

Stowe Harriet Beecher

The Minister's Wooing



Harriet Stowe
The Minister's Wooing

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23156131

The Minister's Wooing:

ISBN <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/47958>

Содержание

INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	18
CHAPTER III	31
CHAPTER IV.	42
CHAPTER V.	64
CHAPTER VI.	80
CHAPTER VII.	93
CHAPTER VIII.	109
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	123

Harriet Beecher Stowe

The Minister's Wooing

INTRODUCTION

The author has endeavoured in this story to paint a style of life and manners which existed in New England in the earlier days of her national existence.

Some of the principal characters are historic: the leading events of the story are founded on actual facts, although the author has taken the liberty to arrange and vary them for the purposes of the story.

The author has executed the work with a reverential tenderness for those great and religious minds who laid in New England the foundations of many generations, and for those institutions and habits of life from which, as from a fruitful germ, sprang all the present prosperity of America.

Such as it is, it is commended to the kindly thoughts of that British fireside from which the fathers and mothers of America first went out to give to English ideas and institutions a new growth in a new world.

H. B. STOWE.

18 Montague Street, Russell Square,

August 25, 1859.

CHAPTER I

Mrs. Katy Scudder had invited Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Jones, and Deacon Twitchel's wife to take tea with her on the afternoon of June second, A. D. 17 – .

When one has a story to tell, one is always puzzled which end of it to begin at. You have a whole corps of people to introduce that *you* know and your reader doesn't; and one thing so presupposes another, that, whichever way you turn your patchwork, the figures still seem ill-arranged. The small item that I have given will do as well as any other to begin with, as it certainly will lead you to ask, 'Pray, who was Mrs. Katy Scudder?' – and this will start me systematically on my story.

You must understand that in the then small seaport-town of Newport, at that time unconscious of its present fashion and fame, there lived nobody in those days who did not know 'the Widow Scudder.'

In New England settlements a custom has obtained, which is wholesome and touching, of ennobling the woman whom God has made desolate, by a sort of brevet rank which continually speaks for her as a claim on the respect and consideration of the community. The Widow Jones, or Brown, or Smith, is one of the fixed institutions of every New England village, – and doubtless the designation acts as a continual plea for one whom bereavement, like the lightning of heaven, has made sacred.

The Widow Scudder, however, was one of the sort of women who reign queens in whatever society they move in; nobody was more quoted, more deferred to, or enjoyed more unquestioned position than she. She was not rich, – a small farm, with a modest, ‘gambrel-roofed,’ one-story cottage, was her sole domain; but she was one of the much-admired class who, in the speech of New England, are said to have ‘faculty,’ – a gift which, among that shrewd people, commands more esteem than beauty, riches, learning, or any other worldly endowment. *Faculty* is Yankee for *savoir faire*, and the opposite virtue to shiftlessness. Faculty is the greatest virtue, and shiftlessness the greatest vice, of Yankee man and woman. To her who has faculty nothing shall be impossible. She shall scrub floors, wash, wring, bake, brew, and yet her hands shall be small and white; she shall have no perceptible income, yet always be handsomely dressed; she shall not have a servant in her house, – with a dairy to manage, hired men to feed, a boarder or two to care for, unheard-of pickling and preserving to do, – and yet you commonly see her every afternoon sitting at her shady parlour-window behind the lilacs, cool and easy, hemming muslin cap-strings, or reading the last new book. She who hath faculty is never in a hurry, never behindhand. She can always step over to distressed Mrs. Smith, whose jelly won’t come, – and stop to show Mrs. Jones how she makes her pickles so green, – and be ready to watch with poor old Mrs. Simpkins, who is down with the rheumatism.

Of this genus was the Widow Scudder, – or, as the neighbours

would have said of her, she that *was* Katy Stephens. Katy was the only daughter of a shipmaster, sailing from Newport harbour, who was wrecked off the coast one cold December night, and left small fortune to his widow and only child. Katy grew up, however, a tall, straight, black-eyed girl, with eyebrows drawn true as a bow, a foot arched like a Spanish woman's, and a little hand which never saw the thing it could not do, – quick of speech, ready of wit, and, as such girls have a right to be, somewhat positive withal. Katy could harness a chaise, or row a boat; she could saddle and ride any horse in the neighbourhood; she could cut any garment that ever was seen or thought of; make cake, jelly, and wine, from her earliest years, in most precocious style; all without seeming to derange a sort of trim, well-kept air of ladyhood that sat jauntily on her.

Of course, being young and lively, she had her admirers, and some well-to-do in worldly affairs laid their lands and houses at Katy's feet; but, to the wonder of all, she would not even pick them up to look at them. People shook their heads, and wondered whom Katy Stephens expected to get, and talked about going through the wood to pick up a crooked stick, – till one day she astonished her world by marrying a man that nobody ever thought of her taking.

George Scudder was a grave, thoughtful young man, – not given to talking, and silent in the society of women, with that kind of reverential bashfulness which sometimes shows a pure, unworldly nature. How Katy came to fancy him everybody

wondered, – for he never talked to her, never so much as picked up her glove when it fell, never asked her to ride or sail; in short, everybody said she must have wanted him from sheer wilfulness, because he of all the young men of the neighbourhood never courted her. But Katy, having very sharp eyes, saw some things that nobody else saw. For example, you must know she discovered by mere accident that George Scudder always was looking at her, wherever she moved, though he looked away in a moment if discovered, – and that an accidental touch of her hand or brush of her dress would send the blood into his cheek like the spirit in the tube of a thermometer; and so, as women are curious, you know, Katy amused herself with investigating the causes of these little phenomena, and, before she knew it, got her foot caught in a cobweb that held her fast, and constrained her, whether she would or no, to marry a poor man that nobody cared much for but herself.

George was, in truth, one of the sort who evidently have made some mistake in coming into this world at all, as their internal furniture is in no way suited to its general courses and currents. He was of the order of dumb poets, – most wretched when put to the grind of the hard and actual; for if he who would utter poetry stretches out his hand to a gainsaying world, he is worse off still who is possessed with the desire of living it. Especially is this the case if he be born poor, and with a dire necessity upon him of making immediate efforts in the hard and actual. George had a helpless invalid mother to support; so, though he

loved reading and silent thought above all things, he put to instant use the only convertible worldly talent he possessed, which was a mechanical genius, and shipped at sixteen as a ship-carpenter. He studied navigation in the fore-castle, and found in its calm diagrams and tranquil eternal signs food for his thoughtful nature, and a refuge from the brutality and coarseness of sea life. He had a healthful, kindly animal nature, and so his inwardness did not ferment and turn to Byronic sourness and bitterness; nor did he needlessly parade to everybody in his vicinity the great gulf which lay between him and them. He was called a good fellow, – only a little lumpish, – and as he was brave and faithful, he rose in time to be a shipmaster. But when came the business of making money, the aptitude for accumulating, George found himself distanced by many a one with not half his general powers.

What shall a man do with a sublime tier of moral faculties, when the most profitable business out of his port is the slave-trade? So it was in Newport in those days. George's first voyage was on a slaver, and he wished himself dead many a time before it was over, – and ever after would talk like a man beside himself if the subject was named. He declared that the gold made in it was distilled from human blood, from mothers' tears, from the agonies and dying groans of gasping, suffocating men and women, and that it would sear and blister the soul of him that touched it: in short, he talked as whole-souled, unpractical fellows are apt to talk about what respectable people sometimes do. Nobody had ever instructed him that a slave-ship, with

a procession of expectant sharks in its wake, is a missionary institution, by which closely-packed heathens are brought over to enjoy the light of the gospel.

So, though George was acknowledged to be a good fellow, and honest as the noon-mark on the kitchen floor, he let slip so many chances of making money as seriously to compromise his reputation among thriving folks. He was wastefully generous, – insisted on treating every poor dog that came in his way, in any foreign port, as a brother, – absolutely refused to be party in cheating or deceiving the heathen on any shore, or in skin of any colour, – and also took pains, as far as in him lay, to spoil any bargains which any of his subordinates founded on the ignorance or weakness of his fellow-men. So he made voyage after voyage, and gained only his wages and the reputation among his employers of an incorruptibly honest fellow.

To be sure, it was said that he carried out books in his ship, and read and studied, and wrote observations on all the countries he saw, which Parson Smith told Miss Dolly Persimmon would really do credit to a printed book; but then they never *were* printed, or, as Miss Dolly remarked of them, they never seemed to come to anything – and coming to anything, as she understood it, meant standing in definite relations to bread and butter.

George never cared, however, for money. He made enough to keep his mother comfortable, and that was enough for him, till he fell in love with Katy Stephens. He looked at her through those glasses which such men carry in their souls, and she was a

mortal woman no longer, but a transfigured, glorified creature, – an object of awe and wonder. He was actually afraid of her; her glove, her shoe, her needle, thread, and thimble, her bonnet-string, everything, in short, she wore or touched became invested with a mysterious charm. He wondered at the impudence of men that could walk up and talk to her, – that could ask her to dance with such an assured air. *Now* he wished he were rich; he dreamed impossible chances of his coming home a millionaire to lay unknown wealth at Katy's feet; and when Miss Persimmon, the ambulatory dressmaker of the neighbourhood, in making up a new black gown for his mother, recounted how Captain Blatherem had sent Katy Stephens "most the splendidest India shawl that ever she did see," he was ready to tear his hair at the thought of his poverty. But even in that hour of temptation he did not repent that he had refused all part and lot in the ship by which Captain Blatherem's money was made, for he knew every timber of it to be seasoned by the groans and saturated with the sweat of human agony. True love is a natural sacrament; and if ever a young man thanks God for having saved what is noble and manly in his soul, it is when he thinks of offering it to the woman he loves. Nevertheless, the India-shawl story cost him a night's rest; nor was it till Miss Persimmon had ascertained, by a private confabulation with Katy's mother, that she had indignantly rejected it, and that she treated the captain 'real ridiculous,' that he began to take heart. 'He ought not,' he said, 'to stand in her way now, when he had nothing to offer. No,

he would leave Katy free to do better, if she could; he would try his luck, and if, when he came home from the next voyage, Katy was disengaged, why, then he would lay all at her feet.'

And so George was going to sea with a secret shrine in his soul, at which he was to burn unsuspected incense.

But, after all, the mortal maiden whom he adored suspected this private arrangement, and contrived – as women will – to get her own key into the lock of his secret temple; because, as girls say, 'she was *determined* to know what was there.' So, one night, she met him quite accidentally on the sea-sands, struck up a little conversation, and begged him in such a pretty way to bring her a spotted shell from the South Sea, like the one on his mother's mantelpiece, and looked so simple and childlike in saying it, that our young man very imprudently committed himself by remarking, that, 'When people had rich friends to bring them all the world from foreign parts, he never dreamed of her wanting so trivial a thing.'

Of course Katy 'didn't know what he meant, – she hadn't heard of any rich friends.' And then came something about Captain Blatherem; and Katy tossed her head, and said, 'If anybody wanted to insult her, they might talk to her about Captain Blatherem,' – and then followed this, that, and the other, till finally, as you might expect, out came all that never was to have been said; and Katy was almost frightened at the terrible earnestness of the spirit she had evoked. She tried to laugh, and ended by crying, and saying she hardly knew what; but when she

came to herself in her own room at home, she found on her finger a ring of African gold that George had put there, which she did not send back like Captain Blatherem's presents.

Katy was like many intensely matter-of-fact and practical women, who have not in themselves a bit of poetry or a particle of ideality, but who yet worship these qualities in others with the homage which the Indians paid to the unknown tongue of the first whites. They are secretly weary of a certain conscious dryness of nature in themselves, and this weariness predisposes them to idolize the man who brings them this unknown gift. Naturalists say that every defect of organization has its compensation, and men of ideal natures find in the favour of women the equivalent for their disabilities among men.

Do you remember, at Niagara, a little cataract on the American side, which throws its silver sheeny veil over a cave called the Grot of Rainbows? Whoever stands on a rock in that grotto sees himself in the centre of a rainbow-circle, above, below, around. In like manner, merry, chatty, positive, busy, housewifely Katy saw herself standing in a rainbow-shrine in her lover's inner soul, and liked to see herself so. A woman, by-the-by, must be very insensible who is not moved to come upon a higher plane of being, herself, by seeing how undoubtingly she is insphered in the heart of a good and noble man. A good man's faith in you, fair lady, if you ever have it, will make you better and nobler even before you know it.

Katy made an excellent wife: she took home her husband's

old mother, and nursed her with a dutifulness and energy worthy of all praise, and made her own keen outward faculties and deft handiness a compensation for the defects in worldly estate. Nothing would make Katy's bright eyes flash quicker than any reflections on her husband's want of luck in the material line. 'She didn't know whose business it was, if *she* was satisfied. She hated these sharp, gimlet, gouging sort of men that would put a screw between body and soul for money. George had that in him that nobody understood. She would rather be his wife on bread and water than to take Captain Blatherem's house, carriages, and horses, and all, – and she *might* have had 'em fast enough, dear knows. She was sick of making money when she saw what sort of men could make it,' – and so on. All which talk did her infinite credit, because *at bottom* she *did* care, and was naturally as proud and ambitious a little minx as ever breathed, and was thoroughly grieved at heart at George's want of worldly success; but, like a nice little Robin Redbreast, she covered up the grave of her worldliness with the leaves of true love, and sang a 'Who cares for that?' above it.

Her thrifty management of the money her husband brought her soon bought a snug little farm, and put up the little brown gambrel-roofed cottage to which we directed your attention in the first of our story. Children were born to them, and George found, in short intervals between voyages, his home an earthly paradise. He was still sailing, with the fond illusion, in every voyage, of making enough to remain at home, – when the yellow

fever smote him under the line, and the ship returned to Newport without its captain.

George was a Christian man; – he had been one of the first to attach himself to the unpopular and unworldly ministry of the celebrated Dr. H., and to appreciate the sublime ideality and unselfishness of those teachings which then were awakening new sensations in the theological mind of New England. Katy, too, had become a professor with her husband in the same church, and his death, in the midst of life, deepened the power of her religious impressions. She became absorbed in religion, after the fashion of New England, where devotion is doctrinal, not ritual. As she grew older, her energy of character, her vigour and good judgment, caused her to be regarded as a mother in Israel; the minister boarded at her house, and it was she who was first to be consulted in all matters relating to the well-being of the church. No woman could more manfully breast a long sermon, or bring a more determined faith to the reception of a difficult doctrine. To say the truth, there lay at the bottom of her doctrinal system this stable corner-stone, – ‘Mr. Scudder used to believe it, – I will.’ And after all that is said about independent thought, isn’t the fact that a just and good soul has thus or thus believed, a more respectable argument than many that often are adduced? If it be not, more’s the pity, – since two-thirds of the faith in the world is built on no better foundation.

In time, George’s old mother was gathered to her son, and two sons and a daughter followed their father to the invisible – one

only remaining of the flock, and she a person with whom you and I, good reader, have joint concern in the further unfolding of our story.

CHAPTER II

As I before remarked, Mrs. Katy Scudder had invited company to tea. Strictly speaking, it is necessary to begin with the creation of the world, in order to give a full account of anything. But for popular use, something less may serve one's turn, and therefore I shall let the past chapter suffice to introduce my story, and shall proceed to arrange my scenery and act my little play on the supposition that you know enough to understand things and persons.

Being asked to tea in our New England in the year 17 – meant something very different from the same invitation in our more sophisticated days. In those times, people held to the singular opinion, that the night was made to sleep in; they inferred it from a general confidence they had in the wisdom of Mother Nature, supposing that she did not put out her lights and draw her bed-curtains, and hush all noise in her great world-house without strongly intending that her children should go to sleep; and the consequence was, that very soon after sunset, the whole community very generally set their faces bedward, and the tolling of the nine-o'clock evening-bell had an awful solemnity in it, sounding to the full. Good society in New England in those days very generally took its breakfast at six, its dinner at twelve, and its tea at six. 'Company tea,' however, among thrifty, industrious folk, was often taken an hour earlier, because each of the inviteés

had children to put to bed, or other domestic cares at home, and as in those simple times people were invited because you wanted to see them, a tea-party assembled themselves at three and held session till sundown, when each matron rolled up her knitting-work and wended soberly home.

Though Newport, even in those early times, was not without its families which affected state and splendour, rolled about in carriages with armorial emblazonments, and had servants in abundance to every turn within-doors, yet there, as elsewhere in New England, the majority of the people lived with the wholesome, thrifty simplicity of the olden time, when labour and intelligence went hand in hand in perhaps a greater harmony than the world has ever seen.

Our scene opens in the great old-fashioned kitchen, which, on ordinary occasions, is the family dining and sitting room of the Scudder family. I know fastidious moderns think that the working-room, wherein are carried on the culinary operations of a large family, must necessarily be an untidy and comfortless sitting-place; but it is only because they are ignorant of the marvellous workings which pertain to the organ of 'faculty,' on which we have before insisted. The kitchen of a New England matron was her throne-room, her pride; it was the habit of her life to produce the greatest possible results there with the slightest possible discomposure; and what any woman could do, Mrs. Katy Scudder could do *par excellence*. Everything there seemed to be always done, and never doing. Washing and baking, those

formidable disturbers of the composure of families, were all over within those two or three morning-hours when we are composing ourselves for a last nap, – and only the fluttering of linen over the green-yard, on Monday mornings, proclaimed that the dreaded solemnity of a wash had transpired. A breakfast arose there as by magic; and in an incredibly short space after, every knife, fork, spoon, and trencher, clean and shining, was looking as innocent and unconscious in its place as if it never had been used and never expected to be.

