NO NAME SERIES.

"Is the Gentleman Anonymous? Is he a great Unknown?"
Daniel Deronda.

His Majesty, Myself.

[By W. M. Baker]

"I once knew a man who had advanced to such a pitch of self-esteem, that he never mentioned himself without taking off his hat." — Coleridge.

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NO NAME SERIES.

HIS MAJESTY, MYSELF.

CONTENTS.

HIS MAJESTY, MYSELF.

PRELIMINARY.

ONE day long since, there landed in New York a boy named Donald McGregor. At what precise date he came, or by what vessel, he never told, but he must have been about twelve years old at the time. The lad was a genuine bit of granite struck off from some Grampian hill by a blow sudden and sharp enough to send him across the Atlantic. So rough and tough was he, that he seemed rather like a fragment of lava hurled over the water by volcanic action elsewhere,—an atom of cinder out of which all possibility of heat renewed had departed forever.

He was not merely a bit of slag, but of Scotch slag, all angles, and every angle an edge hard and sharp. Going direct from the dock, on landing, to the largest commission house he could find in New York, he so insisted upon it that the firm, so to speak, could not help themselves, and found before they knew it that they had employed him, or rather that he had employed himself, as an errand-boy.

He was singularly favored from the outset in being paid a salary which was next to nothing. Even more serviceable to him was the opposition he enjoyed at the hands of every person in the establishment. Like a certain sort of fishing-smack, all the lad needed to bring out his strongest qualities was a wind stiff and steady against him. Invigorated by poverty, and developed by resistance, Donald won his way as steadily as it was slowly. Living

upon a handful of oatmeal a day, he simply persisted. The first on the ground in the morning, he forgot nothing, did everything, was everywhere at the same moment, indulged in no nonsense, flinched from no pain, and was the last to leave at night.

The moment there was oatmeal enough for two, his sister Elspeth crossed the ocean to keep house for him. She was older than he, and his duplicate, except that she was more femininely, and therefore more intensely, himself. Her housekeeping was the least part of her help. She it was who had sent him to America, had sustained him by her letters, and every step he took was under her advice. No wonder that he became after her arrival more efficient and indispensable to the firm, if possible, than before. Year after year, as by process of nature, he became porter, entry clerk, salesman, second clerk, head clerk. It was a struggle hard and long, but he was merely toughened in grain by every wind that blew, growing every day more thoroughly Scotch than if he had remained in Scotland.

The heads of the house valued him, as the years rolled by, as they did the wind which brought their ships into port, but no more. Donald McGregor was a trade-wind so strong and steady that in due time he became a partner.

By this date there was considerably more than oatmeal enough for three, and Donald sent for the last member of his family left in Scotland, his sister Jean. She was the one bit of romance in his very unromantic nature. From almost the hour of her birth the coarse and ungainly lad had loved her to a degree which the rest of the household neither knew nor could have understood had they known it. When she was little more than a bright-haired baby, he gave to her every moment he could steal from his work. He would bring her flowers, when he came in from his tasks at night, red bits of stone, eggs from the nests among the rocks, — whatever he could find to amuse her, — and his greatest delight was to take her with him of summer days to where he watched the sheep among the barren slopes. There he would

make a nest for her of stones and moss, would watch her as she slept, would sing to her when she cried, and would bring home the sheep at night bearing her upon his back from miles away. When misfortune befell the family, little Jean was the inspiration which drove him over the sea to build up a new home for her. Although his sister Elspeth had been his counsellor, it was only Jean in reality whom he had regretted to leave, and it was for her he had worked so hard. After his parents died, and Elspeth joined him in America, he had maintained Jean at school in Scotland, and the day she landed, at last, in New York was the happiest of his life. He had long before arranged, in view of her coming, that she should know nothing of his life before, and when she stepped ashore he bore her in silent triumph to a handsome house which he had bought in another part of the city.

Jean proved to be more than Donald had hoped. In fact, with her fair hair, blue eyes, gentle voice, sweet ways, and face as fresh and rosy as morning, she was a luxury beyond anything he had dared to look forward to during the years of toil. It was as if all that was worth having in Scotland had arrived in her, and with her there came to Donald McGregor the first taste and the purest and sweetest flavor of his wealth. Never was there a lassie who more richly deserved it, and Donald and Elspeth lavished upon Jean dollars where they would not have allowed themselves pennies.

But, alas! there is that which is mightier even than the Scotch. Jean landed in August. One morning during the February following there came into the commission house a former customer, a Mr. Steven Trent. He was a young planter from the South, of light figure, plainly dressed, with the manners of a nobleman. The firm had made many a dollar out of him, as they had out of his father before him; first, by selling for him his sugar and cotton; secondly, and more than over again, by buying for him his plantation supplies; and Mr. Trent was therefore a gentleman to be conciliated. Secretly proud,

also, of his house and of his sister Jean, Donald McGregor invited this profitable customer to dinner. Now young Trent had seen, since he left college at Old Orange, very little society beyond that of his own negroes. Possibly they were of a particularly sable hue. Certainly the Scotch girl whom he met in Mr. McGregor's parlors was so heavenly a contrast to them that she seemed as an angel of God. The ardent Southerner fell desperately in love. In fact he came near defeating himself by the very fervor of his wooing. Leaving his plantation to take care of itself, he stayed in New York to press his suit, and poor Jean was almost frightened by his ardor. Never before had she read even in poetry of such devotion. Wholly unaware of it himself, the lover had one great advantage. The girl had grown up in Scotland with an inbred reverence for the nobility, and she could not rid herself of the idea that this handsome gentleman was of noble blood. To her, from the first, he seemed to be an earl, an American Duke of Argyle. Otherwise, she would have been repelled by his impetuosity. "But this is the way," she said to herself, "that a prince always wooes, I suppose," and when she became sufficiently at ease to love him in return she did so with all her heart.

Whatever may have influenced the older woman, she, to her brother's astonishment, sided with them from the start. Elspeth took their part, in fact, with such energy, that within three months the lovers were engaged. The young planter came and went between the South and New York continually, and in a year he had married Jean and taken her home. Little as he said, Donald was cut to the soul. He had toiled that he might have Jean beneath a roof of his own, and a stranger had frustrated, as in an instant, the labor of a lifetime. He said nothing, but he never forgave either Jean or her husband.

Not long before the marriage, Donald had occasion to visit Vermont on business. A certain Mr. Thirlmore, a merchant of that region, indebted to the firm, was on

the brink of bankruptcy, and the only property belonging to him upon which the Scotchman could lay hold was a large tract of the worst land in the State. The instant McGregor saw it, he was smitten by its rocky resemblance to the part of Scotland from which he came, and he there and then determined to make it his home when he should retire from business. It so happened that Mr. Thirlmore came down to New York to close the transfer of the land upon the very day of the wedding. The old Scot was astonished at the thrill which shot through him as the act was completed. He was losing Jean, and now, under an aspect which expressed only special dissatisfaction with his bargain, "It is as if I had got back Scotland and my boyhood," he said to himself. So far did he melt inwardly, that he took Mr. Thirlmore home with him to the marriage.

In his secret gladness of heart over his new possession, he did not once notice that his companion was good-looking, as well as long-legged, good-natured, and good-for-nothing. There could not have been a more dangerous time in which to take such an unmarried man to his house. The affair of Jean and her lover had given rise to feeling more bitter between Elspeth and Donald than even Jean imagined. In such natures a separation is like the rending asunder of rock, — only another earthquake could bring together again the divided cliffs. Perhaps her sister's happiness had awakened her own girlhood once more in the bosom of Elspeth. Who can understand a woman? The Vermont visitor remained in the city, dropping in upon her every few days. Probably he had nothing else to do, since his failure. Possibly, having sold his last acre, he had nowhere else to go. However it was, the first hint Donald had of the matter was conveyed in the announcement to him by his sister that she was about to be married to Mr. Thirlmore. So well did he know her, that Donald McGregor wasted no breath in astonishment even, and in six months Elspeth too was wedded and gone.

"Deed us the farm ye say is sa mich like Scotland,

Donald," Mrs. Thirlmore said, before she left, for it was agreed that the couple were to live there.

"Na, na, Elspeth," was his canny reply, "I'll no gie it ye; but ye can live there all the same." And thither the couple removed, not without more pecuniary help from her brother than Elspeth had hoped.

But Donald, left now as lonely as when he first landed, had no leisure for sentiment. Love had wronged him, but Death hastened to his aid. The partners in the house dropped out of his way one after the other. In a few years he held the business as completely in his own hands as he could wish.

