how invariably the sorrows that spring from love are a means of enlarging and dignifying a human being. Nothing great or good comes without birth-pangs, and in just the proportion that natures grow more noble, their capacities of suffering increase.

The bitter, silent, irrepressible anguish of that childish

bereavement was to me the awakening of a spiritual nature. The little creature who, had she lived, might have grown up perhaps into a common-place woman, became a fixed star in the heaven-land of the ideal, always drawing me to look upward. My memories of her were a spring of refined and tender feeling, through all my early life. I could not then write; but I remember that the overflow of my heart towards her memory required expression, and I taught myself a strange kind of manuscript, by copying the letters of the alphabet. I bought six cents' worth of paper and a tallow candle at the store, which I used to light surreptitiously when I had been put to bed nights, and, sitting up in my little night-gown, I busied myself with writing my remembrances of her. I could not, for the world, have asked my mother to let me have a candle in my bed-room after eight o'clock. I would have died sooner than to explain why I wanted it. My purchase of paper and candle was my first act of independent manliness. The money, I reflected, was mine, because I earned it myself, and the paper was mine, and the candle was mine, so that I was not using my father's property in an unwarrantable manner, and thus I gave myself up to my inspirations. I wrote my remembrances of her, as she stood among the daisies and the golden lilies. I wrote down her little words of wisdom and grave advice, in the queerest manuscript that ever puzzled a wise man of the East. If one imagines that all this was spelt phonetically, and not at all in the unspeakable and astonishing way in which the English language is conventionally spelt, one may truly imagine

that it was something rather peculiar in the way of literature. But the heart-comfort, the utter abandonment of soul that went into it, is something that only those can imagine who have tried the like and found the relief of it. My little heart was like the Caspian sea, or some other sea which I read about, which had found a secret channel by which its waters could pass off under ground. When I had finished, every evening, I used to extinguish my candle, and put it and my manuscript inside of the straw bed on which I slept, which had a long pocket hole in the centre, secured by buttons, for the purpose of stirring the straw. Over this I slept in conscious security, every night; sometimes with blissful dreams of going to brighter meadows, when I saw my Daisy playing with whole troops of beautiful children, fair as water lilies on the shore of a blue lake. Thus, while I seemed to be like any other boy, thinking of nothing but my sled, and my bat and ball, and my mittens, I began to have a little withdrawing room of my own; another land in which I could walk and take a kind of delight that nothing visible gave me. But one day my oldest sister, in making the bed, with domestic thoroughness, disemboweled my whole store of manuscripts and the half consumed fragment of my candle.

There is no poetry in housewifery, and my sister at once took a housewifely view of the proceeding —

"Well, now! is there any end to the conjurations of boys?" she said. "He might have set the house on fire and burned us all alive, in our beds!"

Reader, this is quite possible, as I used to perform my literary labors sitting up in bed, with the candle standing on a narrow ledge on the side of the bedstead.

Forthwith the whole of my performance was lodged in my mother's hands – I was luckily at school.

"Now, girls," said my mother, "keep quiet about this; above all, don't say a word to the boy. I will speak to him."

Accordingly, that night after I had gone up to bed, my mother came into my room and, when she had seen me in bed, she sat down by me and told me the whole discovery. I hid my head under the bed clothes, and felt a sort of burning shame and mortification that was inexpressible; but she had a good store of that mother's wit and wisdom by which I was to be comforted. At last she succeeded in drawing both the bed clothes from my face and the veil from my heart, and I told her all my little story.

"Dear boy," she said, "you must learn to write, and you need not buy candles, you shall sit by me evenings and I will teach you; it was very nice of you to practice all alone; but it will be a great deal easier to let me teach you the writing letters."

Now I had begun the usual course of writing copies in school. In those days it was deemed necessary to commence by teaching what was called *coarse hand*; and I had filled many dreary pages with m's and n's of a gigantic size; but it never had yet occurred to me that the writing of these copies was to bear any sort of relation to the expression of thoughts and emotions within me that were clamoring for a vent, while my rude copies of printed letters did

bear to my mind this adaptation. But now my mother made me sit by her evenings, with a slate and pencil, and, under her care, I made a cross-cut into the fields of practical handwriting, and was also saved the dangers of going off into a morbid habit of feeling, which might easily have arisen from my solitary reveries.

"Dear," she said to my father, "I told you this one was to be our brightest. He will make a writer yet," and she showed him my manuscript.

"You must look after him, Mother," said my father, as he always said, when there arose any exigency about the children, that required delicate handling.

My mother was one of that class of women whose power on earth seems to be only the greater for being a spiritual and invisible one. The control of such women over men is like that of the soul over the body. The body is visible, forceful, obtrusive, self-asserting. The soul invisible, sensitive, yet with a subtle and vital power which constantly gains control and holds every inch that it gains.

My father was naturally impetuous, though magnanimous, hasty tempered and imperious, though conscientious; my mother united the most exquisite sensibility with the deepest calm – calm resulting from habitual communion with the highest and purest source of all rest – the peace that passeth all understanding. Gradually, by this spiritual force, this quietude of soul, she became his leader and guide. He held her hand and looked up to her with a trustful implicitness that increased with every year.

"Where's your mother?" was always the fond inquiry when he entered the house, after having been off on one of his long preaching tours or clerical counsels. At all hours he would burst from his study with fragments of the sermon or letter he was writing, to read to her and receive her suggestions and criticisms. With her he discussed the plans of his discourses, and at her dictation changed, improved, altered and added; and under the brooding influence of her mind, new and finer traits of tenderness and spirituality pervaded his character and his teachings. In fact, my father once said to me, "She made me by her influence."

In these days, we sometimes hear women, who have reared large families on small means, spoken of as victims who had suffered unheard of oppressions. There is a growing materialism that refuses to believe that there can be happiness without the ease and facilities and luxuries of wealth.

But my father and mother, though living on a narrow income, were never really poor. The chief evil of poverty is the crushing of ideality out of life – the taking away its poetry and substituting hard prose; – and this with them was impossible. My father loved the work he did, as the artist loves his painting and the sculptor his chisel. A man needs less money when he is doing only what he loves to do – what, in fact, he *must* do, – pay or no pay. St. Paul said, "A necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." Preaching the gospel was his irrepressible instinct, a necessity of his being. My mother, from her deep spiritual

nature, was one soul with my father in his life-work. With the moral organization of a prophetess, she stood nearer to heaven than he, and looking in, told him what she saw, and he, holding her hand, felt the thrill of celestial electricity. With such women, life has no prose; their eyes see all things in the light of heaven, and flowers of paradise spring up in paths that to unanointed eyes, seem only paths of toil. I never felt, from anything I saw at home, from any word or action of my mother's, that we were poor, in the sense that poverty was an evil. I was reminded, to be sure, that we were poor in a sense that required constant carefulness, watchfulness over little things, energetic habits, and vigorous industry and self-helpfulness. But we were never poor in any sense that restricted hospitality or made it a burden. In those days, a minister's house was always the home for all the ministers and their families, whenever an exigency required of them to travel, and the spare room of our house never wanted guests of longer or shorter continuance. But the atmosphere of the house was such as always made guests welcome. Three or four times a year, the annual clerical gatherings of the church filled our house to overflowing and necessitated an abundant provision and great activity of preparation on the part of the women of our family. Yet I never heard an expression of impatience or a suggestion that made me suppose they felt themselves unduly burdened. My mother's cheerful face was a welcome and a benediction at all times, and guests found it good to be with her.

In the midst of our large family, of different ages, of vigorous

growth, of great individuality and forcefulness of expression, my mother's was the administrative power. My father habitually referred everything to her, and leaned on her advice with a childlike dependence. She read the character of each, she mediated between opposing natures: she translated the dialect of different sorts of spirits, to each other. In a family of young children, there is a chance for every sort and variety of natures; and for natures whose modes of feeling are as foreign to each other, as those of the French and the English. It needs a common interpreter, who understands every dialect of the soul, thus to translate differences of individuality into a common language of love.

It has often seemed to me a fair question, on a review of the way my mother ruled in our family, whether the politics of the ideal state in a millennial community, should not be one equally pervaded by mother-influences.

The woman question of our day, as I understand it is this. – Shall MOTHERHOOD ever be felt in the public administration of the affairs of state? The state is nothing more nor less than a collection of families, and what would be good or bad for the individual family, would be good or bad for the state.

Such as our family would have been, ruled only by my father, without my mother, such the political state is, and has been; there have been in it "conscript fathers," but no "conscript mothers;" yet is not a mother's influence needed in acts that relate to the interests of collected families as much as in individual ones?

The state, at this very day, needs an influence like what I remember our mother's to have been, in our great, vigorous, growing family, – an influence quiet, calm, warming, purifying, uniting – it needs a womanly economy and thrift in husbanding and applying its material resources – it needs a divining power, by which different sections and different races can be interpreted to each other, and blended together in love – it needs an educating power, by which its immature children may be trained in virtue – it needs a loving and redeeming power, by which its erring and criminal children may be borne with, purified, and led back to virtue.

Yet, while I thus muse, I remember that such women as my mother are those to whom in an especial manner all noise and publicity and unrestful conflict are peculiarly distasteful. My mother had that delicacy of fibre that made any kind of public exercise of her powers an impossibility. It is not peculiarly a feminine characteristic, but belongs equally to many men of the finest natures. It is characteristic of the poets and philosophers of life. It is ascribed by the sacred writers to Jesus of Nazareth, in whom an aversion for publicity and a longing for stillness and retirement are specially indicated by many touching incidents. Jesus preferred to form around him a family of disciples and to act on the world through them, and it is remarkable that he left no writings directly addressed to the world by himself, but only by those whom he inspired.

Women of this brooding, quiet, deeply spiritual nature, while

they cannot attend caucuses, or pull political wires or mingle in the strife of political life, are yet the most needed force to be for the good of the State. I am persuaded that *it is not till this class of women feel as vital and personal responsibility for the good of the State, as they have hitherto felt for that of the family, that we shall gain the final elements of a perfect society*. The laws of Rome, so said the graceful myth, were dictated to Numa Pompilius, by the nymph, Egeria. No mortal eye saw her. She was not in the forum, or the senate. She did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up her voice in the street, but she made the laws by which Rome ruled the world. Let us hope in a coming day that not Egeria, but Mary, the mother of Jesus, the great archetype of the Christian motherhood, shall be felt through all the laws and institutions of society. That Mary, who kept all things and pondered them in her heart – the silent poet, the prophetess, the one confidential friend of Jesus, sweet and retired as evening dew, yet strong to go forth with Christ against the cruel and vulgar mob, and to stand unfainting by the cross where He suffered!

From the time that my mother discovered my store of manuscripts, she came into new and more intimate relation with me. She took me from the district school, and kept me constantly with herself, teaching me in the intervals of domestic avocations.

I was what is called a mother's-boy, as she taught me to render her all sorts of household services, such as are usually performed by girls. My two older sisters, about this time, left us, to establish a seminary in the neighborhood, and the sister nearest my age

went to study under their care, so that my mother said, playfully, she had no resource but to make a girl of me. This association with a womanly nature, and this discipline in womanly ways, I hold to have been an invaluable part of my early training. There is no earthly reason which requires a man, in order to be manly, to be unhandy and clumsy in regard to the minutiæ of domestic life; and there are quantities of occasions occurring in the life of every man, in which he will have occasion to be grateful to his mother, if, like mine, she trains him in woman's arts and the secrets of making domestic life agreeable.

But it is not merely in this respect that I felt the value of my early companionship with my mother. The power of such women over our sex is essentially the service rendered us in forming our ideal, and it was by my mother's influence that the ideal guardian, the "shadow wife," was formed, that guided me through my youth.

She wisely laid hold of the little idyl of my childhood, as something which gave her the key to my nature, and opened before me the hope in my manhood of such a friend as my little Daisy had been to my childhood. This wife of the future she often spoke of as a motive. I was to make myself worthy of her. For her sake I was to be strong, to be efficient, to be manly and true, and above all pure in thought and imagination and in word.

The cold mountain air and simple habits of New England country life are largely a preventive of open immorality; but there is another temptation which besets the boy, against which the

womanly ideal is the best shield – the temptation to vulgarity and obscenity.

It was to my mother's care and teaching I owe it, that there always seemed to be a lady at my elbow, when stories were told such as a pure woman would blush to hear. It was owing to her, that a great deal of what I supposed to be classical literature both in Greek and Latin and in English was to me and is to me to this day simply repulsive and disgusting. I remember that one time when I was in my twelfth or thirteenth year, one of Satan's agents put into my hand one of those stories that are written with an express purpose of demoralizing the young – stories that are sent creeping like vipers and rattle-snakes stealthily and secretly among inexperienced and unguarded boys hiding in secret corners, gliding under their pillows and filling their veins with the fever poison of impurity. How many boys in the most critical period of life are forever ruined, in body and soul, by the silent secret gliding among them of these nests of impure serpents, unless they have a mother, wise, watchful, and never sleeping, with whom they are in habits of unreserved intimacy and communion!

I remember that when my mother took from me this book, it was with an expression of fear and horror which made a deep impression on me. Then she sat by me that night, when the shadows were deepening, and told me how the reading of such books, or the letting of such ideas into my mind would make me unworthy of the wife she hoped some day I would win. With a

voice of solemn awe she spoke of the holy mystery of marriage as something so sacred, that all my life's happiness depended on keeping it pure, and surrounding it only with the holiest thoughts.

It was more the thrill of her sympathies, the noble poetry of her nature inspiring mine, than anything she said, that acted upon me and stimulated me to keep my mind and memory pure. In the closeness of my communion with her I seemed to see through her eyes and feel through her nerves, so that at last a passage in a book or a sentiment uttered always suggested the idea of what she would think of it.

In our days we have heard much said of the importance of training women to be wives. Is there not something to be said on the importance of training men to be husbands? Is the wide latitude of thought and reading and expression which has been accorded as a matter of course to the boy and the young man, the conventionally allowed familiarity with coarseness and indelicacy, a fair preparation to enable him to be the intimate companion of a pure woman? For how many ages has it been the doctrine that man and woman were to meet in marriage, the one crystal-pure, the other foul with the permitted garbage of all sorts of uncleansed literature and license?