The floor, – perhaps, sir, you remember your grandmother's floor, of snowy boards sanded with whitest sand; you remember the ancient fireplace stretching quite across one end, – a vast cavern, in each corner of which a cozy seat might be found, distant enough to enjoy the crackle of the great jolly wood-fire; across the room ran a dresser, on which was displayed great store of shining pewter dishes and plates, which always shone with the same mysterious brightness; and by the side of the fire a commodious wooden 'settee,' or settle, offered repose to people too little accustomed to luxury to ask for a cushion. Oh, that kitchen of the olden times, the old, clean, roomy New England kitchen! Who that has breakfasted, dined, and supped in one has not cheery visions of its thrift, its warmth, its coolness? The noon-mark on its floor was a dial that told of some of the happiest days; thereby did we right up the shortcomings of the solemn old clock that tick-tacked in the corner, and whose ticks seemed mysterious prophecies of unknown good yet to arise out

of the hours of life. How dreamy the winter twilight came in there! – as yet the candles were not lighted, – when the crickets chirped around the dark stone hearth, and shifting tongues of flame flickered and cast dancing shadows and elfish lights on the walls, while grandmother nodded over her knitting-work, and puss purred, and old Rover lay dreamily opening now one eye and then the other on the family group! With all our ceiled houses, let us not forget our grandmothers' kitchens!

But we must pull up, however, and back to our subject-matter, which is in the kitchen of Mrs. Katy Scudder, who has just put into the oven, by the fireplace, some wondrous tea-rusks, for whose composition she is renowned. She has examined and pronounced perfect a loaf of cake which has been prepared for the occasion, and which, as usual, is done exactly right. The best room, too, has been opened and aired, – the white window-curtains saluted with a friendly little shake, as when one says, 'How d'ye do?' to a friend; for you must know, clean as our kitchen is, we are genteel, and have something better for company. Our best room in here has a polished little mahogany tea-table, and six mahogany chairs, with claw talons grasping balls; the white sanded floor is crinkled in curious little waves, like those on the sea-beach; and right across the corner stands the 'buffet,' as it is called, with its transparent glass doors, wherein are displayed the solemn appurtenances of company tea-table. There you may see a set of real China teacups, which George bought in Canton, and had marked with his and his wife's

joint initials, – a small silver cream-pitcher, which has come down as an heirloom from unknown generations, – silver spoons and delicate China cake-plates, which have been all carefully reviewed and wiped on napkins of Mrs. Scudder's own weaving.

Her cares now over, she stands drying her hands on a roller-towel in the kitchen, while her only daughter, the gentle Mary, stands in the doorway with the afternoon sun streaming in spots of flickering golden light on her smooth pale-brown hair, – a *petite* figure, in a full stuff petticoat and white short-gown, she stands reaching up one hand and cooing to something among the apple-blossoms, – and now a Java dove comes whirring down and settles on her finger, – and we, that have seen pictures, think, as we look on her girlish face, with its lines of statuesque beauty, – on the tremulous, half-infantine expression of her lovely mouth, and the general air of simplicity and purity, – of some old pictures of the girlhood of the Virgin. But Mrs. Scudder was thinking of no such Popish matter, I can assure you, – not she! I don't think you could have done her a greater indignity than to mention her daughter in any such connection. She had never seen a painting in her life, and therefore was not to be reminded of them; and furthermore, the dove was evidently, for some reason, no favourite, – for she said, in a quick, imperative tone, 'Come, come, child! don't fool with that bird, it's high time we were dressed and ready,' – and Mary, blushing, as it would seem, even to her hair, gave a little toss, and sent the bird, like a silver fluttering cloud, up among the rosy apple-blossoms. And now

she and her mother have gone to their respective little bedrooms for the adjustment of their toilets, and while the door is shut and nobody hears us, we shall talk to you about Mary.

Newport at the present day blooms like a flower-garden with young ladies of the best *ton*, – lovely girls, hopes of their families, possessed of amiable tempers and immensely large trunks, and capable of sporting ninety changes in thirty days, and otherwise rapidly emptying the purses of distressed fathers, and whom yet travellers and the world in general look upon as genuine specimens of the kind of girls formed by American institutions.

We fancy such a one lying in a rustling silk *négligé*, and, amid a gentle generality of rings, ribbons, puffs, laces, beaux, and dinner-discussion, reading our humble sketch; – and what favour shall our poor heroine find in her eyes? For though her mother was a world of energy and ‘faculty,’ in herself considered, and had bestowed on this one little lone chick all the vigour and all the care and all the training which would have sufficed for a family of sixteen, there were no results produced which could be made appreciable in the eyes of such company. She could not waltz, or polk, or speak bad French, or sing Italian songs; but, nevertheless, we must proceed to say what was her education and what her accomplishments.

Well, then, she could both read and write fluently in the mother-tongue. She could spin both on the little and the great wheel, and there were numberless towels, napkins, sheets, and pillow-cases in the household store that could attest the skill

of her pretty fingers. She had worked several samplers of such rare merit, that they hung framed in different rooms of the house, exhibiting every variety and style of possible letter in the best marking-stitch. She was skilful in all sewing and embroidery, in all shaping and cutting, with a quiet and deft handiness that constantly surprised her energetic mother, who could not conceive that so much could be done with so little noise. In fact, in all household lore she was a veritable good fairy; her knowledge seemed unerring and intuitive: and whether she washed or ironed, or moulded biscuit or conserved plums, her gentle beauty seemed to turn to poetry all the prose of life.

There was something in Mary, however, which divided her as by an appreciable line from ordinary girls of her age. From her father she had inherited a deep and thoughtful nature, predisposed to moral and religious exaltation. Had she been born in Italy, under the dissolving influences of that sunny, dreamy clime, beneath the shadow of cathedrals, and where pictured saints and angels smiled in clouds of painting from every arch and altar, she might, like fair St. Catherine of Siena, have seen beatific visions in the sunset skies, and a silver dove descending upon her as she prayed; but, unfolding in the clear, keen, cold New England clime, and nurtured in its abstract and positive theologies, her religious faculties took other forms. Instead of lying entranced in mysterious raptures at the foot of altars, she read and pondered treatises on the Will, and listened in rapt attention while her spiritual guide, the venerated Dr.

H., unfolded to her the theories of the great Edwards on the nature of true virtue. Womanlike, she felt the subtle poetry of these sublime abstractions which dealt with such infinite and unknown quantities, – which spoke of the universe, of its great Architect, of men, of angels, as matters of intimate and daily contemplation; and her teacher, a grand-minded and simple-hearted man as ever lived, was often amazed at the tread with which this fair young child walked through these high regions of abstract thought, – often comprehending through an ethereal clearness of nature what he had laboriously and heavily reasoned out; and sometimes, when she turned her grave, childlike face upon him with some question or reply, the good man started as if an angel had looked suddenly out upon him from a cloud. Unconsciously to himself, he often seemed to follow her, as Dante followed the flight of Beatrice, through the ascending circles of the celestial spheres.

When her mother questioned him, anxiously, of her daughter's spiritual estate, he answered, that she was a child of a strange graciousness of nature, and of a singular genius; to which Katy responded, with a woman's pride, that she was all her father over again. It is only now and then that a matter-of-fact woman is sublimated by a real love; but if she is, it is affecting to see how impossible it is for death to quench it; for in the child the mother feels that she has a mysterious and undying repossession of the father.

But, in truth, Mary was only a recast in feminine form of

her father's nature. The elixir of the spirit that sparkled within her was of that quality of which the souls of poets and artists are made; but the keen New England air crystallizes emotions into ideas, and restricts many a poetic soul to the necessity of expressing itself only in practical living.

The rigid theological discipline of New England is fitted to produce rather strength and purity than enjoyment. It was not fitted to make a sensitive and thoughtful nature happy, however it might ennoble and exalt.

The system of Dr. H. was one that could only have had its origin in a soul at once reverential and logical, – a soul, moreover, trained from its earliest years in the habits of thought engendered by monarchical institutions. For although he, like other ministers, took an active part as a patriot in the Revolution, still he was brought up under the shadow of a throne; and a man cannot ravel out the stitches in which early days have knit him. His theology, was, in fact, the turning to an invisible Sovereign of that spirit of loyalty and unquestioning subjugation which is one of the noblest capabilities of our nature. And as a gallant soldier renounces life and personal aims in the cause of his king and country, and holds himself ready to be drafted for a forlorn hope, to be shot down, or help make a bridge of his mangled body, over which the more fortunate shall pass to victory and glory, so he regarded himself as devoted to the King Eternal, ready in His hands to be used to illustrate and build up an Eternal Commonwealth, either by being sacrificed as a lost spirit or glorified as a redeemed one, ready to

throw not merely his mortal life, but his immortality even, into the forlorn hope, to bridge with a never-dying soul the chasm over which white-robed victors should pass to a commonwealth of glory and splendour, whose vastness should dwarf the misery of all the lost to an infinitesimal.

It is not in our line to imply the truth or the falsehood of those systems of philosophic theology which seem for many years to have been the principal outlet for the proclivities of the New England mind, but as psychological developments they have an intense interest. He who does not see a grand side to these strivings of the soul cannot understand one of the noblest capabilities of humanity.

No real artist or philosopher ever lived who has not at some hours risen to the height of utter self-abnegation for the glory of the invisible. There have been painters who would have been crucified to demonstrate the action of a muscle, – chemists who would gladly have melted themselves and all humanity in their crucible, if so a new discovery might arise out of its fumes. Even persons of mere artistic sensibility are at times raised by music, painting, or poetry to a momentary trance of self-oblivion, in which they would offer their whole being before the shrine of an invisible loveliness. These hard old New England divines were the poets of metaphysical philosophy, who built systems in an artistic fervour, and felt self exhale from beneath them as they rose into the higher regions of thought. But where theorists and philosophers tread with sublime assurance, woman often follows

with bleeding footsteps; – women are always turning from the abstract to the individual, and feeling where the philosopher only thinks.

It was easy enough for Mary to believe in *self*-renunciation, for she was one with a born vocation for martyrdom; and so, when the idea was put to her of suffering eternal pains for the glory of God and the good of being in general, she responded to it with a sort of sublime thrill, such as it is given to some natures to feel in view of uttermost sacrifice. But when she looked around on the warm, living faces of friends, acquaintances, and neighbours, viewing them as possible candidates for dooms so fearfully different, she sometimes felt the walls of her faith closing round her as an iron shroud, – she wondered that the sun could shine so brightly, that flowers could flaunt such dazzling colours, that sweet airs could breathe, and little children play, and youth love and hope, and a thousand intoxicating influences combine to cheat the victims from the thought that their next step might be into an abyss of horrors without end. The blood of youth and hope was saddened by this great sorrow, which lay ever on her heart, – and her life, unknown to herself, was a sweet tune in the minor key; it was only in prayer, or deeds of love and charity, or in rapt contemplation of that beautiful millennial day which her spiritual guide most delighted to speak of, that the tone of her feelings ever rose to the height of joy.

Among Mary's young associates was one who had been as a brother to her childhood. He was her mother's cousin's son, –

and so, by a sort of family immunity, had always a free access to her mother's house. He took to the sea, as the most bold and resolute young men will, and brought home from foreign parts those new modes of speech, those other eyes for received opinions and established things, which so often shock established prejudices, – so that he was held as little better than an infidel and a castaway by the stricter religious circles in his native place. Mary's mother, now that Mary was grown up to woman's estate, looked with a severe eye on her cousin. She warned her daughter against too free an association with him, – and so – We all know what comes to pass when girls are constantly warned not to think of a man. The most conscientious and obedient little person in the world, Mary resolved to be very careful. She never would think of James, except, of course, in her prayers; but as these were constant, it may easily be seen it was not easy to forget him.

All that was so often told her of his carelessness, his trifling, his contempt of orthodox opinions, and his startling and bold expressions, only wrote his name deeper in her heart, – for was not his soul in peril? Could she look in his frank, joyous face, and listen to his thoughtless laugh, and then think that a fall from a mast-head, or one night's storm, might – Ah, with what images her faith filled the blank! Could she believe all this and forget him?

You see, instead of getting our tea ready, as we promised at the beginning of this chapter, we have filled it with descriptions and meditations, – and now we foresee that the next chapter will

be equally far from the point. But have patience with us; for we can write only as we are driven, and never know exactly where we are going to land.

CHAPTER III

A quiet, maiden-like place was Mary's little room. The window looked out under the overarching boughs of a thick apple orchard, now all in a blush with blossoms and pink-tipped buds, and the light came golden-green, strained through flickering leaves, – and an ever-gentle rustle and whirr of branches and blossoms, a chitter of birds, and an indefinite whispering motion, as the long heads of orchard-grass nodded and bowed to each other under the trees, seemed to give the room the quiet hush of some little side chapel in a cathedral, where green and golden glass softens the sunlight, and only the sigh and rustle of kneeling worshippers break the stillness of the aisles. It was small enough for a nun's apartment, and dainty in its neatness as the waxen cell of a bee. The bed and low window were draped in spotless white, with fringes of Mary's own knotting. A small table under the looking-glass bore the library of a well-taught young woman of those times. The 'Spectator,' 'Paradise Lost,' Shakspeare, and 'Robinson Crusoe,' stood for the admitted secular literature, and beside them the Bible and the works then published of Mr. Jonathan Edwards. Laid a little to one side, as if of doubtful reputation, was the only novel which the stricter people in those days allowed for the reading of their daughters: that seven-volumed, trailing, tedious, delightful old bore, 'Sir Charles Grandison,' – a book whose influence in those

times was so universal, that it may be traced in the epistolary style even of the gravest divines. Our little heroine was mortal, with all her divinity, and had an imagination which sometimes wandered to the things of earth; and this glorious hero in lace and embroidery, who blended rank, gallantry, spirit, knowledge of the world, disinterestedness, constancy, and piety, sometimes walked before her, while she sat spinning at her wheel, till she sighed, she hardly knew why, that no such men walked the earth now. Yet it is to be confessed, this occasional raid of the romantic into Mary's balanced and well-ordered mind was soon energetically put to rout, and the book, as we have said, remained on her table under protest, – protected by being her father's gift to her mother during their days of courtship. The small looking-glass was curiously wreathed with corals and foreign shells, so disposed as to indicate an artistic eye and skilful hand; and some curious Chinese paintings of birds and flowers gave rather a piquant and foreign air to the otherwise homely neatness of the apartment.

Here in this little retreat, Mary spent those few hours which her exacting conscience would allow her to spare from her busy-fingered household-life; here she read and wrote and thought and prayed; – and here she stands now, arraying herself for the tea company that afternoon. Dress, which in our day is becoming in some cases the whole of woman, was in those times a remarkably simple affair. True, every person of a certain degree of respectability had state and festival robes; and a

certain camphor-wood brass-bound trunk, which was always kept solemnly locked in Mrs. Katy Scudder's apartment, if it could have spoken, might have given off quite a catalogue of brocade satin and laces. The wedding-suit there slumbered in all the unsullied whiteness of its stiff ground broidered with heavy knots of flowers; and there were scarfs of wrought India muslin and embroidered crape, each of which had its history, – for each had been brought into the door with beating heart on some return voyage of one who, alas! should return no more. The old trunk stood with its histories, its imprisoned remembrances, – and a thousand tender thoughts seemed to be shaping out of every rustling fold of silk and embroidery, on the few yearly occasions when all were brought out to be aired, their history related, and then solemnly locked up again. Nevertheless, the possession of these things gave to the women of an establishment a certain innate dignity, like a good conscience, so that in that larger portion of existence commonly denominated among them 'every day,' they were content with plain stuff and homespun. Mary's toilet, therefore, was sooner made than those of Newport belles of the present day; it simply consisted in changing her ordinary 'short-gown and petticoat' for another of somewhat nicer materials, a skirt of India chintz and a striped jaconet short-gown. Her hair was of the kind which always lies like satin; but, nevertheless, girls never think their toilet complete unless the smoothest hair has been shaken down and rearranged. A few moments, however, served to braid its shining folds and dispose

them in their simple knot on the back of the head; and having given a final stroke to each side with her little dimpled hands, she sat down a moment at the window, thoughtfully watching where the afternoon sun was creeping through the slates of the fence in long lines of gold among the tall, tremulous orchard-grass, and unconsciously she began warbling, in a low, gurgling voice, the words of a familiar hymn, whose grave earnestness accorded well with the general tone of her life and education: —

‘Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time t’ insure the great reward.’

There was a swish and rustle in the orchard-grass, and a tramp of elastic steps; then the branches were brushed aside, and a young man suddenly emerged from the trees a little behind Mary. He was apparently about twenty-five, dressed in the holiday rig of a sailor on shore, which well set off his fine athletic figure, and accorded with a sort of easy, dashing, and confident air which sat not unhandsomely on him. For the rest, a high forehead shaded by rings of the blackest hair, a keen, dark eye, a firm and determined mouth, gave the impression of one who had engaged to do battle with life, not only with a will, but with shrewdness and ability.

He introduced the colloquy by stepping deliberately behind Mary, putting his arms round her neck, and kissing her.

‘Why, James!’ said Mary, starting up and blushing, ‘Come, now!’