"The first thing I did the day I came," he said to himself, "was to carry a kit o' mackerel across town. To-day, I carry the hale house."

But the inevitable logic of cause and effect, common to natural law and to Scotchmen, wrought out soon after another result. One of the great periodical panics was becoming due. The old merchant had given himself so long and so entirely to business that he had attained to the sagacity which in art is named genius. He now executed his masterpiece. Almost the only man in the city to understand matters clearly, he coolly waited until the billow of business had reached its highest crest. Seeing and seizing upon that instant of poise, before it broke to spend itself in after years of foam and wreck, Donald Mc Gregor sold out and retired.

Mr. Thirlmore was dead, leaving Elspeth with one child, a son, and the old Scotchman went to live with her, transferring to the management of his farm the energy he had withdrawn from the city.

The place was wonderfully like their old home, and very soon the brother and sister were living together as if they were children, but of an exceedingly tough sort, once more. How many dollars her brother was worth Mrs. Thirlmore did not know. She might as easily have conjectured how many snow-flakes are at the disposal of Winter.

Once a year Mrs. Trent spent a month with them,

bringing with her from her home in the South her little Steven. But calamities came at last upon the Trents, and in clusters as those fruits of Sodom always do. Their plantation lay several feet below the level of the Mississippi River, which ran along one side of it, the usual Levee intervening. While young Steven was fishing upon the embankment one winter afternoon, he noticed that the turbid water seemed to be higher than he had ever seen it. He was sixteen years old at the time, and he urged his father, at supper, to be ready for any break in the banks. It was well he did, for no one went to bed that night, and before day the river was upon them. The family barely escaped with their lives to higher ground, and their house, as well as the negro quarters and sugar-mill, was swept away, many negroes being drowned. Worse still, the river made a permanent bed for itself through the heart of the plantation. As if all ills were rushing upon them through the broken embankments, their overseer saved himself from the wreck of things by forging Steven Trent's name, drawing out their last cent in bank, and making his escape. It availed nothing that the bank should have made it good, for soon after the cashier fled, with what was left of its funds, and the institution perished. A few weeks later, and Mrs. Trent died from the exposure of the disastrous night, and the malaria following upon the overflow slew most of the slaves that were left.

If Steven Trent had been Scotch, he might have risen against, and in time have mastered misfortune. But he was of the Southern type instead, slight in build, sensitive in nerve, tropical in affections. Donald McGregor was not more set in his way than was the planter in his, with this difference, that Steven Trent's way was to love with all his heart; — with all his soul, too, for when his wife died the man hesitated but for a moment between her and his boy; but he had loved her most, and loved her longest, and her he followed as of matter of course.

The disasters brought the old Scotchman to the South,

and in full force. He was more grimly silent than ever, for he was asking himself if Jean was not deservedly punished for leaving him. He sold the few negroes left, without a shadow of scruple, and for the utmost he could get, arranged as well as possible in regard to the rest of the property, and returned to Vermont, carrying his nephew with him.

CHAPTER I.

BY WAY OF EXPLANATION.

DONALD McGREGOR'S Vermont farm was as Scotch as himself. In other words, it was little more than a realm of rock. A field had been rescued here and there for cultivation, and by dint of hard work, from the stones large and small which covered it. The Scotchman had imported sheep and cows from over the water, with shepherds and collie dogs, and when the winter was specially severe he enjoyed his discomforts almost as much as though he had never left his native land.

One morning, within a week after his return from the South, he went out in search of his nephews. Two or three of the laborers were trying, in the corner of one of the worst of the fields, to roll out of the way the huge fragments of a dead tree which had been blown down by a storm, the raging of which had been the Scotchman's appropriate welcome back the night of his arrival. Donald McGregor glanced keenly at his two nephews, who were looking on. Steven Trent stood off on one side, slight of build, pale, large-eyed, with an air of refinement which caused even the servants to soften their tones in speaking to him. He was a stranger to the place and to the people. They felt it, he felt it, and it was a something which held him as consciously apart from every one as if it were his clothing, his very skin; yet, and in keeping with it, his were eyes and hands which seemed to cling wherever they touched.

"He is his father over again," growled his uncle to himself. "It is in that climate of his. I daur say it's be-

cause the boy has always had slaves to wait on him. Elspeth says he has Jean's soul under it a'. We'll see."

No one had observed the Scotchman, and young Thirlmore burst out at the laborers just then, "You fools, that is not the way!" and, throwing off his coat, he deliberately pushed them aside, planted the long pole they were using more firmly under the log, and, putting his stout shoulder beneath it, strained slowly against the lever until the log yielded and rolled over.

"There," he said, but without excitement, as he stepped aside, "when a thing is to be done, the only way is to *do* it!"

He was a swarthy country youth, large of feature and of bone, coarsely dressed, almost uncouth in aspect as in voice and manner. It was hard to see wherein the two lads were related. A mastiff and a greyhound were more alike than himself and young Trent, a Normandy draught-horse and a racer would have been better matched. One thing struck the cousin from the South greatly: while young Thirlmore seemed to be coolly indifferent as to his mother, his uncle, and himself, he could not pass an ox without stopping to stroke its broad nose; he had his arms about the neck of any horse that happened to be near him; he never sat down but his fingers were fondling the ears of his big dog "Brute," which followed at his heels the day through.

"You love animals," Trent said to him at last.

"Yes, I do, and a great deal more than I do people," was the almost sullen reply of the other, as he turned away. The truth is, the boy had never been outside the State, and he had recognized a certain superiority in his cousin which had invariably irritated him whenever they had been thrown together, from their earliest days. With the irritation had always arisen in young Thirlmore a desire to assert himself against the other. The trouble was, that the superiority of the new-comer was as hard to define as to be denied, and the farmer boy felt that his very self-assertion was of a blind and blundering kind, but it was only the more determined.

"Yaur son 's nane o' yaur fine-mannered folk, like Steven," the uncle said to his sister that night. "His father, ye ken, was a gentlemon, and Jean too, bonny Jean, was a leddy."

"Ye say true," Elspeth made grim reply. "Jean had na to work as I hed, and Thirlmore he was country folk. No, my lad is n't o' the gentry. He 's no a nobleman, but he may be a king. Time will show," — and, like all Elspeth's canny remarks, the words made due and deep impression upon Donald McGregor.

The farm-house was a small and weather-beaten wooden structure of the plainest kind, but the owner rarely entered it except for his meals. A hundred yards away on one side of the same enclosure he had built a smaller and plainer house, but it was of rock. That night he sat longer than usual at the supper-table. After the rest had risen, and were talking together around the fire, he remained at the table, seemingly more deeply interested than was his wont in a New York commercial paper. Really he was listening to the talk of his nephews, his eyes glancing keenly at them from under the white and shaggy eyebrows. Mrs. Thirlmore said little as she knitted with steady purpose at the blue stocking which reached, as she sat, to her lap, and her son was almost as silent; for young Trent, in his utter bereavement, was eager to love and to make himself loved by the only relatives he had left. A question of his aunt had started him, and he was describing his old home and the night of the disaster. There was such a contrast in the people about him to the warm-hearted and impulsive youth that it told upon him at last as cold does upon a flower. He glanced at his sturdy cousin, who, seated near him, was finishing off an axe-helve with his jack-knife; then at his aunt knitting away, with her long, hard face, as if she always had knitted, and would knit forever; then at his old uncle, intent upon his paper. There was so little sympathy that his heart sank within him, and he soon became as silent as they, and was glad to go to bed, and so get, please God, to his parents in his dreams.

Before he did so McGregor had gone to his house across the yard. The door was of stout oak, and he locked and barred it carefully after him. The building contained but one room, in which was his bed. A vault had been built in the stone wall beside it. In this was an iron safe. A pair of pistols lay upon the table; but it was known that the Scotchman kept nothing but papers in the safe. Had he been the poorest of men, there could not have been less evidence of money about him, the year round. Noticing, as he placed his lamp upon the table, that the shutters of both windows were closed and fastened, he opened the safe, unlocked a drawer, and took out some papers, which he laid beside the lamp; then sat down. There were two documents of legal appearance. Upon the back of each was indorsed, in his own large and rugged hand,

"THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF DONALD MCGREGOR."

Below were carefully ruled off places for dates and names of witnesses.

He untied the red tape, and opened the document labelled outside "Number One." In due form of law it contained a bequest of property to a much larger amount than his sister, or any one else, imagined. It consisted of a great variety of investments minutely described, and, after a comparatively small provision for his sister, the entire amount was to be evenly divided among certain benevolent Boards of his own denomination. There was neither date nor signature, and, after looking it carefully over, the document was folded up and tied. The next, indorsed "Number Two," was a duplicate, except that the property was bequeathed instead to his nephew, Theodore Thirlmore. Like the other, there was neither signature nor date.