If the man is to be the head of the woman, even as Christ is the head of the Church, should he not be her equal, at least, in purity?

My shadow-wife grew up by my side under my mother's creative touch. It was for her I studied, for her I should toil.

The thought of providing for her took the sordid element out of economy and made it unselfish. She was to be to me adviser, friend, inspirer, charmer. She was to be my companion, not alone in one faculty, but through all the range of my being – there should be nothing wherein she and I could not by appreciative sympathy commune together. As I thought of her, she seemed higher than I. I must love up and not down, I said. She must stand on a height and I must climb to her – she must be a princess worthy of many toils and many labors. Gradually she became to me a controlling power.

The thought, of what she would think, closed for me many a book that I felt she and I could not read together – her fair image barred the way to many a door and avenue, which if a young man enters, he must leave his good angel behind, – for her sake I abjured intimacies that I felt she could not approve, and it was my ambition to keep the inner temple of my heart and thoughts so pure, that it might be a worthy resting place for her at last.

CHAPTER V.
I START FOR COLLEGE AND MY UNCLE JACOB ADVISES ME

The time came at last when the sacred habit of intimacy with my mother was broken, and I was to leave her for college.

It was the more painful to her, as only a year before, my father had died, leaving her more than ever dependent on the society of her children.

My father died as he had lived, rejoicing in his work and feeling that if he had a hundred lives to live, he would devote them to the same object for which he had spent that one – the preaching of the Gospel. He left to my mother the homestead and a small farm, which was under the care of one of my brothers, so that the event of his death made no change in our family home center, and I was to go to college and fulfill the hope of his heart and the desire of my mother's life, in consecrating myself to the work of the Christian ministry.

My father and mother had always kept sacredly a little fund laid by for the education of their children; it was the result of many small savings and self-denials – but self-denials so cheerfully and hopefully encountered that they had almost changed their nature and become preferences. The family fund for this purpose had been used in turn by two of my older

brothers, who, as soon as they gained an independent foothold in life, appropriated each his first earnings to replacing this sum for the use of the next.

It was not, however, a fund large enough to dispense with the need of a strict economy, and a supplemental self-helpfulness on our part.

The terms in some of our New England colleges are thoughtfully arranged so that the students can teach for three of the winter months, and the resources thus gained help out their college expenses. Thus at the same time they educate themselves and help to educate others, and they study with the maturity of mind and the appreciation of the value of what they are gaining, resulting from a habit of measuring themselves with the actual needs of life.

The time when the boy goes to college is the time when he feels manhood to begin. He is no longer a boy, but an unfledged, undeveloped man – a creature, half of the past and half of the future. Yet every one gives him a good word or a congratulatory shake of the hand on his entrance to this new plateau of life. It is a time when advice is plenty as blackberries in August, and often held quite as cheap – but nevertheless a young fellow may as well look at what his elders tell him at this time, and see what he can make of it.

As I was "our minister's son," all the village thought it had something to do with my going. "Hallo, Harry, so you've got into college! Think you'll be as smart a man as your dad?" said one.

"Wa-al, so I hear you're going to college. Stick to it now. I could a made suthin ef I'd a had larnin at your age," said old Jerry Smith, who rung the meeting-house bell, sawed wood, and took care of miscellaneous gardens for sundry widows in the vicinity.

But the sayings that struck me as most to the purpose came from my Uncle Jacob.

Uncle Jacob was my mother's brother, and the doctor not only of our village, but of all the neighborhood for ten miles round. He was a man celebrated for medical knowledge through the State, and known by his articles in medical journals far beyond. He might have easily commanded a wider and more lucrative sphere of practice by going to any of the large towns and cities, but Uncle Jacob was a philosopher and preferred to live in a small quiet way in a place whose scenery suited him, and where he could act precisely as he felt disposed, and carry out all his little humors and pet ideas without rubbing against conventionalities.

He had a secret adoration for my mother, whom he regarded as the top and crown of all womanhood, and he also enjoyed the society of my father, using him as a sort of whetstone to sharpen his wits on. Uncle Jacob was a church member in good standing, but in the matter of belief he was somewhat like a high-mettled horse in a pasture, – he enjoyed once in a while having a free argumentative race with my father all round the theological lot. Away he would go in full career, dodging definitions, doubling and turning with elastic dexterity, and sometimes ended by leaping over all the fences, with most astounding assertions, after

which he would calm down, and gradually suffer the theological saddle and bridle to be put on him and go on with edifying paces, apparently much refreshed by his metaphysical capers.

Uncle Jacob was reported to have a wonderful skill in the healing craft. He compounded certain pills which were stated to have most wonderful effects. He was accustomed to exact that, in order fully to develop their medical properties, they should be taken after a daily bath, and be followed immediately by a brisk walk of a specific duration in the open air. The steady use of these pills had been known to make wonderful changes in the cases of confirmed invalids, a fact which Uncle Jacob used to notice with a peculiar twinkle in the corner of his eye. It was sometimes whispered that the composition of them was neither more nor less than simple white sugar with a flavor of some harmless essence, but upon this subject my Uncle Jacob was impenetrable. He used to say, with the afore-mentioned waggish twinkle, that their preparation was his secret.

Uncle Jacob had always had a special favor for me, shown after his own odd and original manner. He would take me in his chaise with him when driving about his business, and keep my mind on a perpetual stretch with his odd questions and droll, suggestive remarks or stories. There was a shrewd keen quality to all that he said, that stimulated like a mental tonic, and none the less so for a stinging flavor of sarcasm and cynicism, that stirred up and provoked one's self-esteem. Yet as Uncle Jacob was companionable and loved a listener, I think he was none the

less agreeable to me for this slight touch of his claws. One likes to find power of any kind – and he who shows that he can both scratch and bite effectively, if he holds his talons in sheath, comes in time to be regarded as a sort of benefactor for his forbearance: and so, though I got many a shrewd mental nip and gripe from my Uncle Jacob, I gave on the whole more heed to his opinion than that of anybody else that I knew.

From the time that I had been detected with my self-invented manuscript, up to the period of my going to college, the expression of my thoughts by writing had always been a passion with me, and from year to year my mind had been busy with its own creations, which it was a solace and amusement for me to record.

Of course there was ever so much crabbed manuscript, and no less confused, immature thought. I wrote poems, essays, stories, tragedies, and comedies. I demonstrated the immortality of the soul. I sustained the future immortality of the souls of animals. I wrote sonnets and odes, in whole or in part on almost everything that could be mentioned in creation.

My mother advised me to make Uncle Jacob my literary mentor, and the best of my productions were laid under his eye.

"Poor trash!" he was wont to say, with his usual kindly twinkle. "But there must be poor trash in the beginning. We must all eat our peck of dirt, and learn to write sense by writing nonsense." Then he would pick out here and there a line or expression which he assured me was "*not bad*." Now and then he

condescended to tell me that for a boy of my age, so and so was actually hopeful, and that I should make something one of these days, which was to me more encouragement than much more decided praise from any other quarter.

We all notice that he who is reluctant to praise, whose commendation is scarce and hard-earned, is he for whose good word everybody is fighting; he comes at last to be the judge in the race. After all, the fact which Uncle Jacob could not disguise, that he had a certain good opinion of me, in spite of his sharp criticisms and scant praises, made him the one whose dicta on every subject were the most important to me.

I went to him in all the glow of satisfaction and the tremble of self-importance that a boy feels who is taking the first step into the land of manhood.

I have the image of him now, as he stood with his back to the fire, and the newspaper in his hand, giving me his last counsels. A little wiry, keen-looking man, with a blue, hawk-like eye, a hooked nose, a high forehead, shadowed with grizzled hair, and a cris-cross of deeply lined wrinkles in his face.

"So you are going to college, boy! Well, away with you; there's no use advising you; you'll do as all the rest do. In one year you'll know more than your father, your mother, or I, or all your college officers – in fact, than the Lord himself. You'll have doubts about the Bible, and think you could have made a better one. You'll think that if the Lord had consulted you he could have laid the foundations of the earth better, and arranged the course of

nature to more purpose. In short, you'll be a god, knowing good and evil, and running all over creation measuring everybody and everything in your pint cup. There'll be no living with you. But you'll get over it, – it's only the febrile stage of knowledge. But if you have a good constitution, you'll come through with it."

I humbly suggested to him that I should try to keep clear of the febrile stage; that forewarned was forearmed.

"Oh, tut! tut! you must go through your fooleries. These are the regular diseases, the chicken-pox, measles, and mumps of young manhood; you'll have them all. We only pray that you may have them light, and not break your constitution for all your life through, by them. For instance, you'll fall in love with some baby-faced young thing, with pink cheeks and long eyelashes, and goodness only knows what abominations of sonnets you'll be guilty of. That isn't fatal, however. Only don't get engaged. Take it as the chicken-pox – keep your pores open, and don't get cold, and it'll pass off and leave you none the worse."

"And she!" said I, indignantly. "You talk as if it was no matter what became of her – "

"What, the baby? Oh, she'll outgrow it, too. The fact is, soberly and seriously, Harry, marriage is the thing that makes or mars a man; it's the gate through which he goes up or down, and you shouldn't pledge yourself to it till you come to your full senses. Look at your mother, boy; see what a woman may be; see what she was to your father, what she is to me, to you, to every one that knows her. Such a woman, to speak reverently, is a pearl of

great price; a man might well sell all he had to buy her. But it isn't that kind of woman that flirts with college boys. You don't pick up such pearls every day."

Of course I declared that nothing was further from my thoughts than anything of that nature.

"The fact is, Harry, you can't afford fooleries," said my uncle. "You have your own way to make, and nothing to make it with but your own head and hands, and you must begin now to count the cost of everything. You have a healthy, sound body; see that you take care of it. God gives you a body but once. He don't take care of it for you, and whatever of it you lose, you lose for good. Many a chap goes into college fresh as you are, and comes out with weak eyes and crooked back, yellow complexion and dyspeptic stomach. He has only himself to thank for it. When you get to college they'll want you to smoke, and you'll want to, just for idleness and good fellowship. Now, before you begin, just calculate what it'll cost you. You can't get a good cigar under ten cents, and your smoker wants three a day, at the least. There go thirty cents a day, two dollars and ten cents a week, or a hundred and nine dollars and twenty cents a year. Take the next ten years at that rate, and you can invest over a thousand dollars in tobacco smoke. That thousand dollars, invested in a savings bank, would give a permanent income of sixty dollars a year, – a handy thing, as you'll find, just as you are beginning life. Now, I know you think all this is prosy; You are amazingly given to figures of rhetoric, but, after all, you've got to get on in a world

where things go by the rules of arithmetic."

"Well, uncle," I said, a little nettled, "I pledge you my word that I won't smoke or drink. I never have done either, and I don't know why I should."

"Good for you! your hand on that, my boy. You don't need either tobacco or spirits any more than you need water in your shoes. There's no danger in doing without them, and great danger in doing with them; so let's look on that as settled.

"Now, as to the rest. You have a faculty for stringing words together, and a hankering after it, that may make or spoil you. Many a fellow comes to naught because he can string pretty phrases and turn a good line of poetry. He gets the notion that he's to be a poet, or orator, or genius of some sort, and neglects study. Now, Harry, remember that an empty bag can't stand upright; and that if you are ever to be a writer you must have something to say, and that you've got to dig for knowledge as for hidden treasure. A genius *for hard work* is the best kind of genius. Look at great writers, and see how many had it. What a student Milton was, and Goethe! Great fellows, those! – like trees that grow out in a pasture lot, with branches all round. Composition is the flowering out of a man's mind. When he has made growth, all studies and all learning, all that makes woody fibre, go into it. Now, study books; observe nature; practice. If you make a good firm mental growth, I hope to see some blossoms and fruits from it one of these days. So go your ways, and God bless you!"

The last words were said as Uncle Jacob slipped into my hand an envelope, containing a sum of money. "You'll need it," he said, "to furnish your room; and hark'e! if you get into any troubles that you don't want to burden your mother with, come to me."

There was warmth in the grip with which these last words were said, and a sort of misty moisture came over his keen blue eye, – little signs which meant as much from his shrewd and reticent nature as a caress or an expression of tenderness might from another.

My mother's last words, after hours of talk over the evening fire, were these: "I want you to be a *good* man. A great many have tried to be great men, and failed; but nobody ever sincerely tried to be a *good* man, and failed."

I suppose it is about the happiest era in a young fellow's life, when he goes to college for the first time.

The future is all a land of blue distant mists and shadows, radiant as an Italian landscape. The boundaries between the possible and the not possible are so charmingly vague! There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow forever waiting for each new comer. Generations have not exhausted it!

De Balzac said, of writing his novels, that the dreaming out of them was altogether the best of it. "To imagine," he said, "is to smoke enchanted cigarettes; to bring out one's imaginations into words, – that is *work*!"

The same may be said of the romance of one's life. The dream-life is beautiful, but the rendering into reality quite

another thing.

I believe every boy who has a good father and mother, goes to college meaning, in a general way, to be a good fellow. He will not disappoint them. – No! a thousand times, no! In the main, he will be a good boy, – not that he is going *quite* to walk according to the counsels of his elders. He is not going to fall over any precipices – not he – but he is going to walk warily and advisedly along the edge of them, and take a dispassionate survey of the prospect, and gather a few botanical specimens here and there. It might be dangerous for a less steady head than his; but he understands himself, and with regard to all things he says, "We shall see." The world is full of possibilities and open questions. Up sail, and away; let us test them!

As I scaled the mountains and descended the valleys on my way to college, I thought over all that my mother and Uncle Jacob had said to me, and had my own opinion of it.

Of course I was not the person to err in the ways he had suggested. I was not to be the dupe of a boy and girl flirtation. My standard of manhood was too exalted, I reflected, and I thought with complacency how little Uncle Jacob knew of me.

To be sure, it is a curious kind of a thought to a young man, that somewhere in this world, unknown to him, and as yet unknowing him, lives the woman that is to be his earthly fate, – to affect, for good or evil, his destiny.