‘I have come, haven’t I?’ said the young man, leaning his elbow on the window-seat and looking at her with an air of comic determined frankness, which yet had in it such wholesome honesty that it was scarcely possible to be angry. ‘The fact is, Mary,’ he added, with a sudden earnest darkening of the face, ‘I won’t stand this nonsense any longer. Aunt Katy has been holding me at arm’s length ever since I got home; and what have I done? Haven’t I been to every prayer-meeting and lecture and sermon, since I got into port, just as regular as a psalm-book? and not a bit of a word could I get with you, and no chance even so much as to give you my arm. Aunt Katy always comes between us and says, “Here, Mary, you take my arm.” What does she think I go to meeting for, and almost break my jaws keeping down the gapes? I never even go to sleep, and yet I am treated in this way! It’s too bad! What’s the row? What’s anybody been saying about me? I always have waited on you ever since you were that high. Didn’t I always draw you to school on my sled? didn’t we always use to do our sums together? didn’t I always wait on you to singing school? and I’ve been made free to run in and out as if I were your brother; – and now she is as glum and stiff, and always stays in the room every minute of the time that I am there, as if she was afraid I should be in some mischief. It’s too bad!’

‘Oh, James, I am sorry that you only go to meeting for the sake of seeing me; you feel no real interest in religious things; and besides, mother thinks now I am grown so old that – Why, you know, things are different now, – at least, we mustn’t, you

know, always do as we did when we were children. But I wish you did feel more interested in good things.'

'I *am* interested in one or two good things, Mary, – principally in you, who are the best I know of. Besides,' he said quickly, and scanning her face attentively to see the effect of his words, 'don't you think there is more merit in my sitting out all these meetings, when they bore me so confoundedly, than there is in your and Aunt Katy's doing it, who really seem to find something to like in them? I believe you have a sixth sense, quite unknown to me, for it's all a maze, – I can't find top, nor bottom, nor side, nor up, nor down to it, – it's you can and you can't, you shall and you shan't, you will and you won't, –'

'James!'

'You needn't look at me so. I'm not going to say the rest of it. But, seriously, it's all anywhere and nowhere to me; it don't touch me, it don't help me, and I think it rather makes me worse; and then they tell me it's because I'm a natural man, and the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit. Well, I *am* a natural man, – how's a fellow to help it?'

'Well, James, why need you talk everywhere as you do? You joke, and jest, and trifle, till it seems to everybody that you don't believe in anything. I'm afraid mother thinks you are an infidel, but I *know* it can't be; yet we hear all sorts of things that you say.'

'I suppose you mean my telling Deacon Twitchel that I had seen as good Christians among the Mahometans as any in Newport. *Didn't* I make him open his eyes? It's true, too!'

‘In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him,’ said Mary; ‘and if there are better Christians than us among the Mahometans, I am sure I am glad of it. But, after all, the great question is, “Are we Christians ourselves?” Oh, James, if you only were a real, true, noble Christian!’

‘Well, Mary, you have got into that harbour, through all the sandbars and rocks and crooked channels; and now do you think it right to leave a fellow beating about outside, and not go out to help him in? This way of drawing up, among your good people, and leaving us sinners to ourselves, isn’t generous. You might care a little for the soul of an old friend, anyhow!’

‘And don’t I care, James? How many days and nights have been one prayer for you! If I could take my hopes of heaven out of my own heart and give them to you, I would. Dr. H. preached last Sunday on the text, “I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen;” and he went on to show how we must be willing to give up even our own salvation, if necessary, for the good of others. People said it was hard doctrine, but I could feel my way through it very well. Yes, I would give my soul for yours; I wish I could.’

There was a solemnity and pathos in Mary’s manner which checked the conversation. James was the more touched because he felt it all so real, from one whose words were always yea and nay, so true, so inflexibly simple. Her eyes filled with tears, her face kindled with a sad earnestness, and James thought, as he

looked, of a picture he had once seen in a European cathedral, where the youthful Mother of Sorrows is represented,

‘Radiant and grave, as pitying man’s decline;
All youth, but with an aspect beyond time;
Mournful, but mournful of another’s crime;
She looked as if she sat by Eden’s door,
And grieved for those who should return no more.’

James had thought he loved Mary; he had admired her remarkable beauty; he had been proud of a certain right in her before that of other young men, her associates; he had thought of her as the keeper of his home; he had wished to appropriate her wholly to himself; – but in all this there had been, after all, only the thought of what she was to be to him; and this, for this poor measure of what he called love, she was ready to offer an infinite sacrifice.

As a subtle flash of lightning will show in a moment a whole landscape – tower, town, winding stream, and distant sea – so that one subtle ray of feeling seemed in a moment to reveal to James the whole of his past life; and it seemed to him so poor, so meagre, so shallow, by the side of that childlike woman, to whom the noblest of feelings were unconscious matters of course, that a sort of awe awoke in him: like the Apostles of old, he ‘feared as he entered into the cloud:’ it seemed as if the deepest string of some eternal sorrow had vibrated between them.

After a moment’s pause, he spoke in a low and altered voice:

‘Mary, I am a sinner. No psalm or sermon ever taught it to me, but I see it now. Your mother is quite right, Mary; you are too good for me; I am no mate for you. Oh, what would you think of me, if you knew me wholly? I have lived a mean, miserable, shallow, unworthy life. You are worthy, you are a saint, and walk in white! Oh, what upon earth, could ever make you care so much for me?’

‘Well, then, James, you will be good? Won’t you talk with Dr. H.?’

‘Hang Dr. H.!’ said James. ‘Now Mary, I beg your pardon, but I can’t make head or tail of a word Dr. H. says. I don’t get hold of it, or know what he would be at. You girls and women don’t know your power. Why, Mary, you are a living gospel. You have always had a strange power over us boys. You never talked religion much; but I have seen high fellows come away from being with you as still and quiet as one feels when one goes into a church. I can’t understand all the hang of predestination, and moral ability, and natural ability, and God’s efficiency, and man’s agency, which Dr. H. is so engaged about; but I can understand *you*—*you* can do me good!’

‘Oh, James, can I?’

‘Mary I am going to confess my sins. I saw that, somehow or other, the wind was against me in Aunt Katy’s quarter, and you know we fellows who take up the world in both fists don’t like to be beat. If there’s opposition, it sets us on. Now I confess I never

did care much about religion, but I thought, without being really a hypocrite, I'd just let you try to save my soul for the sake of getting you; for there's nothing surer to hook a woman than trying to save a fellow's soul. It's a dead-shot, generally, that. Now our ship sails to-night, and I thought I'd just come across this path in the orchard to speak to you. You know I used always to bring you peaches and juneatings across this way, and once I brought you a ribbon.'

'Yes, I've got it yet, James.'

'Well, now, Mary, all this seems mean to me, – mean to try and trick and snare you, who are so much too good for me. I felt very proud this morning that I was to go out first mate this time, and that I should command a ship next voyage. I meant to have asked you for a promise, but I don't. Only, Mary, just give me your little Bible, and I'll promise to read it all through soberly, and see what it all comes to. And pray for me; and if, while I'm gone, a good man comes who loves you, and is worthy of you, why take him, Mary, – that's my advice.'

'James, I'm not thinking of any such things; I don't ever mean to be married. And I'm glad you don't ask me for any promise, because it would be wrong to give it; mother don't even like me to be much with you. But I'm sure all I have said to you to-day is right; I shall tell her exactly all I have said.'

'If Aunt Katy knew what things we fellows are pitched into, who take the world head-foremost, she wouldn't be so selfish. Mary, you girls and women don't know the world you live in;

you ought to be pure and good; you are not as we are. You don't know what men, what women, – no, they're not women! – what creatures, beset us in every foreign port, and boarding-houses that are gates of hell; and then, if a fellow comes back from all this and don't walk exactly straight, you just draw up the hems of your garments and stand close to the wall, for fear he should touch you when he passes. I don't mean you, Mary, for you are different from most; but if you would do what you could, you might save us. – But it's no use talking, Mary. Give me the Bible; and please be kind to my dove, – for I had a hard time getting him across the water, and I don't want him to die.'

If Mary had spoken all that welled up in her little heart at that moment, she might have said too much; but duty had its habitual seal upon her lips. She took the little Bible from her table and gave it with a trembling hand, and James turned to go. In a moment he turned back and stood irresolute.

'Mary,' he said, 'we are cousins; I may never come back: you might kiss me this once.'

The kiss was given and received in silence, and James disappeared among the thick trees.

'Come, child,' said Aunt Katy, looking in, 'there is Deacon Twitchel's chaise in sight, – are you ready?'

'Yes, mother.'

CHAPTER IV.

THEOLOGICAL TEA

At the call of her mother, Mary hurried into the ‘best room, with a strange discomposure of spirit she had never felt before. From childhood, her love for James had been so deep, equable, and intense, that it had never disturbed her with thrills and yearnings; it had grown up in sisterly calmness, and, quietly expanding, had taken possession of her whole nature without her once dreaming of its power. But this last interview seemed to have struck some great nerve of her being, – and calm as she usually was, from habit, principle, and good health, she shivered and trembled as she heard his retreating footsteps, and saw the orchard-grass fly back from under his feet. It was as if each step trod on a nerve, – as if the very sound of the rustling grass was stirring something living and sensitive in her soul. And, strangest of all, a vague impression of guilt hovered over her. *Had* she done anything wrong? She did not ask him there; she had not spoken love to him; no, she had only talked to him of his soul, and how she would give hers for his, – oh, so willingly! – and that was not love; it was only what Dr. H. said Christians must always feel.

‘Child, what *have* you been doing?’ said Aunt Katy, who sat in full flowing chintz petticoat and spotless dimity short-gown, with her company knitting-work in her hands; ‘your cheeks are

as red as peonies. Have you been crying? What's the matter?"

'There is the Deacon's wife, mother,' said Mary, turning confusedly, and darting to the entry-door.

Enter Mrs. Twitchel, – a soft, pillowy, little elderly lady, whose whole air and dress reminded one of a sack of feathers tied in the middle with a string. A large, comfortable pocket, hung upon the side, disclosed her knitting-work ready for operation; and she zealously cleansed herself with a checked handkerchief from the dust which had accumulated during her ride in the old 'one-hoss shay,' answering the hospitable salutation of Katy Scudder in that plaintive, motherly voice which belongs to certain nice old ladies, who appear to live in a state of mild chronic compassion for the sins and sorrows of this mortal life generally.

'Why, yes, Miss Scudder, I'm pretty tol'able. I keep goin', and goin'. That's my way. I's a-tellin' the Deacon, this mornin', I didn't see how I *was* to come here this afternoon; but then I *did* want to see Miss Scudder, and talk a little about that precious sermon, Sunday. How is the Doctor? blessed man! Well, his reward must be great in heaven, if not on earth, as I was a-tellin' the Deacon; and he says to me, says he, "Polly, we mustn't be man-worshippers." There, dear,' (*to Mary,*) 'don't trouble yourself about my bonnet; it a'n't my Sunday one, but I thought 'twould do. Says I to Cerinthy Ann, "Miss Scudder won't mind, 'cause her heart's set on better things." I always like to drop a word in season to Cerinthy Ann, 'cause she's clean took up with vanity and dress. Oh, dear! oh, dear me! so different from your blessed

daughter, Miss Scudder! Well, it's a great blessin' to be called in one's youth, like Samuel and Timothy; but then we doesn't know the Lord's ways. Sometimes I gets clean discouraged with my children, – but then ag'in I don't know; none on us does. Cerinthy Ann is one of the most master hands to turn off work, she takes hold and goes along like a woman, and nobody never knows when that gal finds the time to do all she does do; and I don't know nothin' what I *should* do without her. Deacon was saying, if ever she was called, she'd be a Martha, and not a Mary: but then she's dreadful opposed to the doctrines. Oh, dear me! oh, dear me! Somehow they seem to rile her all up; and she was a-tellin' me yesterday, when she was a-hangin' out clothes, that she never should get reconciled to Decrees and 'Lecture, 'cause she can't see, if things is certain, how folks is to help 'emselves. Says I, "Cerinthy Ann, folks a'n't to help themselves; they's to submit unconditional." And she jest slammed down the clothes-basket and went into the house.'

When Mrs. Twitchel began to talk, it flowed a steady stream, as when one turns a faucet, that never ceases running till some hand turns it back again; and the occasion that cut the flood short at present was the entrance of Mrs. Brown.

Mr. Simeon Brown was a thriving ship-owner of Newport, who lived in a large house, owned several negro-servants and a span of horses, and affected some state and style in his worldly appearance. A passion for metaphysical Orthodoxy had drawn Simeon to the congregation of Dr. H., and his wife of course

stood by right in a high place there. She was a tall, angular, somewhat hard-favoured body, dressed in a style rather above the simple habits of her neighbours, and her whole air spoke the great woman, who in right of her thousands expected to have her say in all that was going on in the world, whether she understood it or not.

On her entrance, mild little Mrs. Twitchel fled from the cushioned rocking-chair, and stood with the quivering air of one who feels she has no business to be anywhere in the world, until Mrs. Brown's bonnet was taken and she was seated, when Mrs. Twitchel subsided into a corner and rattled her knitting-needles to conceal her emotion.

New England has been called the land of equality; but what land upon earth is wholly so? Even the mites in a bit of cheese, naturalists say, have great tumblings and strivings about position and rank: he who has ten pounds will always be a nobleman to him who has but one, let him strive as manfully as he may; and therefore let us forgive meek little Mrs. Twitchel from melting into nothing in her own eyes when Mrs. Brown came in, and let us forgive Mrs. Brown that she sat down in the rocking-chair with an easy grandeur, as one who thought it her duty to be affable and meant to be. It was, however, rather difficult for Mrs. Brown, with her money, house, negroes, and all, to patronise Mrs. Katy Scudder, who was one of those women whose natures seems to sit on thrones, and who dispense patronage and favour by an inborn right and aptitude, whatever be their social advantages. It was

one of Mrs. Brown's trials of life, this secret, strange quality in her neighbour, who stood apparently so far below her in worldly goods. Even the quiet positive style of Mrs. Katy's knitting made her nervous; it was an implication of independence of her sway; and though on the present occasion every customary courtesy was bestowed, she still felt, as she always did when Mrs. Katy's guest, a secret uneasiness. She mentally contrasted the neat little parlour, with its white sanded floor and muslin curtains, with her own grand front-room, which boasted the then uncommon luxuries of Turkey carpet and Persian rug, and wondered if Mrs. Katy did really feel as cool and easy in receiving her as she appeared.

You must not understand that this was what Mrs. Brown *supposed* herself to be thinking about; oh, no! by no means! All the little, mean work of our nature is generally done in a small dark closet just a little back of the subject we are talking about, on which subject we suppose ourselves of course to be thinking; – of course we *are* thinking of it; how else could we talk about it?

The subject in discussion, and what Mrs. Brown supposed to be in her own thoughts, was the last Sunday's sermon, on the doctrine of entire Disinterested Benevolence, in which good Doctor H. had proclaimed to the citizens of Newport their duty of being so wholly absorbed in the general good of the universe as even to acquiesce in their own final and eternal destruction, if the greater good of the whole might thereby be accomplished.

'Well, now, dear me!' said Mrs. Twitchel, while her knitting-

needles trotted contentedly to the mournful tone of her voice, – ‘I was tellin’ the Deacon, if we only could get there! Sometimes I think I get a little way, – but then ag’in I don’t know; but the Deacon he’s quite down, – he don’t see no evidences in himself. Sometimes he says he don’t feel as if he ought to keep his place in the church, – but then ag’in he don’t know. He keeps a-turnin’ and turnin’ on’t over in his mind, and a-tryin’ himself this way and that way; and he says he don’t see nothin’ but what’s selfish, no way.

”Member one night last winter, after the Deacon got warm in bed, there come a rap at the door; and who should it be but old Beulah Ward wantin’ to see the Deacon – ’twas her boy she sent, and he said Beulah was sick and hadn’t no more wood nor candles. Now I know’d the Deacon had carried that critter half a cord of wood, if he had one stick, since Thanksgivin’, and I’d sent her two o’ my best moulds of candles, – nice ones that Cerinthy Ann run when we killed a crittur; but nothin’ would do but the Deacon must get right out his warm bed and dress himself, and hitch up his team to carry over some wood to Beulah. Says I, “Father, you know you’ll be down with the rheumatis for this; besides, Beulah is real aggravatin’. I know she trades off what we send her to the store for rum, and you never get no thanks. She ’xpects, ’cause we has done for her, we always must; and more we do, more we may do.” And says he to me, says he, “That’s jest the way we sarves the Lord, Polly; and what if He shouldn’t hear us when we call on Him in our troubles?” So I shet up; and the

next day he was down with the rheumatis. And Cerinthy Ann, says she, “Well, father, *now* I hope you’ll own you have got *some* disinterested benevolence,” says she; and the Deacon he thought it over a spell, and then he says, “I’m ’fraid it’s all selfish. I’m jest a-makin’ a righteousness of it.” And Cerinthy Ann she come out, declarin’ that the best folks never had no comfort in religion; and for her part she didn’t mean to trouble her head about it, but have jest as good a time as she could while she’s young, ’cause if she was ’lected to be saved she should be, and if she wa’n’t she couldn’t help it, any how.’

‘Mr. Brown says he came on to Dr. H.’s ground years ago’ said Mrs. Brown, giving a nervous twitch to her yarn, and speaking in a sharp, hard, didactic voice, which made little Mrs. Twitchel give a gentle quiver, and look humble and apologetic. ‘Mr. Brown’s a master thinker; there’s nothing pleases that man better than a hard doctrine; he says you can’t get ’em too hard for him. He don’t find any difficulty in bringing his mind up; he just reasons it out all plain; and he says, people have no need to be in the dark; and that’s *my* opinion. “If folks know they ought to come up to anything, why *don’t* they?” he says; and I say so too.’