The old Scotchman sat long and in deep thought, with the bulky document lying open before him. He could not sit still at last, but walked up and down the small room, his head sunk upon his bosom. For the thou-

sandth time he was going over his whole life in slow and rigidly consecutive order. Beginning with his earliest boyhood, he mounted again step by step every year of his rough and laborious path. Penny by penny, dollar by dollar, thousand by thousand, he made his wealth all over again, his brow becoming moist, his breath laboring as he did so. He was at work upon an old problem. His sister Jean had been the only person he had ever loved. With cold and silent intensity he had gone to work chiefly for her; afterward, the making of money had grown to be the habit of his life. Her marriage had alienated him from her, although he had hidden his alienation as he had his affection. His was one of those granite natures which change only by cataclysms. To adopt a milder figure, he was like an oak, which grows, so to speak, by gnarl upon gnarl. His intense devotion to Jean when he was a lad had been but the earliest of these twists in the grain, and, when she had married, the Scotchman had taken another and more violent twist in an opposite direction. He did not wish ever to see her again, and young Steven was so much like the man who had robbed him of her that he almost hated him. Not a penny of his money should go to him.

It had been hard to make his money; it was harder still, and it seemed as if it would take as long a time too, to decide how to bequeath it. He knelt at last in prayer, only for a moment, but his supplication was peremptory. Without getting up, he then opened an old and worn Bible lying upon the table, and darted a keen look at the first page presenting itself.

"Is it not lawful for me," he read aloud, "to do what I will with mine own?" "Yes!" he said with satisfaction, as he glanced up and down the page and saw that it was the language of the master who, in the parable, was paying out money.

He closed the book, then let it fall open before him, and again read aloud the first passage upon which his eye had lighted, — "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

Tracing with his finger the parable to its beginning, he found who was thus referred to, and read with grim satisfaction of the man to whom the five talents had been given, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

The old Scotchman was the most secretive of men. He was chary of his money, and the habit extended to his words. As a rule, his companionship with others had been of the nature of unceasing contest, his closest intimacy being simply with those with whom he had wrestled hardest, the embrace having exclusive reference to the question as to which should throw the other. Donald McGregor had, in consequence, and during a lifetime of struggle, no breath except for his own ends. Moreover, he had learned long ago that half the art of wealth was to conceal what he made, even as one hides seed out of sight if it is to grow. Perhaps it was because he valued it as his most precious possession, certainly he had concealed his religion most carefully of all. Except that he was sternly upright and a regular church-goer, he might be a Mohammedan or an Atheist for anything he said. All the more for that was he, although in his deepest privacy, a devout believer, and he arose from his knees now with a look of relief upon his rugged face. He would have despised any other for resorting to such a solution of difficulties. Now he said to himself, as he undressed and lay down, "Ye are right, Lord, — young Thirlmore 's the lad for the money. Thy law is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," — and went to sleep, very clear in mind as to how his property was to be disposed of.

CHAPTER II.

A START IN LIFE.

WITHIN a month after this the cousins had left the farm. It had always been the intention of the father of Steven Trent to educate his son at Old Orange, the college at which he had himself graduated with high honors, and at the time of his death he had been himself preparing the youth for it, and with great care. With young Thirlmore matters had been different. When he was a boy of ten years of age, his uncle had fully determined that he should be educated merely to manage the farm. But the lad had developed such energy, slow but dogged, as he grew older, that the old merchant had made up his mind to send him to New York and have him trained there to business. As he was about sending him thither a great revival of religion swept over the State, and the lad became in his silent fashion a member of the church. Although the Scotchman showed small evidence of it, he may have been affected himself, for he changed his plans in regard to his nephew. He would not make him a farmer, nor a merchant; there was something better than that for a youth who was growing into so vigorous a manhood. Donald McGregor said little about it, but he saw to it that his nephew was thoroughly taught at an academy in a neighboring town with a view toward entering college.

And thus it befell that the two cousins left the farm. Their uncle consulted neither of them, merely telling them one day that they were to leave the Thursday of the week following to become students at Old Orange, several hundreds of miles south of Vermont. Young Trent was overwhelmed with joy, his cousin as undemonstrative as was his wont. In due time, the two found themselves beneath the academic shades of

which Trent, especially, had heard ever since he could remember.

The cousins were examined for admission as Freshmen in the class-room of Professor Rodney, by that celebrated mathematician himself. There was that in the examiner which made them tremble like newly hatched chickens under the beak of an eagle; and when they passed out at last, his remark, "Very well, gentlemen, that will do," had a certain accent in it as, possibly, of sarcasm. They were glad to go, glancing with some apprehension even at the janitor as they went. From their childhood they had both heard so much of Old Orange, that there was a halo of its august reputation about every one belonging to it. With the shyness of youth they shrank a little as they came down the stone stair-way from the building in which they had been examined, and passed through a group of young men lounging carelessly about the lower step. Evidently these were Seniors, or Juniors at least, they seemed to be so much at home. Hardly had the new-comers passed, when the crowd burst into that peculiar kind of laughter which hurts so, the one hearing it knowing as well that it is aimed at him as if he had been smitten, instead, with a stick or a stone.

"I would n't mind them, Theo," young Trent said as they walked on, for he saw how the swarthy face of his companion flushed. He was unfortunate in his remark.

"It was at me they laughed," he growled. "I see you know it! I am an awkward country lad, but it is the contrast between us which struck them."

He was right, except that he had no idea how uncouth he was. His size, his association with his rough old uncle and energetic mother, the oxen with which he had labored, the rocky soil, the stormy winters, had all left their impress upon young Thirlmore. Never had Old Orange seen a more gawky, angular, lumbering specimen of the rawest of material, and the contrast with his companion was such that it was impossible not to laugh. No one was as sensible of this as the Vermont

youth, and with it came the instant and sullen spirit of self-assertion. Dumbly conscious of reserves of strength within, "I'll show them yet, I'll show them yet!" was what he said to himself, and he said this more and more every day.

Among the first of young Trent's acquaintances was a certain thick-set, easy-mannered, voluble youth by the name of Gruffden. He had urged his attentions upon the other, who had recoiled from him as being coarse of grain, boisterous, and vulgar. But it was an instinct in men of Gruffden's kind to seek after new-comers from the South, and he had fastened himself upon Trent from the outset.

"You must know the Old Orange magnates," he said to him as they crossed the Campus one day, "and yonder is one of them."

He pointed as he spoke to a negro man, who was trundling a wheelbarrow up one of the walks, very fat, exceedingly black, dressed in broadcloth, and with a certain air about him of great dignity.

"You have heard of him. That," said Gruffden, "is the celebrated Cæsar Courteous."

"Who is he?" the other demanded.

"You have heard of Dr. Augustus McMasters, of course? Well," Gruffden continued, "you know that the Doctor is a Seminary Professor and a gentleman of the old school. When you meet a portly old fellow with a white head and a florid face, the very model of urbanity, you may know that is Dr. McMasters. Or if you should never see him, it does n't matter, for when you behold Cæsar Courteous you see the Doctor. This black fellow, mind you, thinks there never was such a perfect gentleman as the old Doctor, and he imitates him. Yes, sir, that confounded nigger — ah! how I hate a nigger! — actually patterns himself upon the Doctor. In his dress, bearing, trick of walking, of lifting his hat to a friend in passing, he copies him as closely as he can. That nigger," and Gruffden put a world of contempt into the word, "tries to copy the Doctor's very tones, the wave of his hand in conversation, — everything."

"I should think his wheelbarrow would interfere with the likeness. What has he got in it?" Trent asked.

"Pies! But it does n't interfere. One day," Gruffden went on, "I managed to upset it for him, for I do hate niggers! Would you believe it? Cæsar Courteous picked up his cakes and pies out of the gutter. He blew the dust off of them, wiped them with his handkerchief, and put them back into his old barrow, and trundled them on. I'll be hanged if he did not beg me, in that polite way of his, to excuse him, as if I had n't upset his rattle-trap on purpose! Yes, that, sir, is Cæsar Courteous. When a fellow buys his pies, he goes into the darkest corner of his room, shuts his eyes tight, eats fast. A nigger! How I hate them!"

The very afternoon following upon this, while Trent was in his room alone, there was a knock at his door, and who should enter but the vender of pies.