We have all read the pretty story about the Princess of China and the young Prince of Tartary, whom a fairy and genius in a

freak of caprice showed to each other in an enchanted sleep, and then whisked away again, leaving them to years of vain pursuit and wanderings. Such is the ideal image of *somebody*, who must exist *somewhere*, and is to be found *sometime*, and when found, is to be ours.

"Uncle Jacob is all right in the main," I said; "but if I should meet the true woman even in my college days, why that, indeed, would be quite another thing."

CHAPTER VI.
MY DREAM-WIFE

All things prospered with me in my college life. I had a sunny room commanding a fine prospect, and uncle Jacob's parting liberality enabled me to furnish it commodiously.

I bought the furniture of a departing senior at a reduced price, and felt quite the spirit of a householder in my possessions. I was well prepared on my studies and did not find my tasks difficult.

My stock of interior garnishment included several French lithographs, for the most part of female heads, looking up, with very dark bright eyes, or looking down, with very long dark eyelashes.

These heads of dream-women are, after all, not to be laughed at; they show the yearning for womanly influences and womanly society which follows the young man in his enforced monastic seclusion from all family life and family atmosphere. These little fanciful French lithographs, generally, are chosen for quite other than artistic reasons. If we search into it we shall find that one is selected because it is like sister "Nell," and another puts one in mind of "Bessie," and then again, there is another "like a girl I used to know." Now and then one of them has such a piquant, provoking air of individuality, that one is sure it must have been sketched from nature. Some teasing, coaxing, "don't-care-what-

you-think" sort of a sprite, must have wreathed poppies and blue corn-flowers just so in her hair, and looked gay defiance at the artist who drew it. There was just such a saucy, spirited gipsy over my mantel piece, who seemed to defy me to find her if I searched the world over – with whom I held sometimes airy colloquies – not in the least was she like my dream-wife, but I liked her for all that, and thought I would "give something" to know what she would have to say to me, just for the curiosity of the thing.

The college was in a little village, and there was no particular amity between the townspeople and the students. I believe it is the understanding in such cases, that college students are to be regarded and treated as a tribe of Bedouin Arabs, whose hand is against every man, and they in their turn are not backward to make good the character. Public opinion shuts them up together – they are a state within a state – with a public sentiment, laws, manners, and modes of thinking of their own. It is a state, too, without women. When we think of this, and remember that all this experience is gone through in the most gaseous and yeasty period of human existence, we no longer wonder that there are college rows and scrapes, that all sort of grotesque capers become hereditary and traditional; that an apple-cart occasionally appears on top of one of the steeples, that cannon balls are rolled surreptitiously down the college stairs, and that tutors' doors are mysteriously found locked at recitation hours. One simply wonders that the roof is not blown off, and the windows out, by the combined excitability of so many fermenting natures.

There is a tendency now in society to open the college course equally to women – to continue through college life that interaction of the comparative influence of the sexes which is begun in the family.

To a certain extent this experiment has been always favorably tried in the New England rural Academies, where young men are fitted for college in the same classes and studies with women.

In these time-honored institutions, young women have kept step with young men in the daily pursuit of science, not only without disorder or unseemly scandal, but with manifestly more quietness and refinement of manner than obtains in institutions where female association ceases altogether. The presence of a couple of dozen of well-bred ladies in the lecture and recitation rooms of a college would probably be a preventive of many of the unseemly and clumsy jokes wherewith it has been customary to diversify the paths of science, to the affliction of the souls of professors.

But for us boys, there was no gospel of womanhood except what was to be got from the letters of mothers and sisters, and such imperfect and flitting acquaintance as we could pick up in the streets with the girls of the village. Now though there might be profit, could young men and women see each other daily under the responsibility of serious business, keeping step with one another in higher studies, yet it by no means follows that this kind of flitting glimpse-like acquaintance, formed merely in the exchange of a few outside superficialities, can have any

particularly good effect. No element of true worthy friendship, of sober appreciation, or manly or womanly good sense, generally enters into these girl-and-boy flirtations, which are the only substitute for family association during the barren years of student life. The students were not often invited into families, and those who gained a character as ladies' men were not favorably looked upon by our elders. Now and then by rare and exceptional good luck a college student is made at home in some good family, where there is a nice kind mother and the wholesome atmosphere of human life; or, he forms the acquaintance of some woman, older and wiser than himself, who can talk with him on all the multitude of topics his college studies suggest. But such cases are only exceptions. In general there is no choice between flirtation and monastic isolation.

For my part, I posed myself on the exemplary platform, and remembering my uncle Jacob's advice, contemplated life with the grim rigidity of a philosopher. I was going to have no trifling, and surveyed the girls at church, on Sunday, with a distant and severe air – as gay creatures of an hour, who could hold no place in my serious meditations. Plato or Aristotle, in person, could not have contemplated life and society from a more serene height of composure. I was favorably known by my teachers, and held rank at the head of my class, and was stigmatized as a "dig," by frisky young gentlemen who enjoyed rolling cannon balls down stairs – taking the tongue out of the chapel bell – greasing the seats, and other thread-bare college jokes, which they had not genius

enough to vary, so as to give them a spice of originality.

But one bright June Sunday – just one of those days that seem made to put all one's philosophy into confusion, when apple-blossoms were bursting their pink shells, and robins singing, and leaves twittering and talking to each other in undertones, there came to me a great revelation.

How innocently I brushed my hair and tied my neck tie, on that fateful morning, contemplating my growing moustache and whiskers hopefully in the small square of looking-glass which served for me these useful purposes of self-knowledge. I looked at my lineaments as those of a free young junior, without fear and without anxiety, without even an incipient inquiry what anybody else would think of them – least of all any woman – and marched forth obediently and took my wonted seat in that gallery of the village church which was assigned to the college students of Congregational descent; where, like so many sheep in a pen, we joined in the services of the common sheep-fold.

I suppose there is moral profit even in the decent self-denial of such weekly recurring religious exercises. To be forced to a certain period of silence, order, quiet, and to have therein a possibility and a suggestion of communion with a Higher Power, and an out-look into immortality, is something not to be undervalued in education, and justifies the stringency with which our New England colleges preserve and guard this part of their régime.

But it was to be confessed in our case, that the number who

really seemed to have any spiritual participation or sympathy in the great purposes of the exercises, was not a majority. A general, dull decency of demeanor was the most frequent attainment, and such small recreations were in vogue as could be pursued without drawing the attention of the monitors. There was some telegraphy of eyes between the girls of the village and some of the more society-loving fellows, who had cultivated intimacies in that quarter; there were some novels, stealthily introduced and artfully concealed and read by the owner, while his head, resting on the seat before him, seemed bowed in devotion; and some artistic exercises in sketching caricatures on the part of others. For my own part, having been trained religiously, I gave strict outward and decorous attention; but the fact was that my mind generally sailed off on some cloud of fancy, and wandered through dream-land, so that not a word of anything present reached my ear. This habit of reverie and castle-building, repressed all the week by the severe necessity of definite tasks, came upon me Sundays as Bunyan describes the hot, sleepy atmosphere of the enchanted ground.

Our pastor was a good man, who wrote a kind of smooth, elegant, unexceptionable English; whose measured cadences and easy flow, were, to use the scripture language, as a "very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play sweetly upon an instrument." I heard him as one hears murmurs and voices through one's sleep, while my spirit went everywhere under the sun. I traveled in foreign lands, I saw pictures, cathedrals; I had

thrilling adventures and hair-breadth escapes; formed strange and exciting acquaintances; in short, was the hero of a romance, whose scenes changed as airily and easily as the sunset clouds of evening. So really and so vividly did this supposititious life excite me that I have actually found myself with tears in my eyes through the pathos of these unsubstantial visions.

It was in one of the lulling pauses of such a romance, while I yet heard the voice of our good pastor proving that "selfishness was the essence of moral evil," that I lifted up my eyes, and became for the first time conscious of a new face, in the third pew of the broad aisle below me. It was a new one – one that certainly had never been there before, and was altogether just the face to enter into the most ethereal perceptions of my visionary life. I started with a sort of awakening thrill, such, perhaps, as Adam had when he woke from his sleep and saw his Eve. There, to be sure, was the face of my dream-wife, incarnate and visible! That face, so refined, so spiritual, so pure! a baptized, Christianized Greek face! A cross between Venus and the Virgin Mary! The outlines were purely, severely classical, such as I have since seen in the Psyche of the Naples gallery; but the large, tremulous, pathetic eyes redeemed them from statuesque coldness. They were eyes that *thought*, that looked deep into life, death, and eternity – so I said to myself as I gazed down on her, and held my breath with a kind of religious awe. The vision was all in white, as such visions must be, and the gauzy crape bonnet with its flowers upon her head, dissolved under my eyes into a sort of

sacred aureole, such as surrounds the heads of saints. I saw her, and only her, through the remaining hour of church. I studied every movement. The radiant eyes were fixed upon the minister, and with an expression so sadly earnest that I blushed for my own wandering thoughts, and began to endeavor to turn my mind to the truths I was hearing told; but, after all, I thought more about her than the discourse. I saw her search the hymn-book for the hymn, and wished that I were down there to find it for her. I saw her standing up, and looking down at her hymns with the wonderful eyes veiled by long lashes, and singing —

> "Call me away from earth and sense,
> One sovereign word can draw me thence,
> I would obey the voice divine,
> And all inferior joys resign."

How miserably gross, and worldly, and unworthy I felt at that moment! How I longed for an ideal, superhuman spirituality, – something that should make me worthy to touch the hem of her garment!

When the blessing was pronounced, I hastened down and stood where I might see her as she passed out of church. I had not been alone in my discoveries: there had been dozens of others that saw the same star, and there were whisperings, and elbowings, and consultings, as a knot of juniors and seniors stationed themselves as I had done, to see her pass out.

As she passed by she raised her eyes slowly, and as it were

by accident, and they fell like a ray of sunlight on one of our number, – Jim Fellows – who immediately bowed. A slight pink flush rose in her cheeks as she gracefully returned the salutation, and passed on. Jim was instantly the great man of the hour; he knew her, it seems.

"It's Miss Ellery, of Portland. Haven't you heard of her?" he said, with an air of importance. "She's the great beauty of Portland. They call her the 'little divinity.' Met her last summer, at Mount Desert," he added, with the comfortable air of a man in possession of the leading fact of the hour – the fact about which everybody else is inquiring.

I walked home behind her in a kind of trance, disdaining to join in what I thought the very flippant and unworthy comments of the boys. I saw the last wave of her white garments as she passed between the two evergreens in front of deacon Brown's square white house, which at that moment became to me a mysterious and glorified shrine; there the angel held her tabernacle.

At this moment I met Miss Dotha Brown, the deacon's eldest daughter, a rosy-cheeked, pleasant-faced girl, to whom I had been introduced the week before. Instantly she was clothed upon with a new interest in my eyes, and I saluted her with *empressement*; if not the rose, she at least was the clay that was imbibing the perfume of the rose; and I don't doubt that my delight at seeing her assumed the appearance of personal admiration. "What a charming Sunday," I said, with emphasis.

"Perfectly charming," said Miss Brown, sympathetically.

"You have an interesting young friend staying with you, I observe," said I.

"Who, Miss Ellery? oh, yes. Oh! Mr. Henderson, she is the sweetest girl!" said Dotha, with effusion.

I didn't doubt it, and listened eagerly to her praises, and was grateful to Miss Brown for the warm invitation to "call" which followed. Miss Ellery was to make them a long visit, and she would be *so* happy to introduce me.

That evening Miss Ellery was a topic of excited discussion in our entry, and Jim Fellows plumed himself largely on his Mount Desert experiences, which he related in a way to produce the impression that he had been regarded with a favorable eye by the divinity.

I was in a state of silent indignation, at him, at all the rest of the boys, at everybody in general, being fully persuaded that they were utterly incapable of understanding or appreciating this wonderful creature.

"Hal, why don't you talk?" said one of them to me, when I had sat silent, pretending to read for a long time; "What do you think of her?"

"Oh, I'm no ladies' man, as you all know," I said, evasively, and actually pretended not to have remarked Miss Ellery except in a cursory manner.

Then followed a period of weeks and months, when that one image was never for a moment out of my thoughts. By a strange

law of our being, a certain idea can accompany us everywhere, not stopping or interrupting the course of the thought, but going on in a sort of shadowy way with it, as an invisible presence.

The man or woman who cherishes an ideal is always liable to this accident, that the spiritual image often descends like a mantle, and invests some very ordinary person, who is, for the time being, transfigured, – "a woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet." It is not what there is in the person, but what there is in *us*, that gives this passage in life its critical power. It would seem as if there were in some men, and some women, preparation for a grand interior illumination and passion, like that hoard of mystical gums and spices which the phenix was fabled to prepare for its funeral pile; all the aspiration and poetry and romance, the upheaval toward an infinite and eternal good, a divine purity and rest, may be enkindled by the touch of a very ordinary and earthly hand, and, burning itself out, leave only cold ashes of experience.

Miss Ellery was a well-bred young lady, of decorous and proper demeanor, of careful religious education, of no particular strength either of mind or emotion, good tempered, and with an instinctive approbativeness that made her desirous to please every body, which created for her the reputation that Miss Brown expressed in calling her "a sweet girl." She was always most agreeable to those with whom she was thrown, and for the time being appeared to be, and was sincerely interested in them; but her mind was like a well-polished looking-glass, retaining not a

trace of anything absent or distant.

She was gifted by nature with wonderful beauty, and beauty of that peculiar style that stirs the senses of the poetical and the ideal; her gentle approbativeness, and the graceful facility of her manner, were such as not at least to destroy the visions which her beauty created. In a quiet way she enjoyed being adored – made love to, but she never overstepped the bounds of strict propriety. She received me with graciousness, and I really think found something in my society which was agreeably stimulating to her. I was somewhat out of the common track of her adorers; my ardor and enthusiasm gave her a new emotion. I wrote poems to her, which she read with a graceful pensiveness and laid away among her trophies in her private writing-desk. I called her my star, my inspiration, my light, and she beamed down on me with a pensive purity. "Yes, she was delighted to have me read Tennyson to her," and many an hour when I should have been studying, I was lounging in the little front parlor of the Brown house, fancying myself Sir Galahad, and reading with emotion, how his "blade was strong, because his heart was pure;" and Miss Ellery murmured "How lovely!" and I was in paradise.