‘Mr. Scudder used to say that it took great afflictions to bring his mind to that place,’ said Mrs. Katy. ‘He used to say that an old paper-maker told him once, that paper that was shaken only one way in the making would tear across the other, and the best paper had to be shaken every way; and so he said we couldn’t tell, till we had been turned and shaken and tried every way, where

we should tear.’

Mrs. Twitchel responded to this sentiment with a gentle series of groans, such as were her general expression of approbation, swaying herself backward and forward; while Mrs. Brown gave a sort of toss and snort, and said that for her part she always thought people knew what they did know, – but she guessed she was mistaken.

The conversation was here interrupted by the civilities attendant on the reception of Mrs. Jones, – a broad, buxom, hearty soul, who had come on horseback from a farm about three miles distant.

Smiling with rosy content, she presented Mrs. Katy a small pot of golden butter, – the result of her forenoon’s churning.

There are some people so evidently broadly and heartily of this world, that their coming into a room always materializes the conversation. We wish to be understood that we mean no disparaging reflection on such persons; – they are as necessary to make up a world as cabbages to make up a garden; the great healthy principles of cheerfulness and animal life seem to exist in them in the gross; they are wedges and ingots of solid, contented vitality. Certain kinds of virtues and Christian graces thrive in such people as the first crop of corn does in the bottom-lands of the Ohio. Mrs. Jones was a church-member, a regular church-goer, and planted her comely person plump in front of Dr. H. every Sunday, and listened to his searching and discriminating sermons with broad, honest smiles of satisfaction.

Those keen distinctions as to motives, those awful warnings and urgent expostulations, which made poor Deacon Twitchel weep, she listened to with great, round, satisfied eyes, making to all, and after all, the same remark, – that it was good, and she liked it, and the Doctor was a good man; and on the present occasion, she announced her pot of butter as one fruit of her reflections after the last discourse.

‘You see,’ she said, ‘as I was a-settin’ in the spring-house, this mornin’, a-workin’ my butter, I says to Dinah, – “I’m goin’ to carry a pot of this down to Miss Scudder for the Doctor, – I got so much good out of his Sunday’s sermon.” And Dinah she says to me, says she, – “Laws, Miss Jones, I thought you was asleep, for sartin!” But I wasn’t; only I forgot to take any carraway-seed in the mornin’, and so I kinder missed it; you know it ’livens one up. But I never lost myself so but what I kinder heerd him goin’ on, on, sort o’ like, – and it sounded *all* sort o’ *good*; and so I thought of the Doctor to-day.’

‘Well, I’m sure,’ said Aunt Katy, ‘this will be a treat; we all know about your butter, Mrs. Jones. I sha’n’t think of putting any of mine on table to-night, I’m sure.’

‘Law, now don’t!’ said Mrs. Jones. ‘Why you re’lly make me ashamed, Miss Scudder. To be sure, folks does like our butter, and it always fetches a pretty good price, —*he’s* very proud on’t. I tell him he oughtn’t to be, – we oughtn’t to be proud of anything.’

And now Mrs. Katy, giving a look at the old clock, told Mary it was time to set the tea-table; and forthwith there was a gentle

movement of expectancy. The little mahogany tea-table opened its brown wings, and from a drawer came forth the snowy damask covering. It was etiquette, on such occasions, to compliment every article of the establishment successively as it appeared; so the Deacon's wife began at the table-cloth.

'Well, I do declare, Miss Scudder beats us all in her table-cloths,' she said, taking up a corner of the damask, admiringly; and Mrs. Jones forthwith jumped up and seized the other corner.

'Why, this 'ere must have come from the Old Country. It's most the beautiflest thing I ever did see.'

'It's my own spinning,' replied Mrs. Katy, with conscious dignity. 'There was an Irish weaver came to Newport the year before I was married, who wove beautifully, – just the Old-Country patterns, – and I'd been spinning some uncommonly fine flax then. I remember Mr. Scudder used to read to me while I was spinning,' – and Aunt Katy looked afar, as one whose thoughts are in the past, and dropped out the last words with a little sigh, unconsciously, as to herself.

'Wall, now, I must say,' said Mrs. Jones, 'this goes quite beyond me. I thought I could spin some; but I shan't never dare to show mine.'

'I'm sure, Mrs. Jones, your towels that you had out bleaching, this spring, were wonderful,' said Aunt Katy. 'But I don't pretend to do much now,' she continued, straightening her trim figure. 'I'm getting old, you know; we must let the young folks take up these things. Mary spins better now than I ever did; Mary, hand

out those napkins.’

And so Mary’s napkins passed from hand to hand.

‘Well, well,’ said Mrs. Twitchel to Mary, ‘it’s easy to see that *your* linen-chest will be pretty full by the time *he* comes along; won’t it, Miss Jones?’ – and Mrs Twitchel looked pleasantly facetious, as elderly ladies generally do, when suggesting such possibilities to younger ones.

Mary was vexed to feel the blood boil up in her cheeks in a most unexpected and provoking way at the suggestion; whereat Mrs. Twitchel nodded knowingly at Mrs. Jones, and whispered something in a mysterious aside, to which plump Mrs. Jones answered, – ‘Why, do tell! now I never!’

‘It’s strange,’ said Mrs. Twitchel, taking up her parable again, in such a plaintive tone that all knew something pathetic was coming, ‘what mistakes some folks will make, a-fetchin’ up girls. Now there’s your Mary, Miss Scudder, – why, there a’n’t nothin’ she can’t do: but law, I was down to Miss Skinner’s, last week, a-watchin’ with her, and re’lly it ’most broke my heart to see her. Her mother was a most amazin’ smart woman; but she brought Suky up, for all the world, as if she’d been a wax doll, to be kept in the drawer, – and sure enough, she was a pretty cretur, – and now she’s married, what is she? She ha’n’t no more idee how to take hold than nothin’. The poor child means well enough, and she works so hard she ’most kills herself; but then she is in the suds from mornin’ till night, – she’s one the sort whose work’s never done, – and poor George Skinner’s clean discouraged.’

‘There’s everything in *knowing how*,’ said Mrs. Katy. ‘Nobody ought to be always working; it’s a bad sign. I tell Mary, – “Always do up your work in the forenoon.” Girls must learn that. I never work afternoons, after my dinner dishes are got away; I never did and never would.’

‘Nor I, neither,’ chimed in Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Twitchel, – both anxious to show themselves clear on this leading point of New-England housekeeping.

‘There’s another thing I always tell Mary,’ said Mrs. Katy, impressively. “‘Never say there isn’t time for a thing that ought to be done. If a thing is *necessary*, why, life is long enough to find a place for it. That’s my doctrine. When anybody tells me they can’t *find time* for this or that, I don’t think much of ’em. I think they don’t know how to work, – that’s all.”

Here Mrs. Twitchel looked up from her knitting, with apologetic giggle at Mrs. Brown.

‘Law, now, there’s Miss Brown, she don’t know nothin’ about it, ’cause she’s got her servants to every turn. I s’pose she thinks it queer to hear us talkin’ about our work. Miss Brown must have her time all to herself. I was tellin’ the Deacon the other day that she was a privileged woman.’

‘I’m sure, those that have servants find work enough following ’em ’round,’ said Mrs. Brown, – who, like all other human beings, resented the implication of not having as many trials in life as her neighbours. ‘As to getting the work done up in the forenoon, that’s a thing I never can teach ’em; they’d rather not. Chloe likes

to keep her work 'round, and do it by snacks, any time, day or night, when the notion takes her.'

'And it was just for that reason I never would have one of those creatures 'round,' said Mrs. Katy. 'Mr. Scudder was principled against buying negroes, – but if he had *not* been, I should not have wanted any of *their* work. I know what's to be done, and most help is no help to me. I want people to stand out of my way and let me get done. I've tried keeping a girl once or twice, and I never worked so hard in my life. When Mary and I do all ourselves, we can calculate everything to a minute; and we get our time to sew and read and spin and visit, and live just as we want to.'

Here, again, Mrs. Brown looked uneasy. To what use was it that she was rich and owned servants, when this Mordecai in her gate utterly despised her prosperity? In her secret heart she thought Mrs. Katy must be envious, and rather comforted herself on this view of the subject, – sweetly unconscious of any inconsistency in the feeling with her views of utter self-abnegation just announced.

Meanwhile the tea-table had been silently gathering on its snowy plateau the delicate china, the golden butter, the loaf of faultless cake, a plate of crullers or wonders, as a sort of sweet fried cake was commonly called, – tea-rusks, light as a puff, and shining on top with a varnish of eggs, – jellies of apple and quince quivering in amber clearness, – whitest and purest honey in the comb, – in short, everything that could go to the getting-up of a most faultless tea.

‘I don’t see,’ said Mrs. Jones, resuming the gentle pæans of the occasion, ‘how Miss Scudder’s loaf-cake always comes out just so. It don’t rise neither to one side nor t’other, but just even all ’round; and it a’n’t white one side and burnt the other, but just a good brown all over; and it don’t have any heavy streak in it.’

‘Jest what Cerinthy Ann was sayin’, the other day,’ said Mrs. Twichel. ‘She says she can’t never be sure how hers is a-comin’ out. Do what she can, it will be either too much or too little; but Miss Scudder’s is always jest so. “Law,” says I, “Cerinthy Ann, it’s *faculty*, – that’s it; – them that has it has it, and them that hasn’t – why, they’ve got to work hard, and not do half so well, neither.”’

Mrs. Katy took all these praises as matter of course. Since she was thirteen years old, she had never put her hand to anything that she had not been held to do better than other folks, and therefore she accepted her praises with the quiet repose and serenity of assured reputation: though, of course, she used the usual polite disclaimers of ‘Oh, it’s nothing, nothing at all; I’m sure I don’t know how I do it, and was not aware it was so good,’ and so on. All which things are proper for gentlewomen to observe, in like cases, in every walk of life.

‘Do you think the Deacon will be along soon?’ said Mrs. Katy, when Mary, returning from the kitchen, announced the important fact, that the tea-kettle was boiling.

‘Why, yes,’ said Mrs. Twichel. ‘I’m a-lookin’ for him every minute. He told me, that he and the men should be plantin’ up

to the eight-acre lot, but he'd keep the colt up there to come down on; and so I laid him out a clean shirt, and says, "Now, father, you be sure and be there by five, so that Miss Scudder may know when to put her tea a-drawin'." – There he is, I believe,' she added, as a horse's tramp was heard without, and, after a few moments, the desired Deacon entered.

He was a gentle, soft-spoken man, low, sinewy, thin, with black hair showing lines and patches of silver. His keen, thoughtful dark eye marked the nervous and melancholic temperament. A mild and pensive humility of manner seemed to brood over him, like the shadow of a cloud. Everything in his dress, air, and motions indicated punctilious exactness and accuracy, at times rising to the point of nervous anxiety.

Immediately after the bustle of his entrance had subsided, Mr. Simeon Brown followed. He was a tall, lank individual, with high-cheek bones, thin, sharp features, small, keen, hard eyes, and large hands and feet.

Simeon was, as we have before remarked, a keen theologian, and had the scent of a hound for a metaphysical distinction. True, he was a man of business, being a thriving trader to the coast of Africa, whence he imported negroes for the American market; and no man was held to understand that branch of traffic better, – he having, in his earlier days, commanded ships in the business, and thus learned it from the root. In his private life, Simeon was severe and dictatorial. He was one of that class of people who, of a freezing day, will plant themselves directly between you and

the fire, and there stand and argue to prove that selfishness is the root of moral evil. Simeon said he always had thought so; and his neighbours sometimes supposed that nobody could enjoy better experimental advantages for understanding the subject. He was one of those men who suppose themselves submissive to the Divine will, to the uttermost extent demanded by the extreme theology of that day, simply because they have no nerves to feel, no imagination to conceive, what endless happiness or suffering is, and who deal therefore with the great question of the salvation or damnation of myriads as a problem of theological algebra, to be worked out by their inevitable x, y, z .

But we must not spend too much time with our analysis of character, for matters at the tea-table are drawing to a crisis. Mrs. Jones has announced that she does not think '*he*' can come this afternoon; by which significant mode of expression she conveyed the dutiful idea that there was for her but one male person in the world. And now Mrs. Katy says, 'Mary, dear, knock at the Doctor's door and tell him that tea is ready.'

The Doctor was sitting in his shady study, in the room on the other side of the little entry. The windows were dark and fragrant with the shade and perfume of blossoming lilacs, whose tremulous shadow, mingled with spots of afternoon sunlight, danced on the scattered papers of a great writing-table covered with pamphlets and heavily-bound volumes of theology, where the Doctor was sitting.

A man of gigantic proportions, over six feet in height, and

built every way with an amplitude corresponding to his height, sitting bent over his writing, so absorbed that he did not hear the gentle sound of Mary's entrance.

'Doctor,' said the maiden, gently, 'tea is ready.'

No motion, no sound, except the quick tracing of the pen over the paper.

'Doctor! Doctor!' a little louder, and with another step into the apartment, – 'tea is ready.'

The Doctor stretched his head forward to a paper which lay before him, and responded in a low, murmuring voice, as reading something.

'Firstly, – if underived virtue be peculiar to the Deity, can it be the duty of a creature to have it?'

Here a little waxen hand came with a very gentle tap on his huge shoulder, and 'Doctor, tea is ready,' penetrated drowsily to the nerve of his ear, as a sound heard in sleep. He rose suddenly with a start, opened a pair of great blue eyes, which shone abstractedly under the dome of a capacious and lofty forehead, and fixed them on the maiden, who by this time was looking up rather archly, and yet with an attitude of the most profound respect, while her venerated friend was assembling together his earthly faculties.

'Tea is ready, if you please. Mother wished me to call you.'

'Oh! – ah! – yes! – indeed!' he said, looking confusedly about, and starting for the door in his study gown.

'If you please, sir,' said Mary, standing in his way, 'would you

not like to put on your coat and wig?'

The Doctor gave a hurried glance at his study gown, put his hand to his head, which, in place of the ample curls of his full-bottomed wig, was decked only with a very ordinary cap, and seemed to come at once to full comprehension. He smiled a kind of conscious, benignant smile, which adorned his high cheekbones and hard features as sunshine adorns the side of a rock, and said, kindly, 'Ah, well, child, I understand now; I'll be out in a moment.'

And Mary, sure that he was now on the right track, went back to the tea-room with the announcement that the Doctor was coming.

In a few moments he entered, majestic and proper, in all the dignity of full-bottomed, powdered wig, full, flowing coat, with ample cuffs, silver knee and shoe buckles, as became the gravity and majesty of the minister of those days.

He saluted all the company with a benignity which had a touch of the majestic, and also of the rustic in it; for at heart the Doctor was a bashful man, that is, he had somewhere in his mental camp that treacherous fellow whom John Bunyan anathematizes under the name of Shame. The company rose on his entrance; the men bowed and the women curtsied, and all remained standing while he addressed to each, with punctilious decorum, those inquiries in regard to health and well-being which preface a social interview. Then, at a dignified sigh from Mrs. Katy, he advanced to the table, and all following his example, stood, while, with one

hand uplifted, he went through a devotional exercise which, for length, more resembled a prayer than a grace, – after which the company were seated.

‘Well, Doctor,’ said Mr. Brown, who, as a householder of substance, felt a conscious right to be first in open conversation with the minister, ‘people are beginning to make a noise about your views. I was talking with Deacon Timmins the other day down on the wharf, and he said Dr. Stiles said that it was entirely new doctrine – entirely so, – and for his part he wanted the good old ways.’

‘They say so, do they?’ said the Doctor, kindling up from an abstraction into which he seemed to be gradually subsiding. ‘Well, let them. I had rather publish *new* divinity than any other, and the more of it the better, —*if it be but true*. I should think it hardly worth while to write, if I had nothing *new* to say.’

‘Well,’ said Deacon Twitchel, – his meek face flushing with awe of his minister – ‘Doctor, there’s all sorts of things said about you. Now the other day I was at the mill with a load of corn, and while I was a-waitin’, Amariah Wadsworth come along with his’n; and so while we were waitin’, he says to me, “Why, they say your minister is gettin’ to be an Arminian;” and he went on a-tellin’ how old Ma’am Badger told him that you interpreted some parts of Paul’s Epistles clear on the Arminian side. You know Ma’am Badger’s a master-hand at doctrines, and she’s ’most an uncommon Calvinist.’

‘That does not frighten me at all,’ said the sturdy Doctor.

'Supposing I do interpret some texts like the Arminians. Can't Arminians have anything right about them? Who wouldn't rather go with the Arminians when they are *right*, than with the Calvinists when they are wrong?'

'That's it, – you've hit it, Doctor,' said Simeon Brown. 'That's what I always say. I say, 'Don't he *prove* it? and how are you going to answer him?' That gravels 'em.'

'Well,' said Deacon Twitchel, 'Brother Seth – you know Brother Seth, – he says you deny depravity. He's all for imputation of Adam's sin, you know; and I have long talks with Seth about it, every time he comes to see me; and he says, that if we did not sin in Adam, it's givin' up the whole ground altogether; and then he insists you're clean wrong about the unregenerate doings.'

'Not at all, – not in the least,' said the Doctor, promptly.

'I wish Seth could talk with you some time, Doctor. Along in the spring, he was down helpin' me to lay stone fence, – it was when we was fencin' off the south-pastur' lot, – and we talked pretty nigh all day; and it really did seem to me that the longer we talked, the sotter Seth grew. He's a master-hand at readin'; and when he heard that your remarks on Dr. Mayhew had come out, Seth tackled up o' purpose and come up to Newport to get them, and spent all his time, last winter, studyin' on it and makin' his remarks: and I tell you, sir, he's a tight fellow to argue with. Why, that day, what with layin' stone wall and what with arguin' with Seth, I come home quite beat out, – Miss Twitchel will

remember.'