"Can I enjoy de satisfaction ob selling you any confectionery to-day, sah?" the portly old soul inquired, as he came in smiling and bowing. "I hab peach-pies, apple-pies, cream-cakes," he continued, coming nearer to Trent, his basket on his arm. "Yes, sah, I hab — O my God!"

"Jupiter!" was the exclamation in reply; and then, "I thought so!"

The corpulent visitor had wilted in the moment of his horror-stricken moan as if touched by palsy. All this took place before the Civil War, and it is impossible now to imagine how utterly the imitator of Dr. McMasters had ceased on the instant to be a man, much less a gentleman, as he stood looking pitifully as a dog at the other, who had risen to his feet. His clothing seemed to have become too large for him, his politeness hung about him as in tatters, his face had grown suddenly stupid except for the wild desperation of his eyes.

"Why, Jupiter!" Trent said, "and so it was to Old Orange you came when you ran away?"

"O Mars Steven, Mars Steven!" gasped the man at last, "you won't, you won't, will you! I hab been free

so long! And O Mars Steven, I got a church here, and I got a wife an' chillun here! I was forgettin' dat I ebber was in de Souf. Hab patience an' I'll buy myself. I'll pay you ebbry cent."

He had grasped the hand of the student within both of his, was clinging to him with imploring eyes, as he sank in an agony of fear at his feet.

"Jupiter! you fool! How can you think — Shake hands, man," Trent exclaimed, overflowing with gladness, the tears actually running down his cheeks. "O, but I am *so* glad, glad to see you! You are the best thing I've seen since I left our old home. Get up!" For the next instant Thirlmore had come into the room.

"Thank you," Trent added, hastily, "I will not have any pies to-day. Hold on, yes I will! Let's have your basket, I'll take them all! Help yourself, Theo, they are splendid!" and the purchaser began eating with an appetite which astonished his cousin. He accompanied their visitor outside the door, to reassure him, and, in his gladness, gave him every penny he had in his pocket.

CHAPTER III.

VACATION.

SILVER becomes more distinctly silver, and gold is made more purely gold, as the processes toward these of the mine, the mill, and the furnace are continued. So with the cousins. When their Freshman year ended, the improvement of the one, as of the other, lay largely in the deepening and development of the essential difference between them. They passed the vacation together upon the Vermont farm. But Steven Trent was so thoroughly unlike his uncle, and his aunt also, that, by silent consent of all parties, when the Sophomore year

ended, Thirlmore returned to Vermont alone, his cousin spending his vacation in Old Orange.

To young Trent the closing of the session brought, at first, luxurious rest. No chapel bell broke his sleep of mornings; so that he reached the refectory in time for breakfast, it mattered not when he got up, and, for a week or two, he satiated his soul with sleep. He had studied long and hard, and needed it greatly. But his meals were of the dreariest sort. The refectory was "a banquet-hall deserted," tables and chairs being heaped upon each other except in one corner. Half a dozen students shared his table there; but they were Seniors, hard readers, did not belong to his literary society, were uncongenial to him in every way.

It grew to be almost dreadful to him at last. The vast building in which his room was situated became more and more of a Bastile, silent except to his echoing steps. Desolation reigned over the Campus. The College walks were overgrown with weeds. He was sick, body and soul, of books, and yet his only resource at last was the library of his society. On his father's plantation he had almost lived in the saddle, and now he would have given anything for a ride, if only once a week, — he sympathized so far with Thirlmore's love of horses; but he could not afford it, and, after one or two long and solitary walks, he turned to books. It would have made a difference of only a few dollars for him to board in one of the adjacent cities, where at least change of scene could have been commanded, if no other entertainment; but small as was the necessary sum he had it not. In all the town there was no family or person with whom he had a visiting acquaintance. Social intercourse between teacher and taught was as undreamed of in those days as the telephone or the phonograph.

After one or two desperate efforts in other directions, young Trent took to reading, as other men take to drinking or to gambling. When he had read through an armful of books he would take the big key of his society hall, cross the deserted Campus between, lock himself

into the echoing building, taking as long a time about it as possible, put the step-ladder to the top of the lofty shelves upon one side, and, looking the books carefully over to the right and to the left as far as he could reach, pick out one here, and another there, until he had made up another armful. And then he would bear the dreary spoil to his room, and resume reading with a wearied heart.

Yes, it was the *heart* which was tired! It may have been the tropical region in which he was born and reared; possibly his blood came down to him from too warm a parentage; he may have been trained too exclusively to loving by those in whose caressing hands he was reared; or it may have been a something wholly peculiar to himself, as ambition was to Alexander, philosophizing to Socrates, poetry to Anacreon; but certain it is that he had a capacity for affection as others have for music. His solitude bewildered him.

"I cannot even go to see Jupiter, or Cæsar, as he calls himself," Trent groaned. "He is afraid his wife will find out that my father formerly owned him. Was ever a man so hemmed in! Cæsar used to come and see me. But he dislikes more and more to be reminded that he was once a slave. He has a church here, but he says it would throw him out if I came to hear him preach. No wonder. How can he be a black Dr. McMasters when I am near? What can I do?" And so the weary days rolled by, he knew not how.

In due time the students came crowding back from happy homes and abundant recreation, and Thirlmore among them. He had been held to hard work upon the stony farm, and was the most robust of them all. His improvement during vacation was as marked as it had been through the session. And thus the Junior year began, continued, and closed.

From the beginning of the term Trent had looked forward to vacation almost with horror. But it proved worse when it arrived than he had dreaded. It was winter, and the snow lay thick upon the deserted grounds. Reading

was loathsome after the hard application which had gone before. Yet there was nothing else to do.

At the close of a day spent in seclusion he lay at last exhausted upon the floor of his room, unable to weep longer, to pray, even to think. His character was taking a new color, as also a higher direction. When he awoke next morning, reaction had set in. God was exceedingly glorious, but the world was the same. The monotony of the snow and his loneliness would have been almost maddening, but for the deepening of soul to which he had attained by prayer. What could he do?

He stood at his window looking out. The air was clear and bright, the world seemed very wide and beautiful, but very lonely. "And all I desire," he groaned, "is what it is so natural to have. Why should I be smitten upon the mouth when my only crime is to hunger, to thirst?"

Poor fellow, his eager heart sent out the craving of his hot and impetuous blood to the tips of the passionate hands extended before him. Alas! the impetuous current returned sickeningly upon his heart. "O God, why is it?" he asked aloud. "Why?"

At that moment his cousin was cutting wood upon a hillside in Vermont. He had gone out after an early breakfast, eager, in his deliberate way, to try a new axe which he had sharpened to a razor edge over night. Selecting the tallest pine he could find, and laying off his coat, cold as it was, he had bent himself to slow, steady, regular work at bringing it down. As he toiled, his brow became moist with perspiration, his breath grew deeper, his eyes kindled. When he stepped aside at last, he stood more and more erect, tingling with health from head to foot, as the pine came crashing to the earth. He had often spoken during the session, of his vacation, but it had always been as if his oxen, horses, and dog Brute were the only individuals he looked forward to seeing there. To-day, Brute had clung closely to him as ever, and, after the tree was down, he sat with the dog's

head upon his knee, talking to him, sharing his lunch with him, as if he cared for no other companionship. The two were alike in this, that there was not much of a why or a wherefore in the mind, apparently, of either. Both were entirely satisfied with the merely outward world, and especially with themselves. Thirlmore ate heartily, slept soundly, read only when too tired to do anything else. His uncle was very rich, he was his mother's only child, and every one about the farm was coming to look up to and be proud of him. No one expressed it, but he was conscious of it, and he was beginning to rejoice silently — to himself as to others — in his vigor of mind, as well as of body. The pine had lifted its head to heaven, and now lay prostrate upon the snow, — the pine should not be the only thing he would conquer!

Yet in the instant his head sank upon his breast. He had asserted himself against the pine, — was he not too self-confident? Because destined to a large growth he was thus far uncertain, for he was unformed. Like a ponderous but evenly balanced mass he leaned heavily now in one direction, now in another, ready to roll sluggishly, but decisively, one way or another. The crash of the falling tree had impelled him along a certain course, but in the same moment conscience arrested him. That elation might be harmless in a smaller man; he dimly felt that for him to yield to it would be for him to descend declivities terribly easy of descent, but from which he shrank. Soon, throwing his axe upon his shoulder, his dog at his heels, he went slowly homeward, so thoughtful that he seemed to be sullen.

When he returned again to Old Orange, at the beginning of the term, Trent said to him one day, "Do you remember seeing an old Parson Vandyke on the platform last Commencement?"

"Vandyke? No. Who is he?" Thirlmore spoke with indifference. As a rule he took less interest in people than Trent.