And then there came wonderful moonlight evenings – evenings when every leaf stirring had a penciled reproduction flickering in light and shade on the turf; and we walked together under arches of elm trees, and I talked and quoted poetry; and she listened and assented in the sweetest manner possible. All my hopes, my plans, my dreams, my speculations, my philosophies,

came out to sun themselves under the magic of those lustrous eyes. Her replies and utterances were greatly in disproportion to mine; but I received them, and made much of them, as of old the priests of Delphi did with those of the inspired maiden. There must be deep meaning in it all, because she was a priestess; and I was not backward to supply it.

I have often endeavored to analyze the sources of the illusion cast over men by such characters as that of Miss Ellery. In their case the instinctive action of approbativeness assumes the semblance of human sympathy, and brings them for the time being into the life-sphere, and under the influence, of any person whom they wish to please, so that they with a temporary sincerity reflect back the ideas and feelings of others. There is just the same illusive sort of charm in this reflection of our own thoughts and emotions from another mind, as there is in the reflection of objects in a placid lake. There is no warmth and no reality to it; and yet, for the time being, it is often the most entrancing thing in the world, and gives back to you the glow of your own heart, the fervor of your imagination, and even every little flower of fancy, and twig of feeling, with a wonderful faithfulness of reproduction.

It is not real sympathy, because, like the image in the lake, it is only there when you are present; and when you are away, reflects with equal facility the next comer.

But men always have been, and to the end of time always will be, fascinated by such women, and will suppose this

mere reflecting power of a highly polished surface to be the sympathetic response for which the heart longs.

So I had no doubt that Miss Ellery was a woman of all sorts of high literary tastes and moral heroisms, for there was nothing so high or so deep in the aspirations of poets or sages in my readings to her, that could not be reflected and glorified in those wonderful eyes.

Neither are such women hypocrites, as they are often called. What they give back to you is for the time being a sincere reflection, and if there is no depth to it, if it passes away with the passing hour, it is simply because their natures – smooth, shallow, and cold – have no deeper power of retention.

The fault lies in expecting more of a thing than there is in its nature – a fault we shall more or less all go on committing till the great curtain falls.

I wrote all about her to my mother; and received the usual cautionary maternal epistle, reminding me that I was yet far from that goal in life when I was warranted in asking any woman to be my wife; and suggesting that my taste might later with maturity; warning me against premature commitments – in short, saying all that good, anxious mothers usually say to young juniors in college in similar circumstances.

In reply, I told my mother that I had found a woman worthy the devotion of a life – a woman who would be inspiration and motive and reward. I extolled her purity and saintliness. I told my mother that she was forming and leading me to all that was holy

and noble. In short I meant to win her though the seven labors of Hercules were to be performed seven times over to reach her.

Now the fact is, my mother might have saved herself her anxiety. Miss Ellery was perfectly willing to be my guiding star, my inspiration, my light, within reasonable limits, while making a visit in an otherwise rather dull town. She liked to be read to; she liked the consciousness of being incessantly admired, and would have made a very good image for some Church of the Perpetual Adoration; but after all, Miss Ellery was as incapable of forming an ineligible engagement of marriage with a poor college student, as the most sensible and collected of Walter Scott's heroines.

Looking back upon this part of my life, I can pity myself with as quiet and dispassionate a perception as if I were a third person. The illusion, for the time being, was so real, the feelings called up by it so honest and earnest and sacred; and supposing there had been a tangible reality to it – what might not such a woman have made of me, or of any man?

And suppose it pleased God to send forth an army of such women, as I thought her to be, among the lost children of men, women armed not only with the outward and visible sign of beauty, but with that inward and spiritual grace which beauty typifies, one might believe that the golden age would soon be back upon us.

Miss Ellery adroitly avoided all occasions of any critical commitment on my part or on her's. Women soon learn a vast amount of tact and diplomacy on that subject: but she gave me to

understand that I was peculiarly congenial to her, and encouraged the outflow of all my romance with the gentlest atmosphere of indulgence. To be sure, I was not the only one whom she thus held with bonds of golden gossamer. She reigned a queen, and had a court at her feet, and the deacon's square, white, prosaic house bristled with the activity and vivacity of Miss Ellery's adorers.

Among them. Will Marshall was especially distinguished. Will was a senior, immensely rich, good-natured as the longest summer day is long, but so idle and utterly incapable of culture that only the liberality of the extra sum paid to a professor who held him in guardianship secured his stay in college classes. It has been my observation that money will secure a great variety of things in this lower world, and among others, will carry a very stupid fellow through college.

Will was a sort of favorite with us all. His good nature was without limit, and he scattered his money with a free hand, and so we generally spoke of him as "Poor Will;" a nice fellow, if he couldn't write a decent note, and blundered through all his recitations.

Will laid himself, so to speak, at Miss Ellery's feet. He was flush of bouquets and confectionery. He caused the village livery stable to import forthwith a turnout worthy to be a car of Venus herself.

I saw all this, but it never entered my head that Miss Ellery would cast a moment's thought other than those of the gentlest womanly compassion on poor Will Marshall.

The time of the summer vacation drew nigh, and with the close of the term closed the vision of my idyllic experiences with Miss Ellery. To the last, she was so gentle and easy to be entreated. Her lovely eyes cast on me such bright encouraging glances; and she accorded me a farewell moonlight ramble, wherein I walked not on earth, but in the seventh heaven of felicity. Of course there was nothing definite. I told her that I was a poor soldier of fortune, but might I only wear her name in my bosom, it would be a sacred talisman, and give strength to my arm, and she sighed, and looked lovely, and she did not say me nay.

I went home to my mother, and wearied that much-enduring woman, all through the vacation, with the hot and cold fits of my fever. Blessed souls! these mothers, who bear and watch and rear the restless creatures, who by and by come to them with the very heart gone out of them for love of another woman – some idle girl, perhaps, that never knew what it was either to love or care, and that plays with hearts as kittens do with pinballs!

I wrote to Miss Ellery letters long, overflowing, and got back little neatly-worded notes on scented paper, speaking in a general way of the charms of friendship.

But the first news that met me on my return to college broke my soap-bubble at one touch.

"Hurrah! Hal – who do you guess is engaged?"

"I don't know."

"Guess."

"I couldn't guess."

"Why, Miss Ellery – engaged to Bill Marshall."

Alnaschar, in the Arabian tale, could not have been more astonished when his basket of glass-ware fell in glittering nothingness. I stood stupid with astonishment.

"*She* engaged to Will Marshall! – why, boys, he's a fool!"

"But you see he's rich. Oh, it's all arranged; they are to be married next month, and go to Europe for their wedding tour," said Jim Fellows.

And so my idol fell from its pedestal – and my first dream dissolved.

CHAPTER VII.
THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION

Miss Ellery was sufficiently mistress of herself, and of circumstances, to close our little pastoral in the most graceful and amiable manner possible.

I received a beautiful rose-scented note from her, saying that the very kind interest in her happiness which I always had expressed, and the extremely pleasant friendship which had arisen between us, made her desirous of informing me, &c., &c. Thereupon followed the announcement of her engagement, terminating with the assurance that whatever new ties she might form, or scenes she might visit, she should ever cherish a pleasant remembrance of the delightful hours spent beneath the elms of X., and indulge the kindest wishes for my future success and happiness.

I, of course, crushed the rose-scented missive in my hand, in the most approved tragical style, and felt that I had been deceived, betrayed and undone. I passed forthwith into that cynical state of young manhood, in which one learns for the first time what a mere unimportant drop his own most terribly earnest and excited feelings may be in the tumbling ocean of the existing world.

This is a valley of humiliation, which lies, in very many

cases, just a day's walk beyond the palace, beautiful with all its fascinations.

The moral geographer, John Bunyan, to whom we are indebted for much wholesome information, tells us that while it is extremely difficult to descend gracefully into this valley, and pilgrims generally accomplish it at the expense of many a sore trip and stumble, yet when once they are fairly down, it presents many advantages of climate and soil not other where found.

The shivering to pieces of the first ideal, while it breaks ruthlessly and scatters much that is really and honestly good and worthy, breaks up no less a certain stock of unconscious self conceit, which young people are none the worse for having lessened.

The very assumption, so common in the early days of life, that we have feelings of a peculiar sacredness above the comprehension of the common herd, and for which only the selectest sympathy is possible, is one savoring a little too much of the unregenerate natural man, to be safely let alone to grow and thrive.

Natures, in particular, where ideality is largely in the ascendant, are apt to begin life with the scheme of building a high and thick stone wall of reticence around themselves, and enthroning therein an idol, whose rites and service are to be performed with a contemptuous indifference to all the rest of mankind.

When this idol is suddenly disenchanted by some stroke of

inevitable reality, and we discern that the image which we had supposed to be the shrine of a divinity, is only a very earthly doll, stuffed with saw-dust, one's pinnacles and battlements – the whole temple in short, that we have prided ourselves on, comes tumbling down about us like the walls of Jericho, not without a certain sense of the ridiculous. Though, like other afflictions, this is not for the present joyous, still the space thus cleared in our mind may be so cultivated as afterwards to bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness.

In my case, my idol was utterly defaced and destroyed in my eyes, because I could not conceal from myself that she was making a marriage wholly without the one element that above all others marriage requires.

Miss Ellery was perfectly well aware of the mental inferiority of poor Bill Marshall, and had listened unreprovingly to the half-contemptuous pity with which it was customary among us to speak of him. I remembered how patronizingly I had often talked of him to her, "Really not a bad fellow – only a little weak, you see;" and the pretty, graceful drollery in her eyes. I remembered things that these same eyes had looked at me, when he blundered and miscalled words in conversation, and a thousand sayings and intimations, each by itself indefinite as the boundary between two tints of the rainbow, by which she showed a superior sense of pleasure in my conversation and society.

And was all this acting and insincerity? I thought not. I was and am fully convinced that had I only been possessed of the wealth

of Bill Marshall, Miss Ellery would infinitely have preferred me as a life companion; and it was no very serious amount of youthful vanity to imagine that I should have proved a more entertaining one. I can easily imagine that she made the decision with some gentle regret at first, – regret dried up like morning dew in the full sunlight of wedding diamonds, and capable of being put completely to sleep upon a couch of cashmere shawls.

With what indignant bitterness did I listen to all the details of the impending wedding from fluent Jim Fellows, who, being from Portland and well posted in all the gossip of the circle in which she moved, enlightened our entry with daily and weekly bulletins of the grandeur and splendors that were being, and to be.

"Boys, only think! Her wedding present from him is a set of diamonds valued at twenty-five thousand dollars. Bob Rivers saw them on exhibition at Tiffany's. Then she has three of the most splendid cashmere shawls that ever were imported into Maine. Captain Sautelle got them from an Indian Prince, and there's no saying what they would have cost at usual rates. I tell you Bill is going it in style, and they are going to be married with drums and trumpets, cymbals and dances; such a wedding as will make old Portland stare; and then off they are going to travel no end of time in Europe, and see all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."

Now, I suppose none of us doubted that could Miss Ellery have attained the diamonds and the cashmeres and the fortune,

with all its possibilities of luxury and self-indulgence, without the addition of the husband, nothing would have been wanting to complete her good fortune; but it is a condition in the way of a woman's making a fortune by marriage, as it was with Faust's compact with an unmentionable party, that it can only be ratified by the sacrifice of herself – herself, and for life! A sacrifice most awful and holy when made in pure love, and most fearful when made for any other consideration. The fact that Miss Ellery could make it was immediate and complete disenchantment to me.

Mine is not, I suppose, the only case where the ideal which has been formed under the brooding influence of a noble mother is shattered by the hand of a woman. Some woman, armed with the sacramental power of beauty, enkindles the highest manliness of the youth, and is, in his eyes, the incarnate form of purity and unworldly virtue, the high prize and incitement to valor, patience, constancy and courage, in the great life-battle.

But she sells herself before his eyes, for diamonds and laces, and trinkets and perfumes; for the liberty of walking on soft carpets and singing in gilded cages; and all the world laughs at his simplicity in supposing that, a fair chance given, any woman would ever do otherwise. Is not beauty woman's capital in trade, the price put into her hand to get whatever she needs; and are not the most beautiful, as a matter of course, destined prizes of the richest?

Miss Ellery's marriage was to me a great awakening, a coming out of a life of pure ideas and sentiment into one of

external realities. Hitherto, I had lived only with people all whose measures and valuations had been those relating to the character – the intellect and the heart. Never in my father's house had I heard the gaining of money spoken of as success in life, except as far as money was needed to advance education, and education was a means for doing good. My father had his zeal, his earnestness, his exultations, but they all related to things *to be done* in his life-work; the saving of souls, the conversion of sinners, the gathering of churches, the repression of intemperance and immorality, the advancement of education. My elder brothers had successfully entered the ministry under his influence, and in counsels with them where to settle, I had never heard the question of salary or worldly support even discussed. The first, the only question I ever heard considered, was *What work was needed to be done*, and what fitness for the doing of it; taking for granted the record, that where the Kingdom of God and its righteousness were first sought, all things would be added.

Thus all my visions of future life had in them something of the innocent verdancy of the golden age, when noble men strove for the favor of fair women, by pureness, by knowledge, by heroism, – and the bravest won the crown from the hand of the most beautiful.

And suddenly to my awakened eyes the whole rushing cavalcade of fashionable life swept by, bearing my princess, amid waving feathers and flashing jewels and dazzling robes and merry laughs and jests, leaving me by the way-side dazed and covered

with dust, to plod on alone.

Now first I felt the shame which comes over a young man, that he has not known the world as old wordlings know it.

In the discussions among the boys, relating to this marriage, I first learned the power of that temptation which comes upon every young man to look on wealth as the first object in a life race.