'That he was!' said his helpmeet. 'I 'member, when he came home, says I, "Father, you seem clean used up;" and I stirred 'round lively like, to get him his tea. But he jest went into the bedroom and laid down afore supper; and I says to Cerinthy Ann, "That's a thing I ha'n't seen your father do since he was took with the typhus." And Cerinthy Ann, she said she knew 'twa'n't anything but them old doctrines, – that it was always so when Uncle Seth come down. And after tea father was kinder chirked up a little, and he and Seth set by the fire, and was a-beginnin' it ag'in, and I jest spoke out and said, – "Now, Seth, these 'ere things doesn't hurt you; but the Deacon is weakly, and if he gets his mind riled after supper, he don't sleep none all night. So," says I, "you'd better jest let matters stop where they be; 'cause," says I, "twon't make no difference, for to-night, which on ye's got the right on't; – reckon the Lord'll go on his own way without you; and we shall find out, by'm-by, what that is.'"

'Mr. Scudder used to think a great deal on these points,' said Mrs. Katy, 'and the last time he was home he wrote out his views. I haven't ever shown them to you, Doctor; but I should be pleased to know what you think of them.'

'Mr. Scudder was a good man, with a clear head,' said the Doctor; 'and I should be much pleased to see anything that he wrote.'

A flush of gratified feeling passed over Mrs. Katy's face; – for one flower laid on the shrine which we keep in our hearts for the

dead is worth more than any gift to our living selves.

We will not now pursue our party further, lest you, Reader, get more theological tea than you can drink. We will not recount the numerous nice points raised by Mr. Simeon Brown and adjusted by the Doctor, – and how Simeon invariably declared, that that was the way in which he disposed of them himself, and how he had thought it out ten years ago.

We will not relate, either, too minutely, how Mary changed colour and grew pale and red in quick succession, when Mr. Simeon Brown incidentally remarked that the ‘Monsoon’ was going to set sail that very afternoon for her three-years’ voyage. Nobody noticed – in the busy amenities – the sudden welling and ebbing of that one poor little heart-fountain.

So we go, – so little knowing what we touch and what touches us as we talk! We drop out a common piece of news, – ‘Mr. So-and-so is dead, – Miss Such-a-one is married, – such a ship has sailed,’ – and lo, on our right hand or our left, some heart has sunk under the news silently, – gone down in the great ocean of Fate, without even a bubble rising to tell its drowning pang. And this – God help us! – is what we call living!

CHAPTER V.

THE LETTER

Mary returned to the quietude of her room. The red of twilight had faded, and the silver moon, round and fair, was rising behind the thick boughs of the apple-trees. She sat down in the window, thoughtful and sad, and listened to the crickets, whose ignorant jollity often sounds as mournfully to us mortals as ours may to superior beings. There the little hoarse, black wretches were scraping and creaking, as if life and death were invented solely for their pleasure, and the world were created only to give them a good time in it. Now and then a little wind shivered among the boughs, and brought down a shower of white petals which shimmered in the slant beams of the moonlight; and now a ray touched some tall head of grass, and forthwith it blossomed into silver, and stirred itself with a quiet joy, like a new-born saint just awaking in Paradise. And ever and anon came on the still air the soft, eternal pulsations of the distant sea, – sound mournfullest, most mysterious, of all the harpings of Nature. It was the sea, – the deep, eternal sea, – the treacherous, soft, dreadful, inexplicable sea; and he was perhaps at this moment being borne away on it, – away, away, – to what sorrows, to what temptations, to what dangers, she knew not. She looked along the old, familiar, beaten path by which he came, by which he

went, and thought, 'What if he *never* should come back?' There was a little path through the orchard out to a small elevation in the pasture-lot behind, whence the sea was distinctly visible, and Mary had often used her low-silled window as a door when she wanted to pass out thither; so now she stepped out, and, gathering her skirts back from the dewy grass, walked thoughtfully along the path and gained the hill. Newport harbour lay stretched out in the distance, with the rising moon casting a long, wavering track of silver upon it; and vessels, like silver-winged moths, were turning and shifting slowly to and fro upon it, and one stately ship in full sail passing fairly out under her white canvas, graceful as some grand, snowy bird. Mary's beating heart told her that *there* was passing away from her one who carried a portion of her existence with him. She sat down under a lonely tree that stood there, and, resting her elbow on her knee, followed the ship with silent prayers, as it passed, like a graceful, cloudy dream, out of her sight.

Then she thoughtfully retraced her way to her chamber; and as she was entering, observed in the now clearer moonlight what she had not seen before, – something white, like a letter, lying on the floor. Immediately she struck a light, and there, sure enough, it was, – a letter in James's handsome, dashing hand; and the little puss, before she knew what she was about, actually kissed it, with a fervour which would much have astonished the writer, could he at that moment have been clairvoyant. But Mary felt as one who finds, in the emptiness after a friend's death, an unexpected

message or memento; and all alone in the white, calm stillness of her little room her heart took sudden possession of her. She opened the letter with trembling hands, and read what of course we shall let you read. We got it out of a bundle of old, smoky, yellow letters, years after all the parties concerned were gone on the eternal journey beyond earth.

‘My dear Mary, —

‘I cannot leave you so. I have about two hundred things to say to you, and it’s a shame I could not have had longer to see you; but blessed be ink and paper! I am writing and seeing to fifty things besides; so you musn’t wonder if my letter has rather a confused appearance.

‘I have been thinking that perhaps I gave you a wrong impression of myself, this afternoon. I am going to speak to you from my heart, as if I were confessing on my death-bed. Well, then, I do not confess to being what is commonly called a bad young man. I should be willing that men of the world generally, even strict ones, should look my life through and know all about it. It is only in your presence, Mary, that I feel that I am bad and low and shallow and mean, because you represent to me a sphere higher and holier than any in which I have ever moved, and stir up a sort of sighing and longing in my heart to come towards it. In all countries, in all temptations, Mary, your image has stood between me and low, gross vice. When I have been with fellows roaring drunken, beastly songs, — suddenly I have seemed to see you as you used to sit beside me in the singing-school, and your voice has been like an angel’s in

my ear, and I have got up and gone out sick and disgusted. Your face has risen up calm and white and still, between the faces of poor lost creatures who know no better way of life than to tempt us to sin. And sometimes, Mary, when I have seen girls that, had they been cared for by good, pious mothers, might have been like you, I have felt as if I could cry for them. Poor women are abused all the world over; and it's no wonder they turn round and revenge themselves on us.

'No, I have not been bad, Mary, as the world calls badness. I have been kept by you. But do you remember you told me once, that, when the snow first fell and lay so dazzling and pure and soft, all about, you always felt as if the spreads and window-curtains that seemed white before were dirty? Well, it's just like that with me. Your presence makes me feel that I am not pure, – that I am low and unworthy, – not worthy to touch the hem of your garment. Your good Dr. H. spent a whole half-day, the other Sunday, trying to tell us about the beauty of holiness; and he cut, and pared, and peeled, and sliced, and told us what it wasn't, and what was *like* it, and wasn't; and then he built up an exact definition, and fortified and bricked it up all round; and I thought to myself that he'd better tell 'em to look at Mary Scudder, and they'd understand all about it. That was what I was thinking when you talked to me for looking at you in church instead of looking towards the pulpit. It really made me laugh in myself to see what a good little ignorant, unconscious way you had of looking up at the Doctor, as if he knew more about that than you did.

‘And now as to your Doctor that you think so much of, I like him for certain things, in certain ways. He is a great, grand, large pattern of a man, – a man who isn’t afraid to think, and to speak anything he does think; but then I do believe, if he would take a voyage round the world in the fore-castle of a whaler, he would know more about what to say to people than he does now; it would certainly give him several new points to be considered. Much of his preaching about men is as like live men as Chinese pictures of trees and rocks and gardens, – no nearer the reality than that. All I can say is, “It isn’t so; and you’d know it, Sir, if you knew men.” He has got what they call a *system*, – just so many bricks put together just so; but it is too narrow to take in all I see in my wanderings round this world of ours. Nobody that has a soul, and goes round the world as I do, can help feeling it at times, and thinking, as he sees all the races of men and their ways, who made them, and what they were made for. To doubt the existence of a God seems to me like a want of common sense. There is a Maker and a Ruler, doubtless; but then, Mary, all this invisible world of religion is unreal to me. I can see we must be good, somehow, – that if we are not, we shall not be happy here or hereafter. As to all the metaphysics of your good Doctor, you can’t tell how they tire me. I’m not the sort of person that they can touch. I must have real things, – real people; abstractions are nothing to me. Then I think that he systematically contradicts on one Sunday what he preaches on another. One Sunday he tells us that God is the immediate efficient Author of every act of will; the next he tells us that we are entire free agents.

I see no sense in it, and can't take the trouble to put it together. But then he and you have something in you that I call religion, – something that makes you *good*. When I see a man working away on an entirely honest, unworldly, disinterested pattern, as he does, and when I see you, Mary, as I said before, I should like at least to *be* as you are, whether I could believe as you do or not.

'How could you so care for me, and waste on one so unworthy of you such love? Oh, Mary, some better man must win you; I never shall and never can; – but then you must not quite forget me; you must be my friend, my saint. If, through your prayers, your Bible, your friendship, you can bring me to your state, I am willing to be brought there, – nay, desirous. God has put the key of my soul into your hands.

'So, dear Mary, good-bye! Pray still for your naughty, loving

'Cousin James.'

Mary read this letter, and re-read it, with more pain than pleasure. To feel the immortality of a beloved soul hanging upon us, to feel that its only communications with Heaven must be through us, is the most solemn and touching thought that can pervade a mind. It was without one particle of gratified vanity, with even a throb of pain, that she read such exalted praises of herself from one blind to the glories of a far higher loveliness.

Yet was she at that moment, unknown to herself, one of the great company scattered through earth who are priests unto God, – ministering between the Divine One, who has unveiled

himself unto them, and those who as yet stand in the outer courts of the great sanctuary of truth and holiness. Many a heart, wrung, pierced, bleeding with the sins and sorrows of earth, longing to depart, stands in this mournful and beautiful ministry, but stands unconscious of the glory of the work in which it waits and suffers. God's kings and priests are crowned with thorns, walking the earth with bleeding feet and comprehending not the work they are performing.

Mary took from a drawer a small pocket-book, from which dropped a lock of black hair, – a glossy curl, which seemed to have a sort of wicked, wilful life in every shining ring, just as she had often seen it shake naughtily on the owner's head. She felt a strange tenderness towards the little wilful thing, and, as she leaned over it, made in her heart a thousand fond apologies for every fault and error.

She was standing thus when Mrs. Scudder entered the room to see if her daughter had yet retired.

‘What are you doing there, Mary?’ she said, as her eye fell on the letter. ‘What is it you are reading?’

Mary felt herself grow pale: it was the first time in her whole life that her mother had asked her a question that she was not from the heart ready to answer. Her loyalty to her only parent had gone on even-handed with that she gave to her God; she felt, somehow, that the revelations of that afternoon had opened a gulf between them, and the consciousness overpowered her.

Mrs. Scudder was astonished at her evident embarrassment,

her trembling, and paleness. She was a woman of prompt, imperative temperament, and the slightest hesitation in rendering to her a full, outspoken confidence had never before occurred in their intercourse. Her child was the core of her heart, the apple of her eye, and intense love is always near neighbour to anger; there was therefore an involuntary flash from her eye and a heightening of her colour, as she said, – ‘Mary, are you concealing anything from your mother?’

In that moment Mary had grown calm again. The wonted serene, balanced nature had found its habitual poise, and she looked up innocently, though with tears in her large blue eyes, and said, – ‘No, mother, – I have nothing that I do not mean to tell you fully. This letter came from James Marvyn; he came here to see me this afternoon.’

‘Here? – when? I did not see him.’

‘After dinner. I was sitting here in the window, and suddenly he came up behind me through the orchard-path.’

Mrs. Katy sat down with a flushed cheek and a discomposed air; but Mary seemed actually to bear her down by the candid clearness of the large blue eye which she turned on her as she stood perfectly collected, with her deadly-pale face and a brilliant spot burning on each cheek.

‘James came to say good-bye. He complained that he had not had a chance to see me alone since he came home.’

‘And what should he want to see you alone for?’ said Mrs. Scudder, in a dry, disturbed tone.

‘Mother, – everybody has things at times which they would like to say to some one person alone,’ said Mary.

‘Well, tell me what he said.’

‘I will try. In the first place he said that he always had been free, all his life, to run in and out of our house, and to wait on me like a brother.’

‘Hum!’ said Mrs. Scudder; ‘but he isn’t your brother for all that.’

‘Well, then he wanted to know why you were so cold to him, and why you never let him walk with me from meetings, or see me alone as we often used to. And I told him why, – that we were not children now, and that you thought it was not best; and then I talked with him about religion, and tried to persuade him to attend to the concerns of his soul; and I never felt so much hope for him as I do now.’

Aunt Katy looked sceptical, and remarked, – ‘If he really felt a disposition for religious instruction, Dr. H. could guide him much better than you could.’

‘Yes, – so I told him, and I tried to persuade him to talk with Dr. H.; but he was very unwilling. He said, I could have more influence over him than anybody else, – that nobody could do him any good but me.’

‘Yes, yes, – I understand all that,’ said Aunt Katy, – ‘I have heard young men say *that* before, and I know just what it amounts to.’

‘But, mother, I do think James was moved very much, this

afternoon. I never heard him speak so seriously; he seemed really in earnest, and he asked me to give him my Bible.'

'Couldn't he read any Bible but yours?'

'Why, naturally, you know, mother, he would like my Bible better, because it would put him in mind of me. He promised faithfully to read it all through.'

'And then, it seems, he wrote you a letter.' 'Yes, mother.'

Mary shrank from showing this letter, from the natural sense of honour which makes us feel it indelicate to expose to an unsympathising eye the confidential outpourings of another heart; and then, she felt quite sure that there was no such intercessor for James in her mother's heart as in her own. But over all this reluctance rose the determined force of duty; and she handed the letter in silence to her mother.

Mrs. Scudder took it, laid it deliberately in her lap, and then began searching in the pocket of her chintz petticoat for her spectacles. These being found, she wiped them, accurately adjusted them, opened the letter and spread it on her lap, brushing out its folds and straightening it, that she might read with the greater ease. After this she read it carefully and deliberately; and all this while there was such a stillness, that the sound of the tall varnished clock in the best room could be heard through the half-opened door.

After reading it with the most tiresome, torturing slowness, she rose, and laying it on the table under Mary's eye, and, pressing down her finger on two lines in the letter, said, 'Mary, have you

told James that you loved him?’

‘Yes, mother, always. I always loved him, and he always knew it.’

‘But, Mary, this that he speaks of is something different. What has passed between – ’

‘Why, mother, he was saying that we who were Christians drew to ourselves and did not care for the salvation of our friends; and then I told him how I had always prayed for him, and how I should be willing even to give up my hopes in heaven, if he might be saved.’

‘Child, – what do you mean?’

‘I mean, if only one of us two could go to heaven, I had rather it should be him than me,’ said Mary.

‘Oh, child! child!’ said Mrs. Scudder, with a sort of groan, – ‘has it gone with you so far as this? Poor child! – after all my care, you *are* in love with this boy, – your heart is set on him.’

‘Mother, I am not. I never expect to see him much, – never expect to marry him or anybody else; – only he seems to me to have so much more life and soul and spirit than most people, – I think him so noble and grand, – that is, that he *could* be, if he were all he ought to be, – that, somehow, I never think of myself in thinking of him, and his salvation seems worth more than mine; – men can do so much more! – they can live such splendid lives! – oh, a real noble man is so glorious!’

‘And you would like to see him well married, would you not?’ said Mrs. Scudder, sending, with a true woman’s aim, this keen

arrow into the midst of the cloud of enthusiasm which enveloped her daughter. 'I think,' she added, 'that Jane Spencer would make him an excellent wife.'

Mary was astonished at a strange, new pain that shot through her at these words. She drew in her breath and turned herself uneasily, as one who had literally felt a keen dividing blade piercing between soul and spirit. Till this moment, she had never been conscious of herself; but the shaft had torn the veil. She covered her face with her hands; the hot blood flushed scarlet over neck and brow; at last, with a beseeching look, she threw herself into her mother's arms.

'Oh, mother, mother, I am selfish, after all!'

Mrs. Scudder folded her silently to her heart, and said, 'My daughter, that is not at all what I wished it to be; I see how it is; – but then you have been a good child; I don't blame you. We can't always help ourselves. We don't always really know how we do feel. I didn't know, for a long while, that I loved your father. I thought I was only curious about him, because he had a strange way of treating me, different from other men; but, one day, I remember, Julian Simons told me that it was reported that his mother was making a match for him with Susan Emery, and I was astonished to find how I felt. I saw him that evening, and the moment he looked at me I saw it wasn't true; all at once I knew something I never knew before, – and that was, that I should be very unhappy, if he loved any one else better than me. But then, my child, your father was a different man from James; – he was

as much better than I was as you are than James. I was a foolish, thoughtless young thing then. I never should have been anything at all, but for him. Somehow, when I loved him, I grew more serious, and then he always guided and led me. Mary, your father was a wonderful man; he was one of the sort that the world knows not of; sometime I must show you his letters. I always hoped, my daughter, that you would marry such a man.'

'Don't speak of marrying, mother. I never shall marry.'

'You certainly should not, unless you can marry in the Lord. Remember the words, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"'

'Mother, James is not an infidel.'