"I pointed him out to you, but you have forgotten. He is a thin, yellow-visaged, white-headed old minister.

He contrasted so strongly with Dr. Stormworth seated upon one side of him, Professor Rodney on the other, Dr. Augustus McMasters, broad and glowing as a setting sun in all his grandeur, behind him, that I could not but be struck with his appearance. He was the only clergyman among all the notables there who was not a D.D. He had such a pitiful, patient look I was sorry for him."

"Well, what about him?"

"Somebody told me yesterday that he has a church a few miles out of Old Orange, and takes boarders. When the short vacation comes I'm going out there. I could not stand another in College."

And thus it came to pass that, when Thirlmore went home, his cousin took up his quarters with old Parson Vandyke for the few weeks of rest.

CHAPTER IV.

A WINTRY WALK.

"I SEE that you have had a good time," Trent said to Thirlmore when the session opened again.

"Splendid," his cousin replied. There was no doubt as to that, he seemed so vigorous.

"I suppose *you* enjoyed yourself," Thirlmore said, carelessly; for chapel was just over, and the remainder of the afternoon was before him, with nothing to do.

"Very much," Trent replied. He also was looking better than ever. "It is the queerest old place you ever saw," he went on with some eagerness. "It lies three or four miles out of town."

"What does?"

"The Vandyke place. Where I boarded, you remember."

"I had forgotten. You went there, did you? What sort of horses did they have? Was there a decent dog on the place?"

"I believe so," the other replied, vaguely. "They have a large orchard. There is a big two-story house with a garden on one side, a stable and a rambling old red barn upon the other. A well is in the front yard. Miss Rachel and her nieces have managed to hide it within a cool mystery of vines. Odd little rooms have been built on to the old house as necessity required. You see," the young man explained, "old Parson Vandyke once had a large family of boys and girls. But his wife is dead, and all his children except Miss Rachel."

"Is she pretty?" asked the other.

"She is nearly fifty, and one of the best women that ever lived. They have an immense garden," Trent hastened to add. "Besides vegetables, it is filled with hollyhocks, altheas, peonies, chrysanthemums, those old-fashioned flowers which remind one of Old Hundred and the other ancient tunes. The cow is old-fashioned; so are the horses, dogs, cats. When I first went out there I could hardly draw my breath; it was like being in a room long shut up. I could smell lavender and camomile everywhere, at least so I thought. It is the old gentleman and Miss Rachel who make it seem so old-fashioned. His sermons are dreadfully dull, there have been years of disaffection in his church, they are very poor; but I enjoyed myself wonderfully. We must go out there some day."

"You must excuse me," the other said. "I can't say I have any passion for old places or people."

Steven Trent said no more, but walked out to the Vandykes at least once a month. He always took tea there, and did not get back to bed until midnight; but he seemed so much the better for his walk next day, that even Thirlmore, who roomed with him, became interested.

One day, when winter had set in, he asked his

cousin casually, "Did you say there were five or six young ladies at Mr. Vanslyke's?"

"Vandyke's, not Vanslyke's. No, there are only two, Miss Peace and Miss Revel, the old gentleman's grandchildren," Trent replied.

"Ah, yes," his room-mate said with a drawl, "Gruffden knows everybody, — he told me about them yesterday. The Parson's son married the daughter of a Professor Bobblestein, or something of the sort, and there was a row about it. Do they talk Dutch and smoke pipes? Gruffden said that they were not like young ladies in general."

"They are *not* like young ladies in general. Listen. Once upon a time," Trent began, "there was a certain Professor Rodenstein, of a German University. He was a sort of radical, a writer of books against religion and government, a Socialist. As an eloquent and audacious insurgent against authority he was the idol of the students, a leader in revolutionary affairs long ago. Driven out of Europe he came to Old Orange and taught German; but almost from the outset he was under the ban of the Faculty, who were but too well acquainted with his reputation and his writings. He had a daughter, however, who was wholly unlike him, large, fair, rosy, laughing, while he was tall, thin, embittered against earth and heaven, devoting himself at last exclusively to smoking and swearing.

"Well," Trent continued, "the last son left to Parson Vandyke fell in love with her, and they ran away and were married. The old Parson was terribly distressed; but it was too much for the German Professor, who had become desperate in his hatred of religion and everybody connected with it, and so he dashed his pipe to atoms upon the floor and shot himself. Perhaps it was remorse for what she had done, but his daughter died soon after giving birth to two girls, twins. Those girls grew up under Parson Vandyke's roof in the care of their aunt, the Parson's only daughter, Miss Rachel, who told me the story. They are now young ladies. One is named Peace, the other Revel, — and that is all."

"It is a good deal too much," Thirlmore said, with a yawn. "I see you are about going out there. Suppose I go with you? But only this time, for I never saw a lady I cared to see twice. The chief thing is that I need exercise."

Their room was in the highest story of the huge stone edifice which was at that date the principal edifice of Old Orange College; its door opening, as did every other, upon a brick-paved hall running the whole length of the prison-like structure. Closing and locking the door behind them, as they passed out, Thirlmore seized upon the arm of his cousin and rushed him along, — all the more vigorously because of his remonstrances; and, holding firmly to his arm, ran him down the three flights of stone stairway three steps at a leap, and so out of the front door, and past its ample steps, into the snow, — when he whirled him suddenly around.

"Do you want to see a man?" Thirlmore asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Hold on a moment!" and, gravely remounting the stones, the larger of the two planted himself upon the top step, took off his hat, drew himself up, lifted his hand, and said, in slow, sonorous tones, "I thank Thee, O God of America, for the signal victory I have this day achieved."

George Washington had stood upon that spot, as every student was told in a week after coming to College, to render thanks for a victory over the British near by, and Trent knew what his cousin meant, — knew, and partly agreed with him. Thirlmore was by this time a splendid fellow. His stature was in keeping with his noble head, dark hair and eyes, and swarthy cheeks, whose russet health was tinged with red. The slowness of his way of talking had come to have a certain flavor in it of laying down the law, which was in harmony with the self-assertion, the unconscious audacity, of the man. Even while resenting it somewhat, Trent could not help admiring the bearing of his cousin. Was it not as natural to him as were their wide, slow movements to the magnificent elms

with which the Campus was adorned? George Washington had more diameter of body, but that also would come to Thirlmore in due time, just as the fulness of foliage would come to the elms which now towered leafless around.

"I thank Thee, O God, for victory," the father of his country went on; — "most of all I thank Thee for myself," — then he replaced his hat and came down the steps with dignity.

Trent glanced around and said, as the other laid hold upon and walked him rapidly away, "Of course you are a fine specimen, Theo; but I would n't say so if I were you."

"Do you know, my little friend, why Uncle Donald educates us?" the other asked, and went on not waiting for an answer. "The old rascal holds us down to college, holds us down to it hard, exactly as a carpenter holds his axe to a grindstone. He cares no more for me than if I was so much steel. He wants to hew and hack with me."

"He has had a tough life, as his father before him had in Scotland," said Trent. "He worships success, I know. It is all he values himself for."

"It is all he values us for, man. Old Mac would kick himself out of the world if he did not succeed. Woe to me if I don't succeed! If I do, he will worship me. Here we are. To the left, wheel!"

Nothing could be simpler than the geography of Old Orange. In front of the College grounds ran the main street, up which they now turned. It had once been the highway between two great cities, Old Orange being the half-way station at which the coaches in former times used to stop for dinner. Now, the railroad ran a mile or so to the south, the roar of its wheels and the shriek of its whistle the only sounds made by the torrent of travel which rolled in double currents, one each way, between the cities. Upon one side of the main street was the town, upon the other side the College buildings. Half a mile further down were the structures of the Theological

Seminary, the residences of its Professors being upon both sides of the street. All along, by the roadside and in yards of houses and down the side streets, were elms and other trees, giving in summer a country appearance to the place. The towers of College and Seminary could be seen from the windows of the flying trains, and former graduates would peer out, as they sped by, with mingled feelings. Very far behind them seemed the years passed in those sombre shades, and how terribly dull it must be for those who were there now?

For it *was* dull in Old Orange. Its contrast, close and strong with the cities, made it seem so. And why was it that the towns-people contrasted as disadvantageously with those of the College and Seminary as their shops, stores, houses did with the buildings of those institutions? It was as if, and in every sense, Brobdignag had camped in Lilliput.

But Trent was thinking of something else. "Theo," he said, "you know Uncle Mac better than I do. I wonder you are not afraid to take so low a grade in college, — a man like you, — a fellow who can do anything he pleases."