Woman is by order of nature the conservator of the ideal. Formed of finer clay, with nicer perceptions, and refined fiber, she is the appointed priestess to guard the poetry of life from sacrilege; but if she be bribed to betray the shrine, what hope for us? "If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"

My acquaintance with Miss Ellery had brought me out of my scholastic retirement, and made me an acquaintance of the whole bevy of the girls of X. Miss Ellery had been invited and fêted in all the families, and her special train of adorers had followed her, and thus I was "*au courant*" of all the existing girl-world of our little town. It was curious to remark what a silken flutter of wings, what an endless volubility of tongues there was, about this engagement and marriage, and how, on the whole, it was treated as the height of splendor and good fortune. My rosy-faced friend, Miss Dotha, was invited to the festival as bridesmaid, and returned thereafter "trailing clouds of glory" into the primitive circles of X; and my cynical bitterness of soul took a sort of perverse pleasure in the amplifications and discussions that I constantly heard in the tea-drinking circles of the town.

"Oh, girls, you've no idea about those diamonds," said Miss Dotha; "great big diamonds as large as peas, and just as clear as water! Bill Marshall made them send orders to Europe specially for the purpose; then she had a pearl set that his mother gave, and his sister gave an amethyst set for a breakfast suit! and you ought to have seen the presents! It was a perfect bazar! The Marshalls are an enormously rich family, and they all came down splendidly: old uncle Tom Marshall gave a solid silver dining set embossed with gold, and old Aunt Tabitha Marshall gave a real Sévres china tea-set, that was taken out of one of the royal palaces in France, at the time of the French Revolution. Captain Atkins was in France about the time they were sacking palaces, and doing all such things, and he brought away quite a number of things that found their way into some of these rich old Portland families. Her wedding veil was given by old Grandmamma Marshall, and was said to have been one that belonged to Queen Marie Antoinette, taken by some of those horrid women when they sacked the Tuilleries, and sold to Captain Atkins; at any rate, it was the most wonderful point lace, just like an old picture."

Fancy the drawing of breaths, the exclamations, the groans of delight, from a knot of pretty, well-dressed, nice country girls, at these wonderful glimpses into Paradise.

"After all," I said, "I think this custom of loading down a woman with finery just at her marriage hour, is giving it when she is least able to appreciate it. Why distract her with gew-gaws at the very moment when her heart must be so full of a new

affection that she cares for nothing else? Miss Ellery is probably so lost in her love for Mr. Marshall, that she scarcely gives a thought to these things, and really forgets that she has them. It would be much more in point to give them to some girl that hasn't a lover."

I spoke with a simple, serious air, as if I had most perfect faith in my words, and a general gentle smile of amusement went round the circle, rippling into a laugh out-right, on the faces of some of the gayer girls. Miss Dotha said:

"Oh, come, now, Mr. Henderson, you are too severe."

"Severe!" said I; "I can't understand what you mean, Miss Dotha. You don't mean, of course, to intimate that Miss Ellery is *not* in love with the man she has married?"

"Oh, now!" said Miss Dotha, laughing, "you know perfectly, Mr. Henderson – we all know – it's pretty well understood, that this wasn't *exactly* what you call a love-match; in fact, I know," she added with the assurance of a confidant, "that she had great difficulty in *making up her mind*; but her family were very anxious for the match, and his family thought it would be such a good thing for him to marry and settle down, you know, so one way and another she concluded to take him."

"And, after all, Will Marshall is a good-natured creature," said Miss Smith.

"And going to Europe is such a temptation," said Miss Brown.

"And she must marry some time," said Miss Jones, "and one can't have *every* thing, you know. Will is certain to be kind to

her, and let her have her own way."

"For my part," said pretty Miss Green, "I'm free to say that I don't blame any girl that has a chance to get such a fortune, for doing it as Miss Ellery has. I've always been poor, and pinched and plagued; never can go any where, or see anything, or dress as I want to; and if I had a chance, such as Miss Ellery had, I think I should be a fool not to take it."

"Well," said Miss Black, reflectively, "the only question is, couldn't Miss Ellery have waited and found a man who had more intellect, and more culture, whom she could respect and love, and who had money, too? She had such extraordinary beauty and such popular manners, I should have thought she might."

"Oh, well," said Miss Dotha, "she was getting on – she was three-and-twenty already – and nobody of just the right sort had turned up – 'a bird in the hand' – you know. After all, I dare say she can love Will Marshall well enough."

Well enough! The cool philosophic tone of this phrase smote on my ear curiously.

"And pray, fair ladies, how much is 'well enough?'" said I.

"Well enough to keep the peace," said Miss Green, "and each let the other alone, to go their own ways and have no fighting."

Miss Green was a pretty, spicy little body, with a pair of provoking hazel eyes; who talked like an unprincipled little pirate, though she generally acted like a nice woman. In less than a year after, by the by, she married a home missionary, in Maine, and has been a devoted wife and mother in a little parish

somewhere in the region of Skowhegan, ever since.

But I returned to my room gloriously misanthropic, and for some time my thoughts, like bees, were busy gathering bitter honey. I gave up visiting in the tea-drinking circles of X. I got myself a dark sombrero hat, which I slouched down over my eyes in bandit style when I walked the street and met with any of my former gentle acquaintances. I wrote my mother most sublime and awful letters on the inconceivable vanity and nothingness of human life. I read Plato and Æschylus, and Emerson's Essays, and began to think myself an old Philosopher risen from the dead. There was a melancholy gravity about all my college exercises, and I began to look down on young freshmen and sophomores with a serene compassion, as a sage who has passed through the vale of years and learned that all is vanity.

The valley of humiliation may have its charms – it is said that there are many flowers that grow there, and nowhere else, but for all that, a young fellow, so far as I know, generally walks through the first part of it in rather a surly and unamiable state.

To be sure, had I been wise, I should have been ready to return thanks on my knees for my disappointment. True, the doll was stuffed with saw-dust, but it was not *my* doll. I had not learned the cheat when it was forever too late to help myself, and was not condemned to spend life in vain attempts to make a warm, living friend of a cold marble statue. Many a man has succeeded in getting his first ideal, and been a miserable man always thereafter, and therefore.

I have lived to hear very tranquilly of Mrs. Will Marshall's soirées and parties, as she reigns in the aristocratic circles of New York; and to see her, still like a polished looking-glass, gracefully reflecting every one's whims and tastes and opinions with charming suavity, and forgetting them when their backs are turned; and to think that she is the right thing in the right place – a crowned Queen of Vanity Fair.

I have become, too, very tolerant and indulgent to the women who do as she did, – use their own charms as the coin wherewith to buy the riches and honors of the world.

The world has been busy for some centuries in shutting and locking every door through which a woman could step into wealth, except the door of marriage. All vigor and energy, such as men put forth to get this golden key of life, is condemned and scouted as unfeminine; and a woman belonging to the upper classes, who undertakes to get wealth by honest exertion and independent industry, loses caste, and is condemned by a thousand voices as an oddity and a deranged person. A woman gifted with beauty, who sells it to buy wealth, is far more leniently handled. That way of getting money is not called unwomanly; and so long as the whole force of the world goes that way, such marriages as Miss Ellery's and Bill Marshall's will be considered *en régle*.

CHAPTER VIII.
THE BLUE MISTS

My college course was at last finished satisfactorily to my mother and friends. What joy there is to be got in college honors was mine. I studied faithfully and graduated with the valedictory.

Nevertheless I came back home again a sadder if not a wiser man than I went. In fact a tendency to fits of despondency and dejection had been growing upon me in these last two years of my college life.

With all the self-confidence and conceit that is usually attributed to young men, and of which they have their share undoubtedly, they still have their times of walking through troubled waters, and sinking in deep mire where there is no standing.

During my last year, the question "What are you good for?" had often borne down like a nightmare upon me. When I entered college all was distant, golden, indefinite, and I was sure that I was good for almost anything that could be named. Nothing that ever had been attained by man looked to me impossible. Riches, honor, fame, any thing that any other man unassisted had wrought out for himself with his own right arm, I could work out also.

But as I measured myself with real tasks, and as I rubbed and

grated against other minds and whirled round and round in the various experiences of college life, I grew smaller and smaller in my own esteem, and oftener and oftener in my lonely hours it seemed as if some evil genius delighted to lord it over me and sitting at my bed-side or fire-side to say "What are you good for, to what purpose all the pains and money that have been thrown away on you? You'll never be anything; you'll only mortify your poor mother that has set her heart on you, and make your Uncle Jacob ashamed of you." Can any anguish equal the depths of those blues in which a man's whole self hangs in suspense before his own eyes, and he doubts whether he himself, with his entire outfit and apparatus, body, soul, and spirit, isn't to be, after all, a complete failure? Better, he thinks never to have been born, than to be born to no purpose. Then first he wrestles with the question, What is life for, and what am I to do or seek in it? It seems to be not without purpose, that the active life-work of the great representative Man of Men was ushered in by a forty days dreary wandering in the wilderness hungry, faint, and tempted of the Devil; for certainly, after education has pretty thoroughly waked up all there is in a man, and the time is at hand that he is to make the decision what to do with it, there often comes a wandering, darkened, unsettled, tempted passage in his life. In Christ's temptations we may see all that besets the young man.

The daily bread question, or how to get a living, – the ambitious heavings, or the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, all to be got by some yielding to Satan, – the ostentatious

impulse to come down on the world with a rush and a sensation, – these are mirrored in a young man's smaller life just as they were in that great life. The whole Heavens can be reflected in the little pool as in the broad ocean!

All these elements of unrest had been boiling in my mind during the last year. Who wants to be nothing in the great world? No *young* man at this time of his course. The wisdom of becoming nothing that he may possess all things is too high for this stage of immaturity.

I came into college as simple, and contented, and satisfied, as a huckleberry bush in a sweet-fern pasture. I felt rich enough for all I wanted to do, and my path of life lay before me defined with great simplicity.

But my intimacy with Miss Ellery, her marriage and all that pertained to it, had brought before my eyes the world of wealth and fashion, a world which a young collegian may try to despise, and about which he may write the most disparaging moral reflections, but which has, after all, its power to trouble his soul. The consciousness of being gloveless, and threadbare in toilet, comes over one in certain atmospheres, as the consciousness of nakedness to Adam and Eve. It is true that in the institution where I attended, as in many other rural colleges in New England, I was backed up by a majority of healthy-minded, hardy men, of real mark and worth, children of honest toil and self-respecting poverty, who were bravely working their way up through education to the prizes and attainments of life. Simple

economies were therefore well understood and respected in the college.

Nevertheless there is something not altogether vulgar in the attractions which wealth enables one to throw around himself. I was a social favorite in college, and took a stand among my fellows as a writer and speaker, and so had a considerable share of that sincere sort of flattery which college boys lavish on each other. I was invited and made much of by some whose means were ample, whose apartments were luxuriously and tastefully furnished, but who were none the less good scholars and high-minded gentlemanly fellows.

In their vacations I had been invited to their houses, and had seen all the refinement, the repose, the ease and the quietude that comes from the possession of wealth in the hands of those who know how to use it. Wealth in such hands gives opportunities of the broadest culture, ability to live in the wisest manner, freedom to choose the healthiest surroundings both for mind and body, not restricted by considerations of expense; and how could I think it anything else than an object ardently to be sought?

It is true, my rich friends seemed equally to enjoy the vacations in my little, plain, mountain home. People generally are insensible to advantages they have always enjoyed, and have an appetite for something new; so the homely rusticity of our house, the perfect freedom from conventionalities, the wild, mountain scenery, the wholesome detail of farm life, the barn with its sweet stores of hay, and its nooks and corners and hiding places,

the gathering in of our apples, and the making of cider, the corn-huskings and Thanksgiving frolics, seemed to have their interest and delights to them, and they often told me I was a lucky fellow to be born to such pleasant surroundings. But I thought within myself, It is easy to say this when you feel the control of thousands in your pocket, when if you are tired you can go to any land or country of the earth for change of scene.

In fact we see in history that the crusade of St. Francis in favor of Poverty was not begun by a poor man, but by a young nobleman who had known nothing hitherto but wealth and luxury. It is from the rich, if from any, that our grasping age must learn renunciation and simplicity. It is easier to renounce a good which one has tried and of which one knows all the attendant thorns and stings than to renounce one that has been only painted by the imagination, and whose want has been keenly felt. When I came to the College I came from the controlling power of home influences. At an early age I had felt the strength of that sphere of spirituality that encircled the lives of my parents, and, being very receptive and sympathetic, had reflected in my childish nature all their feelings.

I had renounced the world before I knew what the world was. I had joined my father's church and was looked upon as one destined in time to take up my father's work of the ministry.

Four years had passed and I came back to my mother, weakened and doubting, indisposed to take up the holy work to which in my early days I looked forward with enthusiasm, yet

with all the sadness which comes from indecision as to one's life-object.

To be a minister is to embrace a life of poverty, of toil, of self-denial. To do this, not only with cheerfulness but with an enthusiasm which shall bear down all before it, which shall elevate it into the region of moral poetry and ideality, requires a fervid, unshaken faith. The man must feel the power of an endless life, be lifted above things material and temporal to things sublime and eternal.

Now it is one peculiarity of the professors of the Christian religion that they have not, at least of late years, arranged their system of education with any wise adaptation to having their young men come out of it *Christians*. In this they differ from many other religionists. The Brahmins educate their sons so that they shall infallibly become Brahmins; the Jews so that they shall infallibly be Jews; the Mohammedans so that they shall be Mohammedans; but the Christians educate their sons so that nearly half of them turn out unbelievers – professors of no religion at all.

There is a book which the Christian world unite in declaring to be an infallible revelation from Heaven. It has been the judgment of critics that the various writings in this volume excel other writings in point of mere literary merit as much as they do in purity and elevation of the moral sentiment. Yet it is remarkable that the critical study of these sacred writings in their original tongues is not in most of our Christian colleges considered as

an essential part of the education of a Christian gentleman, while the heathen literature of Greece and Rome is treated as something indispensable, and to be gained at all hazards.