'He certainly is an *unbeliever*, Mary, by his own confession; but then God is a Sovereign and hath mercy on whom He will. You do right to pray for him; but if he does not come out on the Lord's side, you must not let your heart mislead you. He is going to be gone three years, and you must try to think as little of him as possible; – put your mind upon your duties, like a good girl, and God will bless you. Don't believe too much in your power over him: – young men, when they are in love, will promise anything, and really think they mean it; but nothing is a saving change, except what is wrought in them by sovereign grace.'

'But, mother, does not God use the love we have to each other

as a means of doing us good? Did you not say that it was by your love to father that you first were led to think seriously?'

'That is true, my child,' said Mrs. Scudder, who, like many of the rest of the world, was surprised to meet her own words walking out on a track where she had not expected them, but was yet too true of soul to cut their acquaintance because they were not going the way of her wishes. 'Yes, all that is true; but yet, Mary, when one has but one little ewe lamb in the world, one is jealous of it. I would give all the world, if you had never seen James. It is dreadful enough for a woman to love anybody as you can, but it is more to love a man of unsettled character and no religion. But then the Lord appoints all our goings: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps; – I leave you, my child, in His hands.' And, with one solemn and long embrace, the mother and daughter parted for the night.

It is impossible to write a story of New England life and manners for a thoughtless, shallow-minded person. If we represent things as they are, their intensity, their depth, their unworldly gravity and earnestness, must inevitably repel lighter spirits, as the reverse pole of the magnet drives off sticks and straws.

In no other country were the soul and the spiritual life ever such intense realities, and everything contemplated so much (to use a current New-England phrase) 'in reference to eternity.' Mrs. Scudder was a strong clear-headed, practical woman. No one had a clearer estimate of the material and outward life,

or could more minutely manage its smallest item; but then a tremendous, eternal future had so weighed down and compacted the fibres of her very soul, that all earthly things were but as dust in comparison to it. That her child should be one elected to walk in white, to reign with Christ when earth was a forgotten dream, was her one absorbing wish; and she looked on all the events of life only with reference to this. The way of life was narrow, the chances in favour of any child of Adam infinitely small; the best, the most seemingly pure and fair, was by nature a child of wrath, and could be saved only by a sovereign decree, by which it should be plucked as a brand from the burning. Therefore it was, that, weighing all things in one balance, there was the sincerity of her whole being in the dread which she felt at the thought of her daughter's marriage with an unbeliever.

Mrs. Scudder, after retiring to her room, took her Bible, in preparation for her habitual nightly exercise of devotion, before going to rest. She read and re-read a chapter, scarce thinking what she was reading, – aroused herself, – and then sat with the book in her hand in deep thought. James Marvyn was her cousin's son, and she had a strong feeling of respect and family attachment for his father. She had, too, a real kindness for the young man, whom she regarded as a well-meaning, wilful youngster; but that *he* should touch her saint, her Mary, that *he* should take from her the daughter who was her all, really embittered her heart towards him.

‘After all,’ she said to herself, ‘there are three years, – three

years in which there will be no letters, or perhaps only one or two, – and a great deal may be done in three years, if one is wise;’ – and she felt within herself an arousing of all the shrewd womanly and motherly tact of her nature to meet this new emergency.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTOR

It is seldom that man and woman come together in intimate association, unless influences are at work more subtle and mysterious than the subjects of them dream. Even in cases where the strongest ruling force of the two sexes seems out of the question, there is still something peculiar and insidious in their relationship. A fatherly old gentleman, who undertakes the care of a sprightly young girl, finds, to his astonishment, that little Miss spins all sorts of cobwebs round him. Grave professors and teachers cannot give lessons to their female pupils just as they give them to the coarser sex; and more than once has the fable of 'Cadenus and Vanessa' been acted over by the most unlikely performers.

The Doctor was a philosopher, a metaphysician, a philanthropist, and in the highest and most earnest sense a minister of good on earth. The New England clergy had no sentimental affectation of sanctity that segregated them from wholesome human relations; and, consequently, our good Doctor had always resolved, in a grave and thoughtful spirit, at a suitable time in his worldly affairs, to choose unto himself a helpmeet. Love, as treated of in romances, he held to be a foolish and profane matter, unworthy the attention of a serious and

reasonable creature. All the language of poetry on this subject was to him an unknown tongue. He contemplated the entrance on married life somewhat in this wise: – That at a time and place suiting, he should look out unto himself a woman of a pleasant countenance and of good repute, a zealous, earnest Christian, and well skilled in the items of household management, whom, accosting as a stranger and pilgrim to a better life, he should loyally and lovingly entreat, as Isaac did Rebekah, to come under the shadow of his tent and be a helpmeet unto him in what yet remained of this mortal journey. But straitened circumstances, and the unsettled times of the Revolution, in which he had taken an earnest and zealous part, had delayed to a late bachelorhood the fulfilment of this resolution.

When once received under the shadow of Mrs. Scudder's roof, and within the provident sphere of her unfailing housekeeping, all material necessity for an immediate choice was taken away; for he was in exactly that situation dearest to every scholarly and thoughtful man, in which all that pertained to the outward life appeared to rise under his hand at the moment he wished for it, without his knowing how or why.

He was not at the head of a prosperous church and society, rich and well-to-do in the world, – but, as the pioneer leader of a new theology, in a country where theology was the all-absorbing interest, he had to breast the reaction that ever attends the advent of new ideas. His pulpit talents, too, were unattractive. His early training had been all logical, not in the least æsthetic;

for, like the ministry of his country generally, he had been trained always to think more of what he should say than of how he should say it. Consequently, his style, though not without a certain massive greatness, which always comes from largeness of nature, had none of those attractions by which the common masses are beguiled into thinking. He gave only the results of thought, not its incipient processes; and the consequence was, that few could follow him. In like manner, his religious teachings were characterized by an ideality so high as quite to discourage ordinary virtue.

There is a ladder to heaven, whose base God has placed in human affections, tender instincts, symbolic feelings, sacraments of love, through which the soul rises higher and higher, refining as she goes, till she outgrows the human, and changes, as she rises, into the image of the divine. At the very top of this ladder, at the threshold of Paradise, blazes dazzling and crystalline that celestial grade where the soul knows self no more, having learned, through a long experience of devotion, how blest it is to lose herself in that eternal Love and Beauty of which all earthly fairness and grandeur are but the dim type, the distant shadow. This highest step, this saintly elevation, which but few selectest spirits ever on earth attain, to raise the soul to which the Eternal Father organized every relation of human existence and strung every chord of human love, for which this world is one long discipline, for which the soul's human education is constantly varied, for which it is now torn by sorrow, now flooded by joy, to

which all its multiplied powers tend with upward hands of dumb and ignorant aspiration, – this Ultima Thule of virtue had been seized upon by our sage as the *all* of religion. He knocked out every round of the ladder but the highest, and then, pointing to its hopeless splendour, said to the world, ‘Go up thither and be saved!’

Short of that absolute self-abnegation, that unconditional surrender to the Infinite, there was nothing meritorious, – because, if *that* were commanded, every moment of refusal was rebellion. Every prayer, not based on such consecration, he held to be an insult to the Divine Majesty; – the reading of the Word, the conscientious conduct of life, the performance of the duties of man to man, being, without this, the deeds of a creature in conscious rebellion to its Eternal Sovereign, were all vitiated and made void. Nothing was to be preached to the sinner, but his ability and obligation to rise immediately to this height.

It is not wonderful that teaching of this sort should seem to many unendurable, and that the multitude should desert the preacher with the cry, ‘This is an hard saying; who can hear it?’ The young and gay were wearied by the dryness of metaphysical discussions which to them were as unintelligible as a statement of the last results of the mathematician to the child commencing the multiplication-table. There remained around him only a select circle, – shrewd, hard thinkers, who delighted in metaphysical subtleties, – deep-hearted, devoted natures, who sympathized with the unworldly purity of his life, his active

philanthropy and untiring benevolence, – courageous men, who admired his independence of thought and freedom in breasting received opinions, – and those unperceiving, dull, good people who are content to go to church anywhere as convenience and circumstances may drift them, – people who serve, among the keen-feeling and thinking portion of the world, much the same purpose as adipose matter in the human system, as a soft cushion between the nerves of feeling and the muscles of activity.

There was something affecting in the pertinacity with which the good Doctor persevered in saying his say to his discouraging minority of hearers. His salary was small; his meeting-house, damaged during the Revolutionary struggle, was dilapidated and forlorn, – fireless in winter, and in summer admitting a flood of sun and dust through those great windows which formed so principal a feature in those first efforts of Puritan architecture.

Still, grand in his humility, he preached on, – and as a soldier never asks why, but stands at apparently the most useless post, so he went on from Sunday to Sunday, comforting himself with the reflection that no one could think more meanly of his ministrations than he did himself. ‘I am like Moses only in not being eloquent,’ he said in his simplicity. ‘My preaching is barren and dull, my voice is hard and harsh; but then the Lord is a Sovereign, and may work through me. He fed Elijah once through a raven, and he may feed some poor wandering soul through me.’

The only mistake made by the good man was that of supposing that the elaboration of theology was preaching the gospel. The

gospel he was preaching constantly, by his pure, unworldly living, by his visitations to homes of poverty and sorrow, by his searching out of the lowly African slaves, his teaching of those whom no one else in those days had thought of teaching, and by the grand humanity, outrunning his age, in which he protested against the then admitted system of slavery and the slave-trade. But when, rising in the pulpit, he followed trains of thought suited only to the desk of the theological lecture-room, he did it blindly, following that law of self-development by which minds of a certain amount of fervour *must* utter what is in them, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

But the place where our Doctor was happiest was his study. There he explored, and wandered, and read, and thought, and lived a life as wholly ideal and intellectual as heart could conceive.

And could *Love* enter a reverend doctor's study, and find his way into a heart empty and swept of all those shreds of poetry and romance in which he usually finds the material of his incantations? Even so; – but he came so thoughtfully, so reverently, with so wise and cautious a footfall, that the good Doctor never even raised his spectacles to see who was there. The first that he knew, poor man, he was breathing an air of strange and subtle sweetness, – from what Paradise he never stopped his studies to inquire. He was like a great, rugged elm, with all its lacings and archings of boughs and twigs, which has stood cold and frozen against the metallic blue of winter sky,

forgetful of leaves, and patient in its bareness, calmly content in its naked strength and crystalline definiteness of outline. But in April there is a rising and stirring within the grand old monster, – a whispering of knotted buds, a mounting of sap coursing ethereally from bough to bough with a warm and gentle life; and though the old elm knows it not, a new creation is at hand. Just so, ever since the good man had lived at Mrs. Scudder's, and had the gentle Mary for his catechumen, a richer life seemed to have coloured his thoughts, – his mind seemed to work with a pleasure never felt before.

Whoever looked on the forehead of the good Doctor must have seen the squareness of ideality giving marked effect to its outline. As yet ideality had dealt only with the intellectual and invisible, leading to subtle refinements of argument and exalted ideas of morals. But there was lying in him, crude and unworked, a whole mine of those artistic feelings and perceptions which are awakened and developed only by the touch of beauty. Had he been born beneath the shadow of the great Duomo of Florence, where Giotto's Campanile rises like the slender stalk of a celestial lily, where varied marbles and rainbow glass and gorgeous paintings and lofty statuary call forth, even from childhood, the soul's reminiscences of the bygone glories of its pristine state, his would have been a soul as rounded and full in its sphere of faculties as that of Da Vinci or Michael Angelo. But of all that he was as ignorant as a child; and the first revelation of his dormant nature was to come to him through the face of

woman, – that work of the Mighty Master which is to be found in all lands and ages.

What makes the love of a great mind something fearful in its inception is, that it is often the unsealing of a hitherto undeveloped portion of a large and powerful being: the woman may or may not seem to other eyes adequate to the effect produced, but the man cannot forget her, because with her came a change which makes him for ever a different being. So it was with our friend. A woman it was that was destined to awaken in him all that consciousness which music, painting, poetry awaken in more evenly-developed minds; and it is the silent breathing of her creative presence that is even now creating him anew, while as yet he knows it not.

He never thought, this good old soul, whether Mary were beautiful or not; he never even knew that he looked at her; nor did he know why it was that the truths of his theology, when uttered by her tongue, had such a wondrous beauty as he never felt before. He did not know why it was, that, when she silently sat by him, copying tangled manuscript for the press, as she sometimes did, his whole study seemed so full of some divine influence, as if, like St. Dorothea, she had worn in her bosom, invisibly, the celestial roses of Paradise. He recorded honestly in his diary what marvellous freshness of spirit the Lord had given him, and how he seemed to be uplifted in his communings with heaven, without once thinking from the robes of what angel this sweetness had exhaled.

On Sundays, when he saw good Mrs. Jones asleep, and Simon Brown's hard, sharp eyes, and Deacon Twitchel mournfully rocking to and fro, and his wife handing fennel to keep the children awake, his eye glanced across to the front gallery, where one earnest young face, ever kindling with feeling and bright with intellect, followed on his way, and he felt uplifted and comforted. On Sunday mornings, when Mary came out of her little room, in clean white dress, with her singing-book and psalm-book in her hands, her deep eyes solemn from recent prayer, he thought of that fair and mystical bride, the Lamb's wife, whose union with her Divine Redeemer in a future millennial age was a frequent and favourite subject of his musings; yet he knew not that this celestial bride, clothed in fine linen, clean and white, veiled in humility and meekness, bore in his mind those earthly features. No, he never had dreamed of that! But only after she had passed by, that mystical vision seemed to him more radiant, more easy to be conceived.

It is said that, if a grape-vine be planted in the neighbourhood of a well, its roots, running silently under ground, wreath themselves in a network around the cold clear waters, and the vine's putting on outward greenness and unwonted clusters and fruit is all that tells where every root and fibre of its being has been silently stealing. So those loves are most fatal, most absorbing, in which, with unheeded quietness, every thought and fibre of our life twines gradually around some human soul, to us the unsuspected well-spring of our being. Fearful it is, because

so often the vine must be uprooted, and all its fibres wrenched away; but till the hour of discovery comes, how is it transfigured by a new and beautiful life!

There is nothing in life more beautiful than that trancelike quiet dawn which precedes the rising of love in the soul. When the whole being is pervaded imperceptibly and tranquilly by another being, and we are happy, we know not and ask not why, the soul is then receiving all and asking nothing. At a later day she becomes self-conscious, and then come craving exactions, endless questions, – the whole world of the material comes in with its hard counsels and consultations, and the beautiful trance fades for ever.

Of course all this is not so to *you*, my good friends, who read it without the most distant idea what it can mean; but there are people in the world to whom it has meant and will mean much, and who will see in the present happiness of our respectable friend something even ominous and sorrowful.

It had not escaped the keen eye of the mother how quickly and innocently the good Doctor was absorbed by her daughter, and thereupon had come long trains of practical reflections.

The Doctor, though not popular indeed as a preacher, was a noted man in his age. Her deceased husband had regarded him with something of the same veneration which might have been accorded to a divine messenger, and Mrs. Scudder had received and kept this veneration as a precious legacy. Then, although not handsome, the Doctor had decidedly a grand

and imposing appearance. There was nothing common or insignificant about him. Indeed, it had been said, that, when, just after the declaration of peace, he walked through the town in the commemorative procession side by side with General Washington, the minister, in the majesty of his gown, bands, cocked hat, and full flowing wig, was thought by many to be the more majestic and personable figure of the two.

In those days, the minister united in himself all those ideas of superior position and cultivation with which the theocratic system of the New England community had invested him. Mrs. Scudder's notions of social rank could reach no higher than to place her daughter on the throne of such pre-eminence.

Her Mary, she pondered, was no common girl. In those days it was a rare thing for young persons to devote themselves to religion or make any professions of devout life. The church, or that body of people who professed to have passed through a divine regeneration, was almost entirely confined to middle-aged and elderly people, and it was looked upon as a singular and unwonted call of divine grace when young persons came forward to attach themselves to it. When Mary, therefore, at quite an early age, in all the bloom of her youthful beauty, arose, according to the simple and impressive New England rite, to consecrate herself publicly to a religious life, and to join the company of professing Christians, she was regarded with a species of deference amounting even to awe. Had it not been for the childlike, unconscious simplicity of her manners, the young

people of her age would have shrunk away from her, as from one entirely out of their line of thought and feeling; but a certain natural and innocent playfulness and amiable self-forgetfulness made her a general favourite.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Scudder knew no young man whom she deemed worthy to have and hold a heart which she prized so highly. As to James, he stood at double disadvantage, because, as her cousin's son, he had grown up from childhood under her eye, and all those sins and iniquities into which gay and adventurous youngsters will be falling had come to her knowledge. She felt kindly to the youth; she wished him well; but as to giving him her Mary! – the very suggestion made her dislike him. She was quite sure he must have tried to beguile her – he must have tampered with her feelings to arouse in her pure and well-ordered mind so much emotion and devotedness as she had witnessed.

How encouraging a Providence, then, was it that he was gone to sea for three years! – how fortunate that Mary had been prevented in any way from committing herself with him! – how encouraging that the only man in those parts, in the least fitted to appreciate her, seemed so greatly pleased and absorbed in her society! – how easily might Mary's dutiful reverence be changed to a warmer sentiment, when she should find that so great a man could descend from his lofty thoughts to think of her!

In fact, before Mrs. Scudder had gone to sleep the first night after James's departure, she had settled upon the house where the minister and his young wife were to live, had reviewed

the window-curtains and bed-quilts for each room, and glanced complacently at an improved receipt for wedding-cake, which might be brought out to glorify a certain occasion!