"Do you think so?" his cousin exclaimed, with little evidence of surprise or gratification. "But you are mistaken. I may be big, but I am as dull and slow as an ox. And you must forgive and forget my nonsense. I ought not to have spoken so of my uncle; and I was a fool to say what I did on the College steps. You are my superior, that is in some things. Yes, you are! You are a good soul, Trent. Of course I was not in earnest. I am nothing but a country lout; but my old Uncle thinks Tummas Chawlmers, as he calls him, the greatest man that ever existed. He wants me to be a Chalmers. *Me!* As if I were capable of anything beyond the humblest position!" and, being in that mood, he spoke sincerely.

The heart of Trent went out to the other. Notwithstanding his physical vigor Thirlmore was indolent to the last degree where his studies were concerned. Had it

not been for the unceasing entreaty and daily assistance of his cousin, the burly Vermonter would have been dismissed from College long ago.

The air was cold and bracing. Taking a firmer hold upon his companion's arm, Thirlmore, as if to assert his bodily strength at least, hurried him along at a rapid rate. Now, it so happened that Dr. Stormworth, the most ponderous as well as learned of divines or professors, had been upon a solitary walk, and was coming back along a side street, which ran into theirs, behind the drifted snow. He was of immense build, intellectually and physically. A sermon from him was like hearing military music; upon some of the more enthusiastic, it had almost the effect of brandy. But never under any circumstances did the Doctor associate with any one. His divinity was of the kind which doth hedge a king; and alarming traditions were current as to the fate of the few who had dared to intrude upon him. He smote in his lectures popes, false philosophers, heretics of all sorts, and his audience could sympathize with the smitten, so often had his lightning struck nearer home. Next to hearing him preach, it was an event to meet the Doctor upon the streets. "I say," the student who did so was sure to remark to the next man he met, "I passed Dr. Stormworth on the sidewalk to-day." "You did! and what did he say to you?" was generally the sarcastic reply. Such explanation is necessary in view of what now befell.

Thirlmore had hastened his companion, the air was so bitterly cold, into almost a run. Dr. Stormworth was approaching unperceived behind the drifts, and, at the point where the one street crossed the other, the two men struck the ponderous divine, — struck against him at an angle, and with a force which cast him headlong into the snow!

Trent was stunned with horror when he saw who it was that lifted his awful countenance out of the drift. Dr. Stormworth! Not so with his cousin. Thirlmore had laughed at the instant of collision. When he saw who it was they had smitten down, his uninterrupted

laughter became convulsive, although he indulged it under cover of his cloak, drawn over his face. It never occurred to him to aid Trent, who, his face burning with shame, and with a thousand apologies, was struggling to help the colossal Doctor to his feet.

Dr. Stormworth! Who could imagine the explosion which must come when he could get the snow out of his mouth, the breath into his lungs! But Trent was mistaken. The Doctor knew forty languages, but all combined would not have sufficed. With renewed apologies Trent handed him his spectacles, which he had picked up, and assisted him to get a footing upon the beaten path of the side-walk. The august victim planted his glasses firmly upon his nose, turned, walked back whence he had come, without a word. Covered from head to foot with snow, he was a sight, as he strode away, over which angels, knowing the man as they did, must have laughed.

"It was I that did it," Thirlmore said, wearied at last with laughter, as they walked on. "Pure bodily strength it was! Dr. Stormworth is the greatest man in Old Orange, because he is so big. Poor Stevy, you would have been tossed aside, instead, like a Mother Carey's chicken from the bellying sail of a ship. Woe to the man *I* hit! Your only hope in life, Stevy, is to have me keep hold of you. How the fellows will enjoy it!"

"Thirlmore," the other said, at last, "you may be big. So is a hippopotamus. But you may be very small, too. You assert yourself too much. Jack the Giant-Killer is small, but the giant whom he cheats and kills is always a fool."

But the other had become grave again. "You are right, Trent," he said, seriously. "I suppose I am a fool. But it is because I am little more than an animal. Even our old oxen on the farm will bellow and tear round a little when they are rested, and have had a bellyful of grass. When I get out of doors, away from books, I am like a horse out of harness. Hold up! let us look around us a moment."

They had left Old Orange behind them by this time.

The street was now a country road, running, with many a turn, through a region which rose and fell above the level of a canal winding its way to their left, a mere trench of snow-covered ice. Sleighs dashed past them now and then. As they resumed their walk, they saw a handsome mansion rising from among its cedars upon their right.

"Look at that place, Trent," Thirlmore said, the wind buffeting them as they went, with new fury. "That old rascal has hundreds of acres. Do you see the stables, and the conservatories full of roses, blooming this moment? He has thirty thousand a year, that fellow has. What a difference between him and us! Go into that house, and you will find parlors, libraries, sumptuous bed-chambers. The dining-room is in keeping with the pictures, bronzes, mirrors, carpets, gorgeous dinners. On one side of his fireplace that man is sitting this instant, I'll bet, fat, comfortable, with slippers, velvet dressing-gown, the best cigars, and a decanter of the choicest wine within reach. On the other side sits his wife, richly dressed, rosy as well as fat, with diamonds on her fingers, and plenty more upstairs, — not a care on earth. Between them, on the rug, and about the house, are beautiful children, St. Bernard dogs, and all that. Whenever they take a fancy, they can have any visitors they like, — pretty women, brilliant men. They have a billiard-table, and the best music that money can buy. Nothing to do, not a thing to bother about. And here are we. *We!*"

"Well, what of us?" his companion asked.

"It is wicked," exclaimed Thirlmore; "it is the animal in me, of course, but my miserable soul howls like a hungry wolf for the good things of this life. I can't see why *I* am not as good as anybody. It *is* wicked, is it? Well, God has me in hand, I suppose. He can master me, and nobody else."

CHAPTER V.

THE VANDYKES.

IT was Saturday afternoon which the two cousins had chosen for their visit to the house of Parson Vandyke. The old gentleman had been too busy all the week making pastoral calls through the unbroken snow, and doing light jobs about the place, to have had time before to prepare for to-morrow's pulpit. Their cow, also old, had been sick, and a world of trouble it had required to induce the opinionated animal to take its mash. He had become satisfied years on years ago that the ablest sermons he could possibly prepare would not satisfy his foes in the church, nor, thank heaven, attach his friends more closely to him. Therefore, he was seated at work that afternoon in his bed-room up-stairs, which was also his study, indifferent as to results. With Matthew Henry's Commentary open upon his knees, he was jotting down points therefrom with which to fill up the hour allotted to the sermon.

His daughter Rachel was keeping everything quiet down-stairs, that her father might study. Not that it was necessary: she did so from the habit formed during the years before he became so deaf. You would have known at a glance that she was as much superior to her father as her mother must have been. She was not only taller: his eyes could never have been so strong in the quality of their kindliness as hers, his hands so steady, his foot so firm. Undoubtedly, Miss Rachel had toughened under the terrible discipline of her life; but you were sure in the instant of first seeing her that she had neither broken under it, nor soured. She knew the world of which her father's church was the circumference as well as the centre,—knew it long ago and thoroughly,—and held her steady gait through its agreeables and

disagreeables as she did, upon her rounds of charity, through slushy snow or green grass, drizzly sleet or clear shining.

Trent wondered, at first, at her vein of jest and pleasantry. He came to see that it was habit, — the habit of determined cheerfulness against sore and hopeless trouble. More than once he had been astonished by her severity against stupidity and wrong-doing in general; but he smiled at her words when he came to know how forbearing and pitiful she was toward any personal instance thereof.

"Thank goodness! we are safe from anybody this afternoon," Revel Vandyke remarked, as she helped her aunt with the baking. At that instant the two students were striding toward them through the snow. "Students are aunt's weaknesses," the lively girl went on; "only let her know that any poor young fellow is poor *and* theological, and she yearns over his linen like a mother. If we had one of them out here last strawberry-time, we had forty; and O how they swept the table! I dare say they might have been glad enough to look now and then at Peace or at me; but they could n't, — they were too hungry. If I were good to eat, Aunt would long ago have broken me in little bits like a stick of candy, and have said, Have some! to every theologue till I was all gone."

What her aunt thought was, "You are pretty enough and sweet enough, dear: not a student but would be glad to get if it were only a bit of your little finger." But she was too sensible to say more than, — "You must be quiet, Revel. Your grandfather is studying up-stairs, and you know it. Why can't you be like Peace?"

"Because, Peace is a sober little saint, which I am not, thank heaven! Look at her, how demure she is!" and Revel pointed her rolling-pin at her sister in derision.