It is a fact that from the time that the boy begins to fit for college, his mind is so driven and pressed with the effort to acquire the classical literature, that there is no time to acquire the literature of the Bible, neither is it associated in his mind with the dignity and respect of a classical attainment. He *must* be familiar with Horace and Ovid, with Cicero and Plato, Æschylus and Homer in their original tongues, but the majestic poetry of the Old Testament, and its sages and seers and prophets, become with every advancing year more unintelligible to him. A thoroughly educated graduate of most of our colleges is unprepared to read intelligently many parts of Isaiah or Ezekiel or Paul's epistles. The scripture lessons of the church service often strike on his ear as a strange quaint babble of peculiar sounds, without rhyme or reason. Uncultured and uneducated in all that should enable him to understand them, he is only preserved by a sort of educational awe from regarding them as the jargon of barbarians.

Meanwhile, this literature of the Bible, strange, weird, sibylline, and full of unfulfilled needs and requirements of study, is being assailed in detail through all the courses of a boy's college life. The objections to it as a divine revelation relate to critical questions in languages of which he is ignorant, and yet they are everywhere; they are in the air he breathes, they permeate all

literature, they enter into modern science, they disintegrate and wear away, bit by bit, his reverence and his confidence.

This work had been going on insensibly in my head during my college life, notwithstanding the loyalty of my heart. During those years I had learned to associate the Bible with the most sacred memories of home, with the dearest loves of home life. It was woven with remembrances of daily gatherings around the family altar, with scenes of deepest emotion when I had seen my father and mother fly to its shelter and rest upon its promises. There were passages that never recurred to me except with the sound of my father's vibrating voice, penetrating their words with a never dying power. The Bible was to me like a father and a mother, and the doubts, and queries, the respectful suggestions of incredulity, the mildly suggestive abatements of its authority, which met me, now here and now there, in all the course of my readings and studies, were as painful to me as reflections cast on my father's probity or my mother's honor.

I would not listen to them, I would not give them voice, I smothered them in the deepest recesses of my heart, while meantime the daily pressure that came on me in the studies and requirements of college life left me neither leisure nor inclination to pursue the researches that should clear them up.

To be sure, nothing is so important as the soul – nothing is of so much moment as religion, and the question "Is this God's book or is it not?" is the question of questions. It underlies all things, and he who is wise would drop all other things and

undergo any toil and make any studies that should fit him to judge understandingly on this point. But I speak from experience when I say that the course of study in christian America is so arranged that a boy, from the grammar school upward till he graduates, is so fully pressed and overladen with all other studies that there is no probability that he will find the time or the inclination for such investigation.

In most cases he will do just what I did, throw himself upon the studies proposed to him, work enough to meet the demands of the hour, and put off the acquisition of that more important knowledge to an indefinite future, and sigh, and go backward in his faith.

But without faith or with a faith trembling and uncertain, how is a man to turn his back on the world that is before him – the world that he can see, hear, touch and taste – to work for the world that is unseen and eternal?

I will not repeat the flattering words that often fell on my ear and said to me, "You can make your way anywhere; you can be anything you please." And then there were voices that said in my heart, "I may have wealth, and with it means of power, of culture, of taste, of luxury. If I only set out for that, I may get it." And then, in contrast, came that life I had seen my father live, in its grand simplicity, in its enthusiastic sincerity, in its exulting sense of joy in what he was doing, down to the last mortal moment, and I wished, oh, how fervently! that I could believe as he did. But to be a minister merely from a sense of duty – to bear the

burden of poverty with no perception of the unspeakable riches which Christ hath placed therein – who would not shrink from a life so grating and so cold? To choose the ministry as a pedestal for oratory and self-display and poetic religious sentiment, and thus to attain distinction and easy position, and the command of fashionable luxury, seemed to me a temptation to desecration still more terrible, and I dreaded the hour which should close my college life and make a decision inevitable.

It was with a sober and sad heart that I closed my college course and parted from class-mates – jolly fellows with whom had rolled away the four best years of my life – years that as one goes on afterwards in age look brighter and brighter in the distance. It was a lonesome and pokerish operation to dismantle the room that had long been my home, to bargain away my furniture, pack my books, and bid a final farewell to all the old quiddities and oddities that I had grown attached to in the quaint little village. The parting from Alma Mater is a second leaving of home – and this time for the great world. There is no staving off the battle of life now – the tents are struck, the camp-fires put out, and one must be on the march.

CHAPTER IX.
AN OUTLOOK INTO LIFE

My coming back to my native town was an event of public notoriety. I had won laurels, and as I was the village property, my laurels were duly commented on and properly appreciated. Highland was one of those thrifty Yankee settlements where every house seems to speak the people so well-to-do, and so careful, and progressive in all the means of material comfort. There was not a house in it that was not in a sort of healthy, growing state, receiving, from time to time, some accession that showed that the Yankee aspiration was busy, stretching and enlarging. This had a new bay-window, and that had a new veranda; the other, new, tight, white picket fences all round the yard. Others rejoiced in a fresh coat of paint. But all were alive, and apparently self-repairing. There was to every house the thrifty wood-pile, seasoning for winter; the clean garden, with its wealth of fruit and its gay borders of flowers; and every new kind of flower, and every choice new fruit, found somewhere a patron who was trying a hand at it.

Highland was a place worth living in just for its scenery. It was at that precise point of the country where the hills are inspiriting, vivacious, reminding one of the Psalm, – "The little hills rejoice on every side!" Mountains are grand, but they also are dreary. For

a near prospect they overpower too much, they shut out the sun, they have savage propensities, untamable by man, shown once in a while in land-slides and freshets; but these half-grown hills uplift one like waves of the sea. In summer they are wonderful in all possible shades of greenness; in autumn they are like a mystical rainbow – an ocean of waves, flamboyant with every wonderful device of color; and even when the leaves are gone, in November, and nothing left but the bristling steel-blue outlines of trees, there is a wonderful purple haze, a veil of dreamy softness, around them, that makes you think you never saw them so beautiful.

So I said to myself, as I came rambling over hill and dale back to the old homestead, and met my mother's bright face of welcome at the door. I was the hero of the hour at home, and everything had been prepared to make me welcome. My brother, who kept the homestead, had relinquished the prospect of a college life, and devoted himself to farming, but looked on me as the most favored of mortals in the attainments I had made. His young wife and growing family of children clustered around my mother and leaned on her experience; and as every one in the little village knew and loved her, there was a general felicitation and congratulation on the event of my return and my honors.

"See him in his father's pulpit afore long," said Deacon Manning, who called the first evening to pay his respects; "better try his hand at the weekly prayer meeting, and stir us up a bit."

"I think, Deacon," said I, "I shall have to be one of those that

learn in silence, awhile longer. I may come to be taught, but I certainly cannot teach."

"Well, now, that's modest for a young fellow that's just been through college! They commonly are as feathery and highflying as a this year's rooster, and ready to crow whether their voice breaks or not," said the deacon. "'Learn in silence!' Well, that 'ere beats all for a young man!"

I thought to myself that the good deacon little knew the lack of faith that was covered by my humility.

Since my father's death, my mother had made her home with my Uncle Jacob, her health was delicate, and she preferred to enjoy the honors of a grandmother at a little distance. My Uncle Jacob had no children. Aunt Polly, his wife, was just the softest, sleekest, most domestic dove of a woman whose wings were ever covered with silver. I always think of her in some soft, pearly silk, with a filmy cap, and a half-handkerchief crossed over a gentle, motherly bosom, soft moving, soft speaking, but with a pair of bright, hazel eyes, keen as arrows to send their glances into every place in her dominions. Let anybody try sending in a false account to Aunt Polly, and they will see that the brightness of her eyes was not merely for ornament. Yet everything she put her hand to went so exactly, so easily, you would have said those eyes were made for nothing but reading, for which Aunt Polly had a great taste, and for which she found abundance of leisure.

My mother and she were enjoying together a long and quiet Saturday afternoon of life, reading to each other, and quietly

and leisurely discussing all that they read, – not merely the last novel, as the fashion of women in towns and cities is apt to be, but all the solid works of philosophy and literature that marked the times. My uncle's house was like a bookseller's stall, – it was overrunning with books. The cases covered the walls; they crowded the corners and angles; and still every noteworthy book was ordered, to swell the stock.

My mother and aunt had read together Lecky, and Buckle, and Herbert Spencer, with the keen critical interest of fresh minds. Had it troubled their faith? Not in the least; no more than it would that of Mary on the morning after the resurrection! There is a certain moral altitude where faith becomes knowledge, and the bat-wings of doubt cannot fly so high. My mother was dwelling in that land of Beulah, where the sun always shineth, and the bells of the heavenly city are heard, and the shining ones walk. All was clear to her, all bright, all real, in "the beyond;" but that kind of evidence is above the realm of heavy-footed reason. The "joy unspeakable," the "peace that passeth understanding," are things that cannot be passed from hand to hand. Else I am quite sure my mother would have taken the crown of joy from her head and the peace from her bosom, and given them to me. But the "white stone with the new name" is Christ's gift to each for himself, and "no man knoweth it save he that receiveth it."

But these witnesses who stand gazing into heaven are not without their power on us who stand lower. It steadied my moral nerves, so to speak, that my mother had read and weighed the

words that were making so much doubt and shaking; that she fully comprehended them, and that she smiled without fear.

She listened without distress, without anxiety, to all my doubts and falterings. "You must pass through this; you will be led; it will all come right," she said; "and then perhaps you will be the guide of others."

I had feared to tell her that I had abandoned the purpose of the ministry, but I found it easy.

"I would not have you embrace the ministry for anything but a true love," she said, "any more than I would that you should marry a wife for any other reason. If ever the time comes that you feel you *must* be that, it will be your call; but you can be God's minister otherwise than through the pulpit."

"Talk over your plans with your uncle," she said; "he is in your father's place now."

In fact, my uncle, having no children of his own, had set his heart on me, and was disposed to make me heir, not only to his very modest personal estate, but also to his harvest of ideas and opinions, – all that backwater of thoughts and ideas that accumulate on the mind of a man who thinks and reads a great deal in a lonely neighborhood. So he took me up as a companion in his daily rides over the country.

"Well, Harry, where next?" he said to me the day after my return, as we were driving together. "What are you about? Going to try the ministry?"

"I dare not; I am not fit. I know father wanted it, and prayed

for it, and nothing would be such a joy to mother, but – "

My uncle gave a shrewd, sidelong glance on me.

"I suppose you are like a good many fellows; an education gives them a general shaking up, and all their beliefs break from their lashings and go rolling and tumbling about like spars and oil-casks in a storm on ship-board."

"I can't say that is true of all my beliefs; but yet a great many things that I tried to regard as certain are untied. I have too many doubts for a teacher."

"Who hasn't? I don't know anything in heaven or earth that forty unanswerable questions can't be asked about."

"You know," answered I, "Tennyson says,

> 'There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.'"

"H'm! that depends. Doubt is very well as a sort of constitutional crisis in the beginning of one's life; but if it runs on and gets to be chronic, it breaks a fellow up, and makes him morally spindling and sickly. Men that *do* anything in the world must be men of strong convictions; it won't do to go through life like a hen, craw-crawing and lifting up one foot, and not knowing where to set it down next."

"But," said I, "while I am passing through the constitutional crisis, as you call it, is the very time I must make up my mind to teach others on the most awful of all subjects. I cannot and dare

not. I must be a learner for some years to come, and I must be a learner without any pledges, expressed or implied, to find the truth this way or that." "Well," said my uncle; "I'm not so greatly concerned about that – the Lord needs other ministers besides those in the pulpit. Why, man, the sermons on the evidences of Christianity that have come home to me most have been preached by lay preachers in poor houses and lonely churches, by ignorant men and women, and little children." "There's old Aunt Sarah there," he said, pointing with his whip to a brown house in the distance, "that woman is dying of a cancer, that slowly eats away her life in lingering agony, and all her dependence is the work of a sickly, consumptive daughter, and yet she is more than resigned to her lot, she is so cheerful, so thankful, so hopeful, there is such a blessed calm peace, and rest, and sweetness in that house, that I love to go there. The influence of that woman is felt all through the village —*she* preaches to some purpose."

"Because she *knows* what she believes," I said.

"It was the same with your father, Harry. Now my boy," he added, turning to me with the old controversial twinkle in his eye, and speaking in a confidential tone – "The fact is, I never agreed with your father doctrinally, there were weak spots in his system all along, and I always told him so. I could trip him and floor him in an argument, and have done it a hundred times," he said, giving a touch to his horse.

I thought to myself that it was well enough that my father wasn't there to hear that statement, otherwise there would have

been an immediate tilting match, and the whole ground to be gone over.

"Yes," he said; "it wasn't mainly in your father's theology that his strength lay – it was the Christ in him – the great warm heart – his crystal purity and simplicity – his unworldly earnestness and honesty. He was a godly man and a manly man both, and he sowed seed all over this State that came up good men and good women. Yes, there are hundreds and hundreds in this State to-day that are good men and good women, mainly because he lived. *That's* what I call success in life, Harry, when a man carries himself so that he turns into seed-corn and makes a harvest of good people. You may upset a man's reasonings, and his theology may go to the dogs, but a brave Christian life you can't upset, it will tell. Now, Harry, are you going to try for that?"

"God helping me, I will," I said.

"You see, as to the theologies," he added, "I think it has been well said that the Christian world just now is like a ship that's tacking, it has lost the wind on one side and not quite got it on the other. The growth of society, the development of new physical laws, and this modern scientific rush of the human mind is going to modify the man-made theologies and creeds; some of them will drop away just as the blossom does when the fruit forms, but Christ's religion will be just the same as ever – his words will not pass away."

"But then," I said "there are a whole labyrinth of perplexing questions about this Bible. What is inspiration? What ground

does it cover? How much of all these books is inspired? What is their history? How came we by them? What evidence have we that the record gives us Christ's words uncorrupted?"

"If you had been brought up in Justin Martyr's time or the days of the primitive Christians you would have been put to study all these things first and foremost in your education, but we modern Christians, teach young men everything else except what we profess to think the most important; and so you come out of college ignorant, just where knowledge is most vital."

"Well, that is past praying for now," said I.

"Yes; but even now there is a way out – just as going through a bog you plant your foot hard on what land there is, and then take your bearings – so you must do here. The way to get rid of doubts in religion, is to go to work with all our might and *practice* what we *don't* doubt, and that you can do whatever your calling or profession."