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRIENDS AND RELATIONS OF JAMES

Mr. Zebedee Marvyn, the father of James, was the sample of an individuality so purely the result of New England society and education that he must be embodied in our story as a representative man of the times.

He owned a large farm in the immediate vicinity of Newport, which he worked with his own hands and kept under the most careful cultivation. He was a man past the middle of life, with a white head, a keen blue eye, and a face graven deeply with the lines of energy and thought. His was one of those clearly-cut minds which New England forms among her farmers, as she forms quartz crystals in her mountains, by a sort of gradual influence flowing through every pore of her soil and system.

His education, properly so called, had been merely that of those common schools and academies with which the States are thickly sown, and which are the springs of so much intellectual activity. Here he had learned to think and to inquire, – a process which had not ceased with his schooldays. Though toiling daily with his sons and hired man in all the minutiae of a farmer's life, he kept an observant eye on the field of literature, and there was not a new publication heard of that he did not immediately

find means to add it to his yearly increasing stock of books. In particular was he a well-read and careful theologian, and all the controversial tracts, sermons, and books, with which then, as ever since, New England has abounded, not only lay on his shelves, but had his pencilled annotations, queries, and comments thickly scattered along their margins. There was scarce an office of public trust which had not at one time or another been filled by him. He was deacon of the church, chairman of the school committee, justice of the peace, had been twice representative in the State legislature, and was in permanence a sort of adviser-general in all cases between neighbour and neighbour. Among other acquisitions, he had gained some knowledge of the general forms of law, and his advice was often asked in preference to that of the regular practitioners.

His dwelling was one of those large, square, white, green-blinded mansions – cool, clean, and roomy – wherein the respectability of New England in those days rejoiced. The windows were shaded by clumps of lilacs; the deep yard with its white fence enclosed a sweep of clean, short grass and a few fruit-trees. Opposite the house was a small blacksmith's shed, which, of a wet day, was sparkling and lively with bellows and ringing forge, while Mr. Zebedee and his sons were hammering and pounding and putting in order anything that was out of the way in farming-tools or establishments. Not unfrequently the latest scientific work or the last tractate of theology lay open by his side, the contents of which would be discussed with a neighbour

or two as they entered; for, to say the truth, many a neighbour, less forehanded and thrifty, felt the benefit of this arrangement of Mr. Zebedee, and would drop in to see if he 'wouldn't just tighten that rivet,' or 'kind o'ease out that 'ere brace,' or 'let a feller have a turn with his bellows or a stroke or two on his anvil,' – to all which the good man consented with a grave obligingness. The fact was, that as nothing in the establishment of Mr. Marvyn was often broken or lost or out of place, he had frequent applications to lend to those less fortunate persons, always to be found, who supply their own lack of considerateness from the abundance of their neighbours.

He who is known always to be in hand, and always obliging, in a neighbourhood, stands the chance sometimes of having nothing for himself. Mr. Zebedee reflected quietly on this subject, taking it, as he did all others, into grave and orderly consideration, and finally provided a complete set of tools, which he kept for the purpose of lending; and when any of these were lent, he told the next applicant quietly that the axe or the hoe was already out, and thus he reconciled the Scripture which commanded him to 'do good and lend' with that law of order which was written in his nature.

Early in life Mr. Marvyn had married one of the handsomest girls of his acquaintance, who had brought him a thriving and healthy family of children, of whom James was the youngest. Mrs. Marvyn was, at this time, a tall, sad-eyed, gentle-mannered woman, thoughtful, earnest, deep-natured, though sparing in the

matter of words. In all her household arrangements, she had the same thrift and order which characterized her husband; but hers was a mind of a finer and higher stamp than his.

In her bedroom, near by her work-basket, stood a table covered with books, – and so systematic were her household arrangements, that she never any day missed her regular hours for reading. One who should have looked over this table would have seen there how eager and hungry a mind was hid behind the silent eyes of this quiet woman. History, biography, mathematics, volumes of the encyclopædia, poetry, novels, all alike found their time and place there, – and while she pursued her household labours, the busy, active soul within travelled cycles and cycles of thought, few of which ever found expression in words. What might be that marvellous music of the *Miserere*, of which she read, that it convulsed crowds and drew groans and tears from the most obdurate? What might be those wondrous pictures of Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci? What would it be to see the Apollo, the Venus? What was the charm that enchanted the old marbles – charm untold and inconceivable to one who had never seen even the slightest approach to a work of art? Then those glaciers of Switzerland, that grand, unapproachable mixture of beauty and sublimity in her mountains! – what would it be to one who could see it? Then what were all those harmonies of which she read, – masses, fugues, symphonies? Oh, could she once hear the *Miserere* of Mozart, just to know what music was like! And the cathedrals, what were they? How wonderful they

must be, with their forests of arches, many-coloured as autumn-woods with painted glass, and the chants and anthems rolling down their long aisles! On all these things she pondered quietly, as she sat often on Sundays in the old staring, rattle-windowed meeting-house, and looked at the uncouth old pulpit, and heard the choir fa-sol-la-ing or singing fuguing tunes; but of all this she said nothing.

Sometimes, for days, her thoughts would turn from these subjects and be absorbed in mathematical or metaphysical studies. 'I have been following that treatise on Optics for a week, and never understood it till to-day,' she once said to her husband. 'I have found now that there has been a mistake in drawing the diagrams. I have corrected it, and now the demonstration is complete. – Dinah, take care, that wood is hickory, and it takes only seven sticks of that size to heat the oven.'

It is not to be supposed that a woman of this sort was an inattentive listener to preaching so stimulating to the intellect as that of Dr. H. No pair of eyes followed the web of his reasonings with a keener and more anxious watchfulness than those sad, deep-set, hazel ones; and as she was drawn along the train of its inevitable logic, a close observer might have seen how the shadows deepened over them. For, while others listened for the clearness of the thought, for the acuteness of the argument, she listened as a soul wide, fine-strung, acute, repressed, whose every fibre is a nerve, listens to the problem of its own destiny, – listened as the mother of a family listens, to know what were

the possibilities, the probabilities of this mysterious existence of ours to herself and those dearer to her than herself.

The consequence of all her listening was a history of deep inward sadness. That exultant joy, or that entire submission, with which others seemed to view the scheme of the universe, as thus unfolded, did not visit her mind. Everything to her seemed shrouded in gloom and mystery; and that darkness she received as a token of unregeneracy, as a sign that she was one of those who are destined, by a mysterious decree, never to receive the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Hence, while her husband was a deacon of the church, she for years had sat in her pew while the sacramental elements were distributed, a mournful spectator. Punctilious in every duty, exact, reverential, she still regarded herself as a child of wrath, an enemy to God, and an heir of perdition; nor could she see any hope of remedy, except in the sovereign, mysterious decree of an Infinite and Unknown Power, a mercy for which she waited with the sickness of hope deferred.

Her children had grown up successively around her, intelligent and exemplary. Her eldest son was mathematical professor in one of the leading colleges of New England. Her second son, who jointly with his father superintended the farm, was a man of wide literary culture and of fine mathematical genius; and not unfrequently, on winter evenings, the son, father, and mother worked together, by their kitchen fireside, over the calculations for the almanac for the ensuing year, which the son had been appointed to edit.

Everything in the family arrangements was marked by a sober precision, a grave and quiet self-possession. There was little demonstrativeness of affection between parents and children, brothers and sisters, though great mutual affection and confidence. It was not pride, nor sternness, but a sort of habitual shamefacedness, that kept far back in each soul those feelings which are the most beautiful in their outcome; but after a while, the habit became so fixed a nature, that a caressing or affectionate expression could not have passed the lips of one to another without a painful awkwardness. Love was understood, once for all, to be the basis on which their life was built. Once for all, they loved each other, and after that, the less said the better. It had cost the woman's heart of Mrs. Marvyn some pangs, in the earlier part of her wedlock, to accept of this *once for all*, in place of those daily out-gushings which every woman desires should be like God's loving kindness, 'new every morning;' but hers, too, was a nature strongly inclining inward, and, after a few tremulous movements, the needle of her soul settled, and her life-lot was accepted, – not as what she would like or could conceive, but as a reasonable and good one. Life was a picture painted in low, cool tones, but in perfect keeping; and though another and brighter style might have pleased better, she did not quarrel with this.

Into this steady, decorous, highly-respectable circle, the youngest child, James, made a formidable irruption. One sometimes sees launched into a family circle a child of so different a nature from all the rest, that it might seem as if, like

an aërolite, he had fallen out of another sphere. All the other babies of the Marvyn family had been of that orderly, contented sort who sleep till it is convenient to take them up, and while awake suck their thumbs contentedly and look up with large, round eyes at the ceiling when it is not convenient for their elders and betters that they should do anything else. In farther advanced childhood, they had been quiet and decorous children, who could be all dressed and set up in chairs, like so many dolls, of a Sunday morning, patiently awaiting the stroke of the church-bell to be carried out and put into the waggon which took them over the two miles' road to church. Possessed of such tranquil, orderly, and exemplary young offshoots, Mrs. Marvyn had been considered eminent for her 'faculty' in bringing up children.

But James was destined to put 'faculty,' and every other talent which his mother possessed, to rout. He was an infant of moods and tenses, and those not of any regular verb. He would cry of nights, and he would be taken up of mornings, and he would not suck his thumb, nor a bundle of caraway-seed tied in a rag and dipped in sweet milk, with which the good gossips in vain endeavoured to pacify him. He fought manfully with his two great fat fists the battle of babyhood, utterly reversed all nursery maxims, and reigned as baby over the whole prostrate household. When old enough to run alone, his splendid black eyes and glossy rings of hair were seen flashing and bobbing in every forbidden place and occupation. Now trailing on his mother's gown, he assisted her in salting her butter by throwing in small

contributions of snuff or sugar, as the case might be; and again, after one of those mysterious periods of silence which are of most ominous significance in nursery experience, he would rise from the demolition of her indigo-bag, showing a face ghastly with blue streaks, and looking more like a gnome than the son of a respectable mother. There was not a pitcher of any description of contents left within reach of his little tiptoes and busy fingers that was not pulled over upon his giddy head without in the least seeming to improve its steadiness. In short, his mother remarked that she was thankful every night when she had fairly gotten him into bed and asleep: James had really got through one more day and killed neither himself nor any one else.

As a boy, the case was little better. He did not take to study, yawned over books, and cut out moulds for running anchors when he should have been thinking of his columns of words in four syllables. No mortal knew how he learned to read, for he never seemed to stop running long enough to learn anything; and yet he did learn, and used the talent in conning over travels, sea-voyages, and lives of heroes and naval commanders. Spite of father, mother, and brother, he seemed to possess the most extraordinary faculty of running up unsavoury acquaintances. He was a hail-fellow well-met with every Tom and Jack and Jim and Ben and Dick that strolled on the wharves, and astonished his father with minutest particulars of every ship, schooner, and brig in the harbour, together with biographical notes of the different Toms, Dicks, and Harrys, by whom they were worked.

There was but one member of the family that seemed to know at all what to make of James, and that was their negro servant, Candace.

In those days, when domestic slavery prevailed in New England, it was quite a different thing in its aspects from the same institution in more southern latitudes. The hard soil, unyielding to any but the most considerate culture, the thrifty, close, shrewd habits of the people, and their untiring activity and industry, prevented, among the mass of the people, any great reliance on slave labour. It was something foreign, grotesque, and picturesque in a life of the most matter-of-fact sameness: it was even as if one should see clusters of palm-trees scattered here and there among Yankee wooden meeting-houses, or open one's eyes on clumps of yellow-striped aloes growing among hardhack and huckleberry bushes in the pastures.

Added to this, there were from the very first, in New England, serious doubts in the minds of thoughtful and conscientious people in reference to the lawfulness of slavery; and this scruple prevented many from availing themselves of it, and proved a restraint on all, so that nothing like plantation-life existed, and what servants were owned were scattered among different families, of which they came to be regarded and to regard themselves as a legitimate part and portion, – Mr. Marvyn, as a man of substance, numbering two or three in his establishment, among whom Candace reigned chief. The presence of these tropical specimens of humanity, with their wide, joyous, rich

physical abundance of nature and their hearty *abandon* of outward expression, was a relief to the still clear-cut lines in which the picture of New England life was drawn, which an artist must appreciate.

No race has ever shown such infinite and rich capabilities of adaptation to varying soil and circumstances as the negro. Alike to them the snows of Canada, the hard, rocky land of New England, with its set lines and orderly ways, or the gorgeous profusion and loose abundance of the Southern States. Sambo and Cuffy expand under them all. New England yet preserves among her hills and valleys the lingering echoes of the jokes and jollities of various sable worthies, who saw alike in orthodoxy and heterodoxy, in Dr. This-side and Dr. That-side, only food for more abundant merriment; – in fact, the minister of those days not unfrequently had his black shadow, a sort of African Boswell, who powdered his wig, brushed his boots, defended and patronized his sermons, and strutted complacently about, as if through virtue of his blackness he had absorbed every ray of his master's dignity and wisdom. In families, the presence of these exotics was a godsend to the children, supplying from the abundant outwardness and demonstrativeness of their nature that aliment of sympathy so dear to childhood, which the repressed and quiet habits of New England education denied. Many and many a New Englander counts among his pleasantest early recollections the memory of some of these genial creatures, who by their warmth of nature were the first and most potent

mesmerizers of his childish mind.

Candace was a powerfully built, majestic black woman, corpulent, heavy, with a swinging majesty of motion like that of a ship in a ground swell. Her shining black skin and glistening white teeth were indications of perfect physical vigour which had never known a day's sickness; her turban, of broad red and yellow bandanna stripes, had even a warm tropical glow; and her ample skirts were always ready to be spread over every childish transgression of her youngest pet and favourite, James.

She used to hold him entranced long winter evenings, while she sat knitting in the chimney-corner, and crooned to him strange, wild African legends of the things that she had seen in her childhood and early days, – for she had been stolen when about fifteen years of age; and these weird, dreamy talks increased the fervour of his roving imagination, and his desire to explore the wonders of the wide and unknown world. When rebuked or chastised, it was she who had secret bowels of mercy for him, and hid doughnuts in her ample bosom to be secretly administered to him in mitigation of the sentence that sent him supperless to bed; and many a triangle of pie, many a wedge of cake, had conveyed to him surreptitious consolations which his more conscientious mother longed, but dared not, to impart. In fact, these ministrations, if suspected, were winked at by Mrs. Marvyn, for two reasons: first, that mothers are generally glad of any loving-kindness to an erring boy, which they are not responsible for; and second, that Candace was so set in her ways

and opinions that one might as well come in front of a ship under full sail as endeavour to stop her in a matter where her heart was engaged.

To be sure, she had her own private and special quarrels with ‘Massa James,’ when he disputed any of her sovereign orders in the kitchen, and would sometimes pursue him with uplifted rolling-pin and floury hands when he had snatched a gingernut or cooky without suitable deference or supplication, and would declare, roundly, that there ‘never was sich an aggravatin’ young-un.’ But if, on the strength of this, any one else ventured a reproof, Candace was immediately round on the other side: ‘Dat ar chile gwin’ to be spiled, ’cause dey’s allers a’pickin’ on him; he’s well enough on’y let him alone.’

Well, under this miscellaneous assortment of influences, – through the order and gravity and solemn monotone of life at home, with the unceasing tick-tack of the clock for ever resounding through clean, empty-seeming rooms, – through the sea, ever shining, ever smiling, dimpling, soliciting, like a magical charger who comes saddled and bridled and offers to take you to fairyland, – through acquaintance with all sorts of foreign, outlandish ragamuffins among the ships in the harbour, – from disgust of slow-moving oxen, and long-drawn, endless furrows round the fifteen-acre lot, – from misunderstandings with grave elder brothers, and feeling somehow as if, he knew not why, he grieved his mother all the time just by being what he was and couldn’t help being, – and, finally, by a bitter break

with his father, in which came that last wrench for an individual existence which some time or other the young growing mind will give to old authority, – by all these united, was the lot at length cast; for one evening James was missing at supper, missing by the fireside, gone all night, not at home to breakfast, – till, finally, a strange, weird, most heathenish-looking cabin-boy, who had often been forbidden the premises by Mr. Marvyn, brought in a letter, half-defiant, half-penitent, which announced that James had sailed in the ‘Ariel’ the evening before.

Mr. Zebedee Marvyn set his face as a flint, and said, ‘He went out from us because he was not of us,’ – whereat old Candace lifted her great floury fist from the kneading-trough, and, shaking it like a large snowball, said, ‘Oh, you go ’long, Massa Marvyn; ye’ll live to count dat ar boy for de staff o’ your old age yet, now I tell ye; got de makin’ o’ ten or’nary men in him; kittles dat’s full allers will bile over; good yeast will blow out de cork, – lucky ef it don’t bust de bottle. Tell ye, der’s angels has der hooks in sich, and when de Lord wants him dey’ll haul him in safe and sound.’ And Candace concluded her speech by giving a lift to her whole batch of dough, and flinging it down in the trough with an emphasis that made the pewter on the dresser rattle.

This apparently irreverent way of expressing her mind, so contrary to the deferential habits studiously inculcated in family discipline, had grown to be so much a matter of course to all the family that nobody ever thought of rebuking it. There was a sort

of savage freedom about her, which they excused in right of her having been born and bred a heathen, and of course not to be expected to come at once under the yoke of civilization. In fact, you must all have noticed, my dear readers, that there are some sorts of people for whom everybody turns out as they would for a railroad-car, without stopping to ask why – and Candace was one of them.