The three were in the kitchen. Peace was seated at the window, neat, sedate, doing her sewing in serene continuance. She was under twenty; but beneath her smoothly-parted brown hair was a pure forehead, and soft large eyes which questioned rather than spoke. Her form was

slighter than that of her sister Revel; there was less color in her cheeks, and she had the quiet, Quaker-like bearing of one who waits and listens, — who receives rather than imparts.

"Managing you two is like driving Swift and Slow in the old carriage. You don't match," their aunt remarked. "It takes half my time to hold you in, Revel."

"And the other half to urge Peace on? If it were not for you and for me, Aunt, Peace would sweetly fold her waxen hands together, close her lily eyes, pillow her head upon a big book, and — not go to sleep, but get up again to be wiser than ever."

The one who spoke was aproned to the chin in check cambric, her abundant hair gathered up under a bit of white muslin, which made an escaping curl or two seem all the blacker. She was plump and round, the dimples coming and going in cheek and chin, equally prompt, and full of a certain womanly energy, whether for work or play, laughter or tears.

The oven was a sort of cavern on one side of the open fireplace, into which a cooking-stove had intruded. Part of the baking was in the oven already, and the table was heaped with unbaked cookies, pies, bread, while the aunt and Revel, floured from head to foot and with arms bared to the elbows, were making more; for, what with visitors from parish and Theological Seminary, the Vandykes rarely sat down to their tea-table alone.

"It is odd that you two sisters should be so unlike," their aunt said; and added, but not for the first time, "Odder still you should be twins!"

"Listen, people!" and Revel sang as she worked: —

> "She is the lily, and I am the rose;
> She is the ring-dove; as every one knows,
> I am the mocking-bird. She is the breeze,
> I am the wind which doth tempest the seas.
> She is the moonbeam, and I am the sun —

Psha! what does come next? O yes, — dear Aunty, see if our batch is n't done!" And she threw open the

door of the oven, out of which there gushed an overpowering fragrance, — almost a dinner in itself.

"Where on earth did you learn *that?*" her aunt found time to ask, in the act of seeing that the baking was done, and then of taking it out with a long-handled shovel.

Her niece aided her, and said, "O, Mr. Trent had scribbled it on the blotting-paper of his table when he was here last summer. He had crossed and crossed it, but I ciphered out a good deal more than that. My! how good it smells!"

At this instant there was a knock at the front door,— quite a loud knock.

"I knew it! The butcher with his bill! I would n't have your grandfather go down to him for anything! Run, Peace! No," their aunt added, "you go, Revel: I can't leave the batch. It 's only the butcher. Peace has got her lap full of her things. Run, child!"

Now, it so chanced that Thirlmore's high spirits had got the best of him. When the two men had arrived within a hundred yards of the house, he had suddenly placed his leg behind his companion, and, as he laid him over it upon his back in the snow, he said, "I know you are tired, and want to rest a little. I 'll go on, and get them to open the door." So that, when Revel Vandyke, bare-armed, dusted with flour, muffled to the chin, and in a great hurry, threw open the door, she asked of the man who knocked, somewhat sharply, "Are you the butcher?"

"No, madam," her visitor slowly replied, pushing up his felt hat from his forehead, and turning back his snow-covered cloak. "No, miss," he repeated, still more deliberately, as he looked at her, "I am not the butcher, I 'm the lamb."

It was said in such a plaintive tone, and the speaker seemed so tall and commanding, that, with an exclamation which was half scream, half laughter, the girl ran away, leaving the door open.

"It 's one of those pesky, everlasting agents!" Miss Rachel explained. "He wants to preach about Mada-

gascar to-morrow, and take up a collection. Lamb indeed! I know I could n't be civil to him till I get this baking fixed. Peace, put your work away. Go, show him into the parlor before he disturbs your grandfather."

But when her niece reached the hall, she found two visitors instead, unbuttoning their wrappings, and brushing off the snow. One of them she knew, and stood quietly by until he turned, saw her, and said: "Miss Peace, this is Mr. Thirlmore, Miss Vandyke, Thirlmore. You must excuse our intrusion. My friend insisted upon coming to-day."

"Which will explain why I got to the door before him," Thirlmore said. But the girl did not laugh, as Revel would have done. She smiled with a kind of sedate strength, which caused the eyes of the one who had spoken to linger upon her face, as if arrested in his mood somewhat.

"Aunt will be glad to see you," she said. Had it been her aunt or Revel, they would have offered to take the hats of the gentlemen, to relieve them of their overcoats. She did neither. "Walk in the parlor," she said, waiting for them to be ready to do so, "you will find it warm there. Aunt will be in directly."

Steven Trent was like his father in this, that he was clothed about in a subtile atmosphere as of superior birth and blood. Perhaps it was because he treated every one with a quiet, but somewhat unusual courtesy. The Professors spoke to him in altered accents. Even Donald McGregor did not address him as he did Thirlmore. He had an uneasy sense of being inferior somehow to his nephew, which made him the more willing that Trent should spend his vacations at Old Orange. Thirlmore often asserted his physical strength against his cousin, on that account. Because he knew that Trent would not like it, he intended to say, when the lady who had opened the door should return, "Please let us go into your kitchen; this glorious smell comes from there, does n't it?" For they were rather rough in their ways

in Vermont. When, however, he looked in the face of Peace Vandyke, and heard her speak, he did not say more than "Thank you," and went into the parlor, whither his companion had gone.

"You and Trent are well mated," he said to himself, and added, "Confound you both! I hope the other will come back."

Miss Rachel was relieved when Peace returned to the kitchen, and reported.

"I like Mr. Trent better than any boarder we ever had," she said, "and, goodness knows! we have had enough of them. And that is the Mr. Thirlmore we have heard so much about! Provoking, is n't it? I can't leave my baking. Fix up, girls, and go in till I can come. Of course, you will say I hope they will stay to tea."

"Was that Mr. Thirlmore?" Revel said. "A lamb indeed! You go in, Peace; I won't."

"There are two of them. You must, child. Run up stairs and tidy yourself. Peace," her aunt added, "you will do as you are. Go in, dear."

"Well," Revel said, untying her apron, and letting her abundant hair out of its imprisonment, "I 'll go in, but I won't ask them to stay to tea. No, I won't do it, because —"

She stopped, with a gesture of comic dismay. Peace had left the door ajar when she went out. The other doors were open. The visitors might have heard her!

"Mr. Trent, I am baking," Miss Rachel said, going to the parlor, and holding the door so that she could be heard, but not seen. "Revel will be in directly. Father is studying. We are real glad to see you." And she drew the door to, and went back to her pies.

It was as plain a parlor as could well be, but there was a piano, and a good many books were upon the tables. In one corner was a large walnut case full of them, the book-case being the handsomest present old Mr. Vandyke had ever received at a donation party. Deacon Ruggles, the leader of the disaffected faction in the

church, had been the only man who had refused to contribute toward it. "No," he said, "I've always opposed Parson Vandyke. He is n't a good preacher, and you all know it. No, sir, not a cent. I 'll stand to what I 've always said." There were also a highly-polished stove, a well-used sofa, a few pictures upon the walls, a half-dozen cane-seated chairs, and that was all.

Thirlmore was evidently glad when Revel came in. He had been almost repelled from the demure girl who was now conversing with his cousin, and he exerted himself to please her sister. She was by no means hard to become acquainted with, and they were soon talking and laughing together as if they had been friends for some time.

"You are entirely right," he said to her at last, — "perfectly right. I would not, if I were you."

"Right? Would not?" but there was apprehension in her eyes as she asked it.

"I would not ask us to stay to supper, if I were you," he explained, deliberately. "You are perfectly right. Don't do it."

The young girl colored, looked at him, then laughed merrily.

Miss Rachel, hard at work in the kitchen, heard the merriment and laughter also. "Girls will be girls," she said to the pie she was in act of ornamenting by printing it around the edges with a bureau key. "But my girls — !"

Miss Rachel could not say to herself, much less to the pies, all she thought. The run-away marriage of her last remaining brother to the daughter of the German Professor had seemed, at the time, to be a disaster beyond all words. Not that Miss Rachel had not learned to endure, and then love, the fair-haired, laughing, foreign-fashioned young wife her brother had brought to the old home; it was the dreadful old father of the girl who had been her horror. Parson Vandyke could not be induced to have anything to do with him. But after the babies were born Miss Rachel could not endure the misery of

the poor mother, who was silently pining for the sound of her own language, for the sight of her father's sour and well-bearded face. And so, without consulting any one, in the goodness of her soul, she drove into Old Orange one Sunday afternoon and hastened to the room, over a barber's shop, where the Professor lived, and in which he taught German and fencing to such students as he could get.