"I shall certainly try," said I.

"For example," said my uncle, "There's the Sermon on the Mount. Nobody has any doubt about that, there it lies – plain enough, and enough of it – not a bit of what's called theology in it. Not a word of information to settle the mooted questions men wrangle over, but with a direct answer to just the questions any thoughtful man must want to have answered when he looks at life. Is there a Father in the heavens? Will he help us if we ask? May the troubles of life be our discipline? Is there a better life beyond? And how are we to get that? There is Christ's

philosophy of life in that sermon, and Christ's mode of dealing with actual existing society; and he who undertakes in good faith to square his heart and life by it will have his hands full. The world has been traveling eighteen hundred years and not come fully into the light of its meaning. There has never been a Christian state or a Christian nation, according to that. That document is in modern society just like a lump of soda in a tumbler of vinegar, it keeps up a constant commotion, and will do so till every particle of life is adjusted on its principles. The man who works out Christ's teachings into a palpable life-form, preaches Christianity, no matter what his trade or calling. He may be a coal heaver or he may be a merchant, or a lawyer, or an editor – he preaches all the same. Men always know it when they meet a bit of Christ's sermons walking out bodily in good deeds; they're not like worldly wisdom, and have a smack of something a good deal higher than common sense, but when people see it they say, "Yes – that's the true thing." Now one of our Presidents, General Harrison, found out on a certain day that through a flaw in the title deeds he was owner to half the city of Cincinnati. What does he do? Why, simply he says to himself, 'These people have paid their money in good faith, and I'll do by them as I'd be done by,' and he goes to a lawyer and has fresh deeds drawn out for the whole of 'em, and lived and died a poor, honest man. That action was a preaching of Christ's doctrine as I take it, and if you'll do as much whenever you get a chance, its no matter what calling you take for a pulpit. So now tell me what are you

thinking of setting yourself about?"

"I intend to devote myself to literature," said I. "I always had a facility for writing, while I never felt the call or impulse toward public speaking; and I think the field of current literature opens a wide scope. I have had already some success in having articles accepted and well spoken of, and have now some promising offers. I have an opportunity to travel in Europe as correspondent of two papers, and I shall study to improve myself. In time I may become an editor, and then perhaps at last proprietor of a paper. So runs my scheme of life, and I hope I shall be true to myself and my religion in it. I shall certainly try to. Current literature – the literature of newspapers and magazines, is certainly a power."

"A very great power, Harry," said my uncle; "and getting to be in our day a tremendous power, a power far outgoing that of the pulpit, and that of books. This constant daily self-asserting literature of newspapers and periodicals is acting on us tremendously for good or for ill. It has access to us at all hours and gets itself heard as a preacher cannot, and gets itself read as scarcely any book does. It ought to be entered into as solemnly as the pulpit, for it is using a great power. Yet just now it is power without responsibility. It is in the hands of men who come under no pledge, pass no examination, give no vouchers, though they hold a power more than that of all other professions or books united. One cannot be a doctor, or a lawyer, or a minister, unless some body of his fellows looks into his fitness to serve society in these ways; but one may be turned loose to talk in every

family twice a day, on every subject, sacred and profane, and say anything he chooses without even the safeguard of a personal responsibility. He shall speak from behind a screen and not be known. Now you know old Dante says that the souls in the other world were divided into three classes, those who were for God and those who were for the Devil, and those who were for neither, but for themselves. It seems to me that there's a vast many of these latter at work in our press – smart literary adventurers, who don't care a copper what they write up or what they write down, wholly indifferent which side of a question they sustain, so they do it smartly, and ready to sell their wit, their genius and their rhetoric to the highest bidder. Now, Harry, I'd rather see you a poor, threadbare, hard-worked, country minister than the smartest and brightest fellow that ever kept his talents on sale in Vanity Fair."

"Well," said I, "isn't it just here that your principle of living out a Gospel should come? Must there not be writers for the press who believe in the Sermon on the Mount, and who are pledged to get its principles into life-forms as fast as they can?"

"Yea, verily," said my uncle; "but do you mean to keep faithful to that? You have, say, a good knack at English; you can write stories, and poems, and essays; you have a turn for humor; and now comes the Devil to you and says, Show me up the weak points of those reformers; raise a laugh at those temperance men, – those religionists, who, like all us poor human trash, are running religion, and morals, and progress into the

ground.' You can succeed; you can carry your world with you. You see, if Virtue came straight down from Heaven with her white wings and glistening robes, and always conducted herself just like an angel, our trial in life wouldn't be so great as it is. But she doesn't. Human virtue is more apt to appear like a bewildered, unprotected female, encumbered with all sorts of irregular bandboxes, dusty, disheveled, out of fashion, and elbowing her way with ungainly haste and ungraceful postures. You know there are stories of powerful fairies who have appeared in this way among men, to try their hearts; and those who protect them when they are feeble and dishonored, they reward when they are glorious. Now, your smart, flippant, second-rate wits never have the grace to honor Truth when she loses her way, and gets bewildered and dusty, and they drive a flourishing business in laughing down the world's poor efforts to grow better."

"I think," said I, "that we Americans have one brilliant example of a man who had keen humor, and used it on the Christian side. The animus of the "Biglow Papers" is the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount translated into the language of Yankee life, and defended with wit and drollery."

"You say truth, Harry, and it was no small thing to do it; for the Anti-Slavery cause then was just in that chaotic state in which every strange bird and beast, every shaggy, irregular, unkempt reformer, male and female, were flocking to it, and there was capital scope for caricature and ridicule; and all the fastidious, and conservative, and soft-handed, and even-stepping

people were measureless in their contempt for this shocking rabble. Lowell stood between them and the world, and fought the battle with weapons that the world could understand. There was a Gospel truth in and it did what no sermon could; this is the more remarkable because he used for the purpose a harlequin faculty, that has so often been read out of meeting and excommunicated that the world had come to look at it as ex-officio of the Devil. Whittier and Longfellow made valiant music of the solemn sort, but Lowell evangelized wit."

'John P. Robinson, he,'

"The fortunate man," said I, "to have used a great opportunity!"

"Harry, the only way to be a real man, is to have a cause you care for more than yourself. That made your father – that made your New England Fathers – that raises literature above some child's play, and makes it manly – but if you would do it you must count on one thing – that the devil will tempt you in the outset with the bread question as he did the Lord.

"Command that these stones be made bread;"

is the first onset – you'll want money, and money will be offered for what you ought not to write. There's the sensational

novel, the blood and murder and adultery story, of which modern literature is full – you can produce it – do it perhaps as well as anybody – it will sell. Will you be barkeeper to the public, and when the public call for hot brandy sling give it to them, and help them make brutes of themselves? Will you help to vulgarize and demoralize literature if it will pay?"

"No;" said I, "not if I know myself."

"Then you've got to begin life with some motive higher than to make money, or get a living, and you'll have sometimes to choose between poisonous nonsense that brings pay, and honest truth that nobody wants."

"And I must tell the Devil that there is a higher life than the bread-life?" said I.

"Yes; get above that, to begin with. Remember the story of General Marion, who invited some British officers to dine with him and gave them nothing but roasted potatoes. They went away and said it was in vain to try to conquer a people when their officers would live on such fare rather than give up the cause. Do you know, Harry, what is my greatest hope for this State? It's this: Two or three years ago there was urgent need to carry this State in an election, and there was no end of hard money sent up to buy votes among our poor farmers: but they couldn't be bought. They had learned, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' to some purpose. The State went all straight for liberty. What I ask of any man who wants to do a life-work is ability to be happy on a little."

"Well," said I, "I have been brought up to that. I have no expensive habits. I neither drink nor smoke. I am used to thinking definitely as to figures, and I am willing to work hard, and begin at the bottom of the ladder, but I mean to keep my conscience and my religion, and lend a helping hand to the good cause wherever I can."

"Well, now, my boy, there're only two aids that you need for this – one is God, and the other is a true, good woman. God you will have, but the woman – she must be found."

I felt the touch on a sore spot, and so answered, purposely misunderstanding his meaning. "Yes, I have not to go far for her – my mother."

"Oh yes, my boy – thank God for her; but Harry, you can't take her away from this place; her roots have spread here; they are matted and twined with the very soil; they run under every homestead and embrace every grave. She is so interwoven with this village that she could not take root elsewhere, beside that, Harry, look at the clock of life – count the years, sixty-five, sixty-six, sixty-seven, and the clock never stops! Her hair is all white now, and that snow will melt by and by, and she will be gone upward. God grant I may go first, Harry."

"And I, too," said I, fervently. "I could not live without her."

"You must find one like her, Harry. It is not good for man to be alone; we all need the motherly, and we must find it in a wife. Do you know what I think the prettiest story of courtship I ever read? Its the account of Jacob's marriage with Rebecca, away back in

the simple old times. You remember the ending of it, – 'And Isaac brought her into her mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebecca and she became his wife, and Isaac was comforted for his mother's death.' There's the philosophy of it," he added; "it's the mother living again in the wife. The motherly instinct is in the hearts of all true women, and sooner or later the true wife becomes a mother to her husband; she guides him, cares for him, teaches him, and catechises him all in the nicest way possible. Why I'm sure I never should know how to get along a day without Polly to teach me the requirings and forbiddens of the commandments; to lecture me for going out without my muffler, and see that I put on my flannels in the right time; to insist that I shall take something for my cough, and raise a rebellion to my going out when there's a north-easter. So much for the body, and as for the soul-life, I believe it is woman who holds faith in the world – it is woman behind the wall, casting oil on the fire that burns brighter and brighter, while the Devil pours on water; and you'll never get Christianity out of the earth while there's a woman in it. I'd rather have my wife's and your mother's opinion on the meaning of a text of Scripture than all the doctors of divinity, and their faith is an anchor that always holds. Some jackanapes or other I read once, said every woman wanted a master, and was as forlorn without a husband as a masterless dog. Its a great, deal truer that every man wants a mother; men are more forlorn than masterless dogs, a great deal, when no woman cares for them. Look at the homes single women make for themselves; how neat, how cosy,

how bright with the oil of gladness, and then look at old bachelor dens! The fact is, women are born comfort-makers, and can get along by themselves a great deal better than we can."

"Well," said I, "I don't think I shall ever marry. Of course if I could find a woman like my mother, it would be another thing. But times are altered – the women of this day are all for flash and ambition, and money. There are no more such as you used to find in the old days."

"Oh, nonsense, Harry; don't come to me with that sort of talk. Bad sort for a young man – very. What I want to see in a young fellow is a resolution to have a good wife and a home of his own as quick as he can find it. The Roman Catholics weren't so far out of the way when they said marriage was a sacrament. It is the greatest sacrament of life, and that old church does yeoman service to humanity in the stand she takes for Christian marriage. I should call that the most prosperous state when all the young men and women were well mated and helping one another according to God's ordinances. You may be sure, Harry, that you can never be a whole man without a wife."

"Well," I said; "there's time enough for that by and by; if I'm predestinated I suppose it'll come along when I have my fortune made."

"Don't wait to be rich, Harry. Find a faithful, heroic friend that will strike hands with you, poor, and begin to build up your nest together, – that's the way your father and mother did, and who enjoyed more? That's the way your Aunt Polly and I did,

and a good time we have had of it. There has always been the handful of meal in the barrel and the little oil in the cruse, and if the way we have always lived is poverty, all I have to say is, poverty is a pretty nice thing."

"But," said I, bitterly, "you talk of golden ages. There are no such women now as you found, the women now are mere effeminate dolls of fashion – all they want is ease and show, and luxury, and they care nothing who gives it – one man is as good as another if he is only rich."

"Tut, tut, boy! Don't you read your Bible? Away back in Solomon's time, it's written, 'Who can find a virtuous woman? Her price is above rubies.' Are rubies found without looking for them, and do diamonds lie about the street? Now, just attend to my words – brave men make noble women, and noble women make brave men. Be a true man first, and some day a true woman will be given you. Yes, a woman whose opinion of you will hold you up if all the world were against you, and whose 'Well done!' will be a better thing to come home to, than the senseless shouting of the world who scream for this thing to-day and that to-morrow."

By this time the horse had turned up the lane, and my mother stood smiling in the door. I marked the soft white hair that shone like a moonlight glory round her head, and prayed inwardly that the heavens would spare her yet a little longer.

CHAPTER X
COUSIN CAROLINE

"You must go and see your cousin Caroline," said my mother, the first evening after I got home; "you've no idea how pretty she's grown."

"She's what I call a pattern girl," said my uncle Jacob, "a girl that can make the most of life."

"She is a model housekeeper and manager," said Aunt Polly.

Now if Aunt Polly called a girl a model house-keeper, it was the same for her that it would be for a man to receive a doctorate from a college; in fact it would be a good deal more, as Aunt Polly was one who always measured her words, and never said anything *pro forma*, or without having narrowly examined the premises.

Elderly people who live in happy matrimony are in a gentle way disposed to be match-makers. If they have sense, as my elders did, they do not show this disposition in any very pronounced way. They never advise a young man directly to try his fortune with "So and so," knowing that that would, in nine cases out of ten, be the direct way to defeat their purpose. So my mother's gentle suggestion, and my uncle Jacob's praise, and Aunt Polly's endorsement, were simply in the line of the most natural remarks.

Cousin Caroline was the daughter of Uncle Jacob's brother,

the only daughter in the family. Her father was one of those men most useful and necessary in society, composed of virtues and properties wholly masculine. He was strong, energetic, shrewd, acridly conscientious, and with an intensity of self-will and love of domination. This rugged rock, all granite, had won a tender woman to nestle and flower in some crevice of his heart and she had clothed him with a garland of sons and one flower of a daughter. Within a year or two her death had left this daughter the mistress of her father's family. I remembered Caroline of old, as my school companion; the leading scholar, in every study, always good natured, steady, and clear-headed, ready to help me when I faltered in a translation, or the solution of an algebraic problem. In those days I never thought of her as pretty. There were the outlines and rudiments, which might bloom into beauty, but thin, pale, colorless, and deficient in roundness and grace.