Moreover, Mr. Marvyn was not displeased with this defence of James, as might be inferred from his mentioning it four or five times in the course of the morning, to say how foolish it was, – wondering why it was that Candace and everybody else got so infatuated with that boy, – and ending, at last, after a long period of thought, with the remark that these poor African creatures often seemed to have a great deal of shrewdness in them, and that he was often astonished at the penetration that Candace showed.

At the end of the year James came home, more quiet and manly than he had ever been known before, – so handsome with his sunburnt face, and his keen, dark eyes and glossy curls, that half the girls in the front gallery lost their hearts the first Sunday he appeared in church. He was tender as a woman to his mother, and followed her with his eyes, like a lover, wherever she went: he made due and manly acknowledgments to his father, but declared his fixed and settled intention to abide by the profession he had chosen; and he brought home all sorts of strange foreign gifts for every member of the household. Candace was glorified with a flaming red and yellow turban of Moorish stuff from Mogadore,

together with a pair of gorgeous yellow morocco slippers with peaked toes, which, though there appeared no call to wear them in her common course of life, she would put on her fat feet, and contemplate with daily satisfaction. She became increasingly strengthened thereby in the conviction that the angels who had their hooks in Massa James's jacket were already beginning to shorten the line.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH TREATS OF ROMANCE

There is no word in the English language more unceremoniously and indefinitely kicked and cuffed about, by what are called sensible people, than the word *romance*. When Mr. Smith or Mr. Stubbs has brought every wheel of life into such range and order that it is one steady, daily grind, – when they themselves have come into the habits and attitudes of the patient donkey, who steps round and round the endlessly turning wheel of some machinery – then they fancy that they have gotten ‘the victory that overcometh the world.’

All but this dead grind, and the dollars that come through the mill, is by them thrown into one waste ‘catch-all’ and labelled *romance*. Perhaps there was a time in Mr. Smith’s youth, – he remembers it now, – when he read poetry, when his cheek was wet with strange tears, when a little song, ground out by an organ-grinder in the street, had power to set his heart beating and bring a mist before his eyes. Ah, in those days he had a vision! – a pair of soft eyes stirred him strangely; a little weak hand was laid on his manhood, and it shook and trembled; and then came all the humility, the aspiration, the fear, the hope, the high desire, the troubling of the waters by the descending angel of love, – and a little more and Mr. Smith might have become a man, instead

of a banker! He thinks of it now, sometimes, as he looks across the fireplace after dinner and sees Mrs. Smith asleep, innocently shaking the bouquet of pink bows and Brussels lace that waves over her placid red countenance.

Mrs. Smith wasn't his first love, nor, indeed, any love at all, but they agreed reasonably well. And as for poor Nellie, – well, she is dead and buried, – all that was stuff and romance. Mrs. Smith's money set him up in business, and Mrs. Smith is a capital manager, and he thanks God that he isn't romantic, and tells Smith Junior not to read poetry or novels, and to stick to realities.

'This is the victory that overcometh the world,' – to learn to be fat and tranquil, to have warm fires and good dinners, to hang your hat on the same peg at the same hour every day, to sleep soundly all night, and never to trouble your head with a thought or imagining beyond.

But there are many people besides Mr. Smith who have gained this victory, – who have strangled their higher nature and buried it, and built over its grave the structure of their life, the better to keep it down.

The fascinating Mrs. T., whose life is a whirl between ball and opera, point-lace, diamonds, and schemings of admiration for herself, and of establishments for her daughters, – there was a time, if you will believe me, when that proud, worldly woman was so humbled, under the touch of some mighty power, that she actually thought herself capable of being a poor man's wife. She thought she could live in a little, mean house, on no-matter-

what-street, with one servant, and make her own bonnets, and mend her own clothes, and sweep the house Mondays, while Betty washed, – all for what? All because she thought that there was a man so noble, so true, so good, so high-minded, that to live with him in poverty, to be guided by him in adversity, to lean on him in every rough place of life, was a something nobler, better, purer, more satisfying, than French laces, opera-boxes, and even Madame Roget's best gowns.

Unfortunately, this was all romance, – there was no such man. There was, indeed, a person of very common, self-interested aims and worldly nature, whom she had credited at sight with an unlimited draft on all her better nature; and when the hour of discovery came, she awoke from her dream with a start and a laugh, and ever since has despised aspiration, and been busy with the *realities* of life, and feeds poor little Mary Jane, who sits by her in the opera-box there, with all the fruit which she has picked from the bitter tree of knowledge. There is no end of the epigrams and witticisms which she can throw out, this elegant Mrs. T., on people who marry for love, lead prosy, worky lives, and put on their best cap with pink ribbons for Sunday. 'Mary Jane shall never make a fool of herself;' but, even as she speaks, poor Mary Jane's heart is dying within her at the vanishing of a pair of whiskers from an opposite box, which whiskers the poor little fool has credited with a *résumé* drawn from her own imaginings of all that is grandest and most heroic, most worshipful in man. By-and-by, when Mrs. T. finds the

glamour has fallen on her daughter, she wonders; she has 'tried to keep novels out of the girl's way, – where did she get these notions?'

All prosaic, and all bitter, disenchanted people talk as if poets and novelists *made* romance. They do – just as much as craters make volcanoes, – no more. What is romance? whence comes it? Plato spoke to the subject wisely, in his quaint way, some two thousand years ago, when he said, 'Man's soul, in a former state, was winged and soared among the gods; and so it comes to pass, that, in this life, when the soul, by the power of music or poetry, or the sight of beauty, hath her remembrance quickened, forthwith there is a struggling and a pricking pain as of wings trying to come forth, – even as children in teething.' And if an old heathen, two thousand years ago, discoursed thus gravely of the romantic part of our nature, whence comes it that in Christian lands we think in so pagan a way of it, and turn the whole care of it to ballad-makers, romancers, and opera-singers?

Let us look up in fear and reverence, and say, 'God is the great maker of romance. He, from whose hand came man and woman, – He, who strung the great harp of Existence with all its wild and wonderful and manifold chords, and attuned them to one another, – He is the great Poet of life.' Every impulse of beauty, of heroism, and every craving for purer love, fairer perfection, nobler type and style of being than that which closes like a prison-house around us, in the dim, daily walk of life, is God's breath, God's impulse, God's reminder to the soul that

there is something higher, sweeter, purer, yet to be attained.

Therefore, man or woman, when thy ideal is shattered – as shattered a thousand times it must be; when the vision fades, the rapture burns out, turn not away in scepticism and bitterness, saying, ‘There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink,’ but rather cherish the revelations of those hours as prophecies and fore-shadowings of something real and possible, yet to be attained in the manhood of immortality. The scoffing spirit that laughs at romance, is an apple of the Devil’s own handing from the bitter tree of knowledge; – it opens the eyes only to see eternal nakedness.

If ever you have had a romantic, uncalculating friendship – a boundless worship and belief in some hero of your soul; if ever you have so loved, that all cold prudence, all selfish worldly considerations, have gone down like drift-wood before a river flooded with new rain from heaven, so that you even forgot yourself, and were ready to cast your whole being into the chasm of existence, as an offering before the feet of another, and all for nothing, – if you awoke bitterly betrayed and deceived, still give thanks to God that you have had one glimpse of heaven. The door now shut will open again. Rejoice that the noblest capability of your eternal inheritance has been made known to you; treasure it, as the highest honour of your being, that ever you could so feel, – that so divine a guest ever possessed your soul.

By such experiences are we taught the pathos, the sacredness of life; and if we use them wisely, our eyes will ever after

be anointed to see what poems, what romances, what sublime tragedies lie around us in the daily walk of life, 'written not with ink, but in fleshly tables of the heart.' The dullest street of the most prosaic town has matter in it for more smiles, more tears, more intense excitement, than ever were written in story or sung in poem; the reality is there, of which the romancer is the second-hand recorder.

So much of a plea we put in boldly, because we foresee grave heads beginning to shake over our history, and doubts rising in reverend and discreet minds whether this history is going to prove anything but a love-story, after all.

We do assure you, right reverend Sir, and you, most discreet Madam, that it is not going to prove anything else; and you will find, if you will follow us, that there is as much romance burning under the snow-banks of cold Puritan preciseness as if Dr. H. had been brought up to attend operas instead of metaphysical preaching; and Mary had been nourished on Byron's poetry instead of 'Edwards on the Affections.'

The innocent credulities, the subtle deceptions, that were quietly at work under the grave, white curls of the Doctor's wig, were exactly of the kind which have beguiled man in all ages, when near the sovereign presence of her who is born for his destiny; – and as for Mary, what did it avail her that she could say the Assembly's Catechism from end to end without tripping, and that every habit of her life beat time to practical realities, steadily as the parlour clock? The wildest Italian singer or dancer,

nursed on nothing but excitement from her cradle, never was more thoroughly possessed by the awful and solemn mystery of woman's life, than this Puritan girl.

It is quite true, that, the next morning after James's departure, she rose as usual in the dim gray, and was to be seen opening the kitchen-door just at the moment when the birds were giving the first little drowsy stir and chirp, – and that she went on setting the breakfast-table for the two hired men, who were bound to the fields with the oxen, – and that then she went on skimming cream for the butter, and getting ready to churn, and making up biscuit for the Doctor's breakfast, when he and they should sit down together at a somewhat later hour; and as she moved about, doing all these things, she sung various scraps of old psalm-tunes; and the good Doctor, who was then busy with his early exercises of devotion, listened, as he heard the voice, now here, now there, and thought about angels and the Millennium. Solemnly and tenderly there floated in at his open study-window, through the breezy lilacs, mixed with low of kine, and bleat of sheep, and hum of early wakening life, the little silvery ripples of that singing, somewhat mournful in its cadence, as if a gentle soul were striving to hush itself to rest. The words were those of the rough old version of the psalms then in use: —

'Truly my waiting soul relies
In silence God upon:
Because from him there doth arise
All my salvation.'

And then came the busy patter of the little footsteps without, the moving of chairs, the clink of plates, as busy hands were arranging the table; and then again there was a pause, and he thought she seemed to come near to the open window of the adjoining room, for the voice floated in clearer and sadder: —

‘O God, to me be merciful,
Be merciful to me!
Because my soul for shelter safe,
Betakes itself to thee.

‘Yea, in the shadow of thy wings
My refuge have I placed,
Until these sore calamities
Shall quite be overpast.’

The tone of life in New England, so habitually earnest and solemn, breathed itself in the grave and plaintive melodies of the tunes then sung in the churches; and so these words, though in the saddest minor key, did not suggest to the listening ear of the auditor anything more than that pensive religious calm in which he delighted to repose. A contrast indeed they were, in their melancholy earnestness, to the exuberant carollings of a robin, who, apparently attracted by them, perched himself hard by in the lilacs, and struck up such a merry *roulade* as quite diverted the attention of the fair singer; in fact, the intoxication breathed

in the strain of this little messenger, whom God had feathered and winged and filled to the throat with ignorant joy, came in singular contrast with the sadder notes breathed by that creature of so much higher mould and fairer clay, – that creature born for an immortal life.

But the good Doctor was inly pleased when she sung; and when she stopped, looked up from his Bible wistfully, as missing something, he knew not what; for he scarce thought how pleasant the little voice was, or knew he had been listening to it, – and yet he was in a manner enchanted by it, so thankful and happy that he exclaimed with fervour, ‘The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.’

So went the world with him, full of joy and praise, because the voice and the presence wherein lay his unsuspected life, were securely near, – so certainly and constantly a part of his daily walk, that he had not even the trouble to wish for them. But in that other heart how was it? – how with the sweet saint that was talking to herself in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs?

The good child had remembered her mother’s parting words the night before, – ‘Put your mind upon your duties,’ – and had begun her first conscious exercise of thought with a prayer that grace might be given her to do it. But even as she spoke, mingling and interweaving with that golden thread of prayer was another consciousness, a life in another soul, as she prayed that the grace of God might overshadow him, shield him from temptation, and lead him up to heaven; and this prayer so got the start of the

other, that, ere she was aware, she had quite forgotten self, and was feeling, living, thinking in that other life.

The first discovery she made, when she looked out into the fragrant orchard, whose perfumes steamed in at her window, and listened to the first chirping of birds among the old apple-trees, was one that has astonished many a person before her; – it was this: she found that all that had made life interesting to her was suddenly gone. She herself had not known that, for the month past, since James came from sea, she had been living in an enchanted land; that Newport harbour, and every rock and stone, and every mat of yellow seaweed on the shore, that the two-mile road between the cottage and the white house of Zebedee Marvyn, every mullein-stalk, every juniper-tree, had all had a light and a charm which were suddenly gone. There had not been an hour in the day for the last four weeks that had not had its unsuspected interest, – because he was at the White House; because, possibly, he might be going by, or coming in: nay, even in church, when she stood up to sing, and thought she was thinking only of God, had she not been conscious of that tenor voice that poured itself out by her side? and though afraid to turn her head that way, had she not felt that he was there every moment? – heard every word of the sermon and prayer for him? The very vigilant care which her mother had taken to prevent private interviews had only served to increase the interest by throwing over it the veil of constraint and mystery. Silent looks, involuntary starts, things indicated, not expressed – these

are the most dangerous, the most seductive aliment of thought to a delicate and sensitive nature. If things were said out, they might not be said wisely, – they might repel by their freedom, or disturb by their unfitness; but what is only looked is sent into the soul through the imagination, which makes of it all that the ideal faculties desire.

In a refined and exalted nature it is very seldom that the feeling of love, when once thoroughly aroused, bears any sort of relation to the reality of the object. It is commonly an enkindling of the whole power of the soul's love for whatever she considers highest and fairest; it is, in fact, the love of something divine and unearthly, which, by a sort of illusion, connects itself with a personality. Properly speaking, there is but One true, eternal Object of all that the mind conceives in this trance of its exaltation. Disenchantment must come, of course; and in a love which terminates in happy marriage there is a tender and gracious process, by which, without shock or violence, the ideal is gradually sunk in the real, which, though found faulty and earthly, is still ever tenderly remembered as it seemed under the morning light of that enchantment.

What Mary loved so passionately, that which came between her and God in every prayer, was not the gay, young, dashing sailor, – sudden in anger, imprudent of speech, and, though generous in heart, yet worldly in plans and schemings, – but her own ideal of a grand and noble man, such a man as she thought he might become. He stood glorified before her – an image

of the strength that overcomes things physical; of the power of command which controls men and circumstances; of the courage which disdains fear; of the honour which cannot lie; of constancy which knows no shadow of turning; of tenderness which protects the weak; and, lastly, of religious loyalty, which should lay the golden crown of its perfected manhood at the feet of a Sovereign Lord and Redeemer. This was the man she loved; and with this regal mantle of glories she invested the person called James Marvyn: and all that she saw and felt to be wanting, she prayed for with the faith of a believing woman.

Nor was she wrong; for, as to every leaf and every flower there is an ideal to which the growth of the plant is constantly urging, so is there an ideal to every human being, – a perfect form in which it might appear, were every defect removed and every characteristic excellence stimulated to the highest point. Once, in an age, God sends to some of us a friend who loves in us, *not* a false imagining, an unreal character, but, looking through all the rubbish of our imperfections, loves in us the divine ideal of our nature, – loves, not the man that we are, but the angel that we may be. Such friends seem inspired by a divine gift of prophecy, – like the mother of St. Augustine, who, in the midst of the wayward, reckless youth of her son, beheld him in a vision, standing, clothed in white, a ministering priest at the right hand of God – as he has stood for long ages since. Could a mysterious foresight unveil to us this resurrection form of the friends with whom we daily walk, compassed about with mortal infirmity, we should

follow them with faith and reverence through all the disguises of human faults and weaknesses, 'waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.'

But these wonderful soul-friends, to whom God grants such perception, are the exceptions in life; yet, sometimes are we blessed with one who sees through us, as Michel Angelo saw through a block of marble when he attacked it in a divine fervour, declaring that an angel was imprisoned within it: and it is often the resolute and delicate hand of such a friend that sets the angel free.

There be soul-artists, who go through this world, looking among their fellows with reverence, as one looks amid the dust and rubbish of old shops for hidden works of Titian and Leonardo; and, finding them, however cracked or torn, or painted over with tawdry daubs of pretenders, immediately recognise the divine original, and set themselves to cleanse and restore. Such be God's real priests, whose ordination and anointing are from the Holy Spirit; and he who hath not this enthusiasm is not ordained of God, though whole synods of bishops laid hands on him.

Many such priests there be among women; for to this silent ministry their nature calls them, endowed, as it is, with fineness of fibre and a subtile keenness of perception outrunning slow-footed reason, – and she of whom we write was one of these.

At this very moment, while the crimson wings of morning were casting delicate reflections on tree, and bush, and rock, they

were also reddening innumerable waves round a ship that sailed alone, with a wide horizon stretching like an eternity around it; and in the advancing morning stood a young man, thoughtfully looking off into the ocean, with a book in his hand – James Marvyn, – as truly and heartily a creature of this material world as Mary was of the invisible and heavenly.

There are some who seem made to *live*, – life is such a joy to them; their senses are so fully *en rapport* with all outward things; the world is so keenly appreciable, so much a part of themselves; they are so conscious of power and victory in the government and control of material things, that the moral and invisible life often seems to hang tremulous and unreal in their minds, like the pale, faded moon in the light of a gorgeous sunrise. When brought face to face with the great truths of the invisible world, they stand related to the higher wisdom much like the gorgeous, gay Alcibiades to the divine Socrates, or like the young man in Holy Writ to Him for whose appearing Socrates longed; – they gaze, imperfectly comprehending, and at the call of ambition or riches turn away sorrowing.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.