I had seen very little of Caroline through my college life; we had exchanged occasionally a cousinly letter, but in my last vacation she was away upon a visit. I was not, therefore, prepared for the vision which bloomed out upon me from the singer's seat, when I looked up on Sunday and saw her, standing in a shaft of sunlight that lit up her whole form with a kind of glory. I rubbed my eyes with astonishment, as I saw there a very beautiful woman, and beautiful in quite an uncommon style, one which promised a more lasting continuance of personal attraction than is usual with our New England girls. I own, that a head and bust of the Venus de Milo type; a figure at once graceful, yet ample

in its proportions; a rich, glowing bloom, speaking of health and vigor, – gave a new radiance to eyes that I had always admired, in days when I never had thought of even raising the question of Caroline's beauty. These charms were set off, too, by a native talent for dress, – that sort of instinctive gift that some women have of arranging their toilet so as exactly to suit their own peculiar style. There was nothing fussy, or furbelowed, or gaudy, as one often sees in the dress of a country beauty, but a grand and severe simplicity, which in her case was the very perfection of art.

My Uncle Ebenezer Simmons lived at a distance of nearly two miles from our house, but that evening, after tea, I announced to my mother that I was going to take a walk over to see cousin Caroline. I perceived that the movement was extremely popular and satisfactory in the eyes of all the domestic circle.

Whose thoughts do not travel in this direction, I wonder, in a small country neighborhood? Here comes Harry Henderson home from college, with his laurels on his brow, and here is the handsomest girl in the neighborhood, a pattern of all the virtues. What is there to be done, except that they should straightway fall in love with each other, and taking hold of hands walk up the Hill Difficulty together? I presume that no good gossip in our native village saw any other arrangement of our destiny as possible or probable.

I may just as well tell my readers first as last, that we did not fall in love with each other, though we were the very best friends

possible, and I spent nearly half my time at my uncle's house, besetting her at all hours, and having the best possible time in her society; but our relations were as frankly and clearly those of brother and sister as if we had been children of one mother.

For a beautiful woman, Caroline had the least of what one may call legitimate coquetry, of any person I ever saw. There are some women, and women of a high class too, who seem to take a natural and innocent pleasure in the power which their sex enables them to exercise over men, and who instinctively do a thousand things to captivate and charm one of the opposite sex, even when they would greatly regret winning his whole heart. If well principled and instructed they try to keep themselves under control, but they still do a thousand ensnaring things, for no other reason, that I can see, than that it is their nature, and they cannot help it. If they have less principle this faculty becomes then available power, by which they can take possession of all that a man has, and use it to carry their own plans and purposes.

Of this power, whatever it may be, Caroline had nothing; nay, more, she despised it, and received the admiration and attentions which her beauty drew from the opposite sex, with a coldness, in some instances amounting to incivility.

With me she had been from the first so frankly, cheerfully and undisguisedly affectionate and kind, and with such a straightforward air of comradeship and a literal ignoring of everything sentimental, that the very ground of anything like love-making did not seem to exist between us. The last evening

before I was to leave for my voyage to Europe, I spent with her, and she gave me a curiously-wrought traveling-case, in which there was a pocket for any imaginable thing that a bachelor might be supposed to want on his travels.

"I wish I could go with you," she said to me, with an energy quite out of her usual line.

"I am sure I wish you could," said I; and what with the natural softness of heart that a young man feels, when he is plunging off from the safe ground of home into the world and partly from the unwonted glow of feeling that came over Caroline's face, as she spoke, I felt quite a rush of emotion, and said, as I kissed her hand, "Why didn't we think of this before, Caroline?"

"Oh, nonsense, Henry; don't you be sentimental, of all things," she replied briskly, withdrawing her hand. "Of course, I didn't mean anything more than that I wished I was a young fellow like you, free to take my staff and bundle, and make my way in the great world. Why couldn't I be?"

"*You*," said I, "Caroline, you, with your beauty and your talents, – I think you might be satisfied with a woman's lot in life."

"A woman's lot! and what is that, pray? to sit with folded hands and see life drifting by – to be a mere nullity, and endure to have my good friends pat me on the back, and think I am a bright and shining light of contentment in woman's sphere?"

"But," said I, "you know, Caroline, that there is always a possibility in woman's destiny, especially a woman so beautiful

as you are."

"You mean marriage. Well, perhaps if I could do as you can, go all over the world, examine and search for the one I want, and find him, the case would be somewhat equal; but my chances are only among those who propose to me. Now, I have read in the Arabian Nights of princesses so beautiful that men came in regiments, to seek the honor of their hand; but such things don't occur in our times in New England villages. My list for selection must be confined to such of the eligible men in this neighborhood as are in want of wives; men who want wives as they do cooking-stoves, and make up their minds that I may suit them. By the by, I have been informed already of one who has had me under consideration, and concluded *not* to take me. Silas Boardman, I understand, has made up his mind, and informed his sisters of the fact, that I am altogether too dressy in my taste for his limited means, and besides that I am too free and independent; so that door is closed to me, you'll observe. Silas won't have me!"

"The conceited puppy!" said I.

"Well, isn't that the common understanding among men – that all the marriageable girls in their neighborhood are on exhibition for their convenience? If the very first idea of marriage with any one of them were not so intensely disagreeable to me, I would almost be willing to let some of them ask me, just to hear what I could tell them. Now you know, Harry, I put *you* out of the case, because you are my cousin, and I no more think of you in that way than if you were my brother, but, frankly, I never yet

saw the man that I could by any stretch of imagination conceive of my wanting, or being willing to marry; I know no man that it wouldn't be an untold honor to me to be doomed to marry. I would rather scrub floors on my knees for a living."

"But you do see happy marriages."

"Oh, yes, dear souls, of course I do, and am glad of it, and wonder and admire; yes, I see some happy marriages. There's Uncle Jacob and his wife, kind old souls, two dear old pigeons of the sanctuary! – how charmingly they get along! and your father and mother – they seemed one soul; it really was encouraging to see that people could live so."

"But you musn't be too ideal, Caroline; you musn't demand too much of a man."

"Demand? I don't demand anything of any man, I only want to be let alone. I don't want to wait for a husband to make me a position, I want to make one for myself; I don't want to take a husband's money, I want my own. You have individual ideas of life, you want to work them out; so have I: you are expected and encouraged to work them out independently, while I am forbidden. Now, what would you say if somebody told you to sit down quietly in the domestic circle and read to your mother, and keep the wood split and piled, and the hearth swept, and diffuse a sweet perfume of domestic goodness, like the violet amid its leaves, till by and by some woman should come and give you a fortune and position, and develop your affections, – how would you like that? Now the case with me is just here, I am, if you

choose to say it, so ideal and peculiar in my views that there is no reasonable prospect that I shall ever marry, but I want a position, a house and home of my own, and a sphere of independent action, and everybody thinks this absurd and nobody helps me. As long as mother was alive, there was some consolation in feeling that I was everything to her. Poor soul! she had a hard life, and I was her greatest pride and comfort, but now she is gone, there is nothing I do for my father that a good, smart housekeeper could not be hired to do; but you see that would cost money, and the money that I thus save is invested without consulting me: it goes to buy more rocky land, when we have already more than we know what to do with. I sacrifice all my tastes, I stunt my growth mentally and intellectually to this daily tread-mill of house and dairy, and yet I have not a cent that I can call my own, I am a servant working for board and clothes, and because I am a daughter I am expected to do it cheerfully; my only escape from this position is to take a similar one in the family of some man to whom, in addition to the superintendence of his household, I shall owe the personal duties of a wife, and *that* way out you may know I shall never take. So you are sure to find me ten or twenty years hence a fixture in this neighborhood, spoken of familiarly as 'old Miss Caroline Simmons,' a cross-pious old maid, held up as a warning to contumacious young beauties how they neglect their first gracious offer. 'Caroline was a handsome gal in her time,' they'll say, 'but she was too perticklar, and now her day is over and she's left an old maid. She held her head too high

and said "No" a little too often; ye see, gals better take their fust chances.'"

"After all, cousin," I said, "though we men are all unworthy sinners, yet sometimes you women do yield to much persuasion, and take some one out of pity."

"I can't do that; in fact I have tried to do it, and can't. This desperate dullness, and restraint, and utter paralysis of progress that lies like a nightmare on one, is a dreadful temptation; when a man offers you a fortune, which will give you ease, leisure, and power to follow all your tastes and a certain independent stand, such as unmarried women cannot take, it is a great temptation."

"But you resisted it!"

"Well, I was sorely tried; there were things I wanted desperately – a splendid house in Boston, pictures, carriages, servants, – oh, I did want them; I wanted the éclat, too, of a rich marriage, but I couldn't; the man was too good a man to be trifled with; if he would only have been a good uncle or grandpa I would have loved him dearly, and been ever so devoted, kept his house beautifully, waited on him like a dutiful daughter, read to him, sung to him, nursed him, been the best friend in the world to him, but his *wife* I could not be; the very idea of it made the worthy creature perfectly repulsive and hateful to me."

"Did you ever try to tell your father how you feel?"

"Of what earthly use? There are people in this world who don't understand each other's vernacular. Papa and I could no more discuss any question of the inner life together than if he

spoke Chickasaw and I spoke French. Papa has a respect for my practical efficiency and business talent, and in a certain range of ideas we get on well together. He thinks I have made a great mistake, and that there is a crack in my head somewhere, but he says nothing; his idea is that I have let slip the only chance of my life, but still, as I am a great convenience at home, he is reconciled. I suppose all my friends mourn in secret places over me, and I should have been applauded and commended on all hands if I had done it; but, after all, wouldn't it be a great deal more honest, more womanly, more like a reasonable creature, for me to do just what you are doing, fit myself to make my own way, and make an independence for myself? Really it isn't honest to take a position where you know you can't give the main thing asked for, and keep out somebody perhaps who can. My friend has made himself happy with a woman who perfectly adores him, and ought to be much obliged to me that I didn't take him at his word; good, silly soul that he was."

"But, after all, the Prince may come – the fated knight – Caroline."

"And deliver the distressed damsel?" she said, laughing. "Well, when he comes I'll show him my 'swan's nest among the reeds.' Soberly, the fact is, cousin," she said, "you men don't know us women. In the first place they say that there are more of us born than there are of you: and that doesn't happen merely to give you a good number to choose from, and enable every widower to find a supernumerary; it is because it was meant

that some women should lead a life different from the domestic one. The womanly nature can be of use otherwhere besides in marriage, in our world. To be sure, for the largest class of women there is nothing like marriage, and I suppose the usages of society are made for the majority, and exceptional people mustn't grumble if they don't find things comfortable; but I am persuaded that there is a work and a way for those who cannot marry."

"Well, there's Uncle Jacob has just been preaching to me that no *man* can be developed fully without a wife," said I.

"Uncle Jacob has matrimony on the brain! it's lucky he isn't a despotic Czar or, I believe, he'd marry all the men and women, *wille nille*. I grant that the rare, real marriage, that occurs one time in a hundred, is the true ideal state for man and woman, but it doesn't follow that all and everything that brings man and woman together in marriage is blessed, and I take my stand on St. Paul's doctrine that there are both men and women called to some higher state; now, it seems to me that the number of these increases with the advancement of society. Marriage requires so close an intimacy that there must be perfect agreement and sympathy; the lower down in the scale of being one is, the fewer distinctive points there are of difference or agreement. It is easier for John and Patrick, and Bridget and Katy, to find comfortable sympathy and agreement than it is for those far up in the scale of life where education has developed a thousand individual tastes and peculiarities. We read in history of the Rape of the Sabines, and how the women thus carried off at hap-hazard took so

kindly to their husbands that they wouldn't be taken back again. Such things are only possible in the barbarous stages of society, when characters are very rudimentary and simple. If a similar experiment were made on women of the cultivated classes in our times I fancy some of the men would be killed; I know *one* would," – she said with an energetic grasp of her little fist and a flash out of her eyes.

"But the ideal marriage is the thing to be sought," said I.

"For you, who are born with the right to seek, it *is* the thing to be sought," she said; "for me, who am born to wait till I am sought by exactly the right one, the chances are so infinitesimal that they ought not to be considered; I may have a fortune left me, and die a millionaire; there is no actual impossibility in *that* thing's happening – it is a thing that has happened to people who expected it as little as I do – but it would be the height of absurdity to base any calculation upon it and yet all the arrangements that are made about me and for me, are made on the presumption that I am to marry. I went to Uncle Jacob and tried to get him to take me through a course of medical study, to fit me for a professional life, and it was impossible to get him to take any serious view of it, or to believe what I said; he seemed really to think I was plotting to upset the Bible and the Constitution, in planning for an independent life."

"After all, Caroline, you must pardon me if I say that it does not seem possible that a woman like you will be allowed – that is you know – you will – well – find somebody – that is, you will

be less exacting by and by."

"Exacting! why do you use that word, when I don't exact anything? I am not so very ideal in my tastes, I am only *individual*; I must have in myself a certain feeling towards this possible individual, and I don't find it. In one case certainly I asked myself why I didn't? The man was all he should be, I didn't object to him in the slightest degree as a man; but looked on respecting the marriage relation, he was simply intolerable. It must be that I have no vocation to marry, and yet I want what any live woman wants; I want something of my own; I want a life-work worth doing; I want a home of my own; I want money that I can use as I please, that I can give and withhold, and dispose of as absolutely *mine*, and not another's; and the world seems all arranged so as to hinder my getting it. If a man wants to get an education there are colleges with rich foundations, where endowments have been heaped up, and scholarships founded, to enable him to prepare for life at reasonable expense. There are no such for women, and their schools, such as they are, infinitely poorer than those given to men, involve double the expense. If you ask a professional man to teach you privately, he laughs at you, compliments you, and sends you away with the feeling that he considers you a silly, cracked-brain girl, or perhaps an unsuccessful angler in matrimonial waters; he seems to think that there is no use teaching you, because you will throw down all, and run for the first man that beckons to you. That sort of presumption is insufferable to me."

"Oh, well, Carrie, you know those old Doctors, they get a certain jog-trot way of arranging human life; and then men that are happily married are in such bliss, and such women-worshipers that they cannot make up their mind that anybody they care about should not enter their paradise."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.