Miss Rachel thought of that visit now as she handled her pastry. She wanted to bring the newly made grandfather back with her in the old carriage that day. He and his runaway daughter would meet, the babies would melt his heart, there would be reconciliation and concord. She found the gray and grizzled Professor up-stairs in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a meerschaum as large as her fist, a keg of beer of his own brewing in the corner of the room, which was dirty and in a condition of utmost disorder. The old radical seemed, before she had said a word, to know who she was, and why she came, and had, so to speak, frozen toward her. He had been exasperated against God and man for many years, and his daughter's elopement and marriage had perhaps crazed him. He listened to her as though he heard her not. Except for his pipe, the hoary-headed old revolutionist seemed to her like nothing so much as a polar bear. While she told the pitiful story of the poor young mother lying between her new-born babes at home, he sat without stirring, his keen gray eyes fastened upon her, sharp and cold, one hand holding his pipe, the other slowly stroking the heavy tangle of his white beard. When she had done he removed his pipe from its place beneath his mustache, and asked, "Haf you read my books?" then he replaced it.

She was constrained to say that she had not.

"You are a poor ignorant woman," he remarked, but without anger, and then talked steadily on for half an hour. So far as she could understand his broken English, it was a denunciation of pretty much everything. Government was a tyranny, property a swindle, marriage

a superstition, Christianity the culminating lie of it all. The poor lady waited patiently until he was out of breath, and then renewed her effort. In vain she wept and entreated. He seemed so white and cold and still, it was like talking with a corpse.

There was no interruption; but, when she could say no more, he remarked, as if he had not heard a word she had said, "But de trunk of all de religions in de world is de belief in a God, and de accursed root of dat trunk is de religious sentiment. Until dat is *wröten*, torn up, what you call e-rad-i-cated, what is accomplished? Noting!" — and, thereupon, he discoursed for many minutes, not to her, not to himself,— it seemed to be mechanical, mere inability to cease talking by reason of the impulse and habit of many years.

It was useless to do more; Miss Rachel could get nothing else from him, and she had to come away at last utterly defeated.

"That night," she now said to herself in her kitchen, "he shot himself. Two weeks after that the poor creature died with her babies upon her bosom. Three months after my brother was dead."

And thus it was her nieces had been to her as her own children and more, almost from the hour of their birth. She held a pie in each hand, and was in the act, as she thought it all over, of stowing them away in the pantry, when there came another sound of mirth.

"It does me good to hear Revel laugh, and Peace too. Peace!" she said. She paused a moment, her eyes closed, her lips moved. Considering the circumstances of the case, — things more painful than any recorded so far, — it was no wonder there was that behind, beneath all this, which Miss Rachel could not confide to her pies, hardly even to God himself.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COLLEGE GENIUS.

THE Monday after the visit of the cousins to the Vandykes, the whole world seemed to be out of sorts. It was not that the weather was severe, but that its wintry cold was contradictory and uncertain. As the two crossed the Campus to the recitation-room, the snow was a lake of slush, the icicles rattling down upon them as they went, from the writhing elms overhead.

"Look at those clouds, Thirlmore," Trent remarked, pausing a moment, "they roll this way, then that, then another way, as if chaos was come again."

"It is because the wind whirleth about continually. It ought to blow one way or the other strong and steady," the other said, not looking up. "If there is a thing I hate, it is shilly-shally. Come on."

The class were equally out of sorts as they came in and seated themselves, almost morosely, no man having anything to say to his neighbor. As to Professor Rodney, his face seemed whiter, his eyes blacker, his lips thinner, than ever. He was charged as with the snapping electricity of extreme cold. When he called the roll there was a sarcastic accent seemingly upon each name in turn, and there was a tone of resentment in consequence, in the curt "Here!" of the owner thereof.

But the class realized the growing ill-humor of Professor Rodney when, after two or three recitations, he suddenly called, "Grumbles!"

Trent happened to be looking just then at the owner of the name. He was a singularly long, lank, loose-jointed, sandy-haired, freckled-faced country fellow. His clothing was coarse and hung about him with slight allusion to the angles of his ungainly person, and he had

sunk down into his usual despairing droop at the end of one of the semicircular ranges of seats.

"Grumbles!" the Professor repeated, and sharply. At the first mention of his name the student had opened his light blue eyes and his mouth, his face growing sallow with alarm. It was too dreadful to be true! Upon the second call he started up, hastened down the steps, then stumbled and almost fell as he mounted the platform and stood before the blackboard. Little he cared for the laughter of the class, his sorrowful eyes were fastened upon the face of the Professor of Mathematics, a bit of chalk, which he had picked up, was in his trembling hand.

"Mr. Grumbles, you are aware," began the Professor, "that it is the object of the differential calculus to show how to obtain the various differentials of those simple functions of quantity which are recognized in analysis, whether presented singly, Mr. Grumbles, or in any form of combination. You understand, of course?" It was worse than Greek to the poor fellow; but he shifted his weight from one foot to the other, and looked at his tormentor with blank eyes. "Such functions," the Professor went on, "are the sum, difference, product, and quotient of variables, their powers and roots, — exponentials, logarithms, direct and inverse circular functions. That was what we learned last year. Now — I have your attention, Mr. Grumbles?"

"Yes, sir!"

But the helpless accents fell upon a pitiless ear, and the Professor continued, "In the integral calculus, as you know, we invert the process. Write!" and, with uncertain hand, the miserable student inscribed on the blackboard the formula,

$$\frac{dx}{dy} = F'(x).$$

"Now," the Professor said, "find $F'(x)$, if you please, sir."

A titter ran through the class as the victim of the moment stood staring at the problem, his mind ceasing

to act at all, nothing but vacuity before him as he gazed. Evidently the Professor enjoyed it. Diocletian found pleasure in the torture of flies; and the brilliant mathematician leaned back in his chair, his eyes half closed, his delicate white hands held with the fingers tip to tip, and waited. The man who could not understand a matter as simple as that which he had propounded ceased, with the Professor, to have the rights of a human being, — was of the grade of a mosquito, — lower still, a weed. For the time, his victim was as bereft of intellect as if he himself had adopted the theory of the other in regard to him. There were some "hard cases" among the hundred students upon the benches: even they pitied their luckless comrade. Professor Rodney sat perfectly still; he seemed to be feeding his contempt upon its helpless prey. Possibly he had forgotten his existence.

A movement of mirth ran round the seats at last, and then ceased. The amusement of the class rose into laughter, and subsided. The Professor did not stir a hand's breadth; he did not even smile as he sat. Nor did Grumbles. The figures, the very room and College, had vanished. He saw instead his father's house at Scrubstones, the ploughed field, the bald face of his old horse. Suddenly, the white head of the pastor of his church came before him. "I am here to prepare for the ministry," he thought. "That little church is paying my expenses," — and he lifted his helpless hand to rub his forehead. It was wet. The day was cold, but he had never perspired thus when reaping. Then he lowered his hand slowly, and stared through the blackboard into his dismal future again. "O, what would the church think!"

There was no telling how long the remorseless instructor might have sat, as still as a statue of Mephistopheles cut in the coldest and hardest of marble. Suddenly, there was a cough from the benches. Professor Rodney started, colored, said deliberately, and with cruel politeness, "That will do, sir," and Grumbles shambled back to his seat.

"Mr. Guernsey!"

It was he who had coughed, and there was a sensation as the name was called. The Professor's tones were peculiar, too. But any chance visitor would have wondered still more as he saw who answered it, — would have said to himself, "What can that child be doing here?" For, at the call, a little boy, apparently, had risen from his seat, and, limping painfully along, had mounted the platform, taken up the chalk from its ledge, and turned toward the Professor. Apparently it was a mere child, the face was so smooth and fair, the eyes so soft and full. But then the shoulders were too broad, the head too big; moreover, the calm confidence of the attitude was singular, considering the disaster to Grumbles just before.

Beginning at the end of the blackboard farthest from the instructor, and standing now and then on tiptoe to do it as thoroughly as possible, the student wiped the board with the cloth from end to end.

"Will you be kind enough, Mr. Guernsey —" and Professor Rodney dictated a long and difficult problem, the other writing it out rapidly in small and beautiful characters.

"If you please," the instructor added, when the problem was written. His entire manner had changed. Turning from the class, sitting back in his chair, his hands lying clasped together in his lap, he watched what followed with serious enjoyment. The class did the same, each man leaning forward as he sat. Without a pause, the fair and plump-faced boy, his head clustered about by locks like those of a petted child, began the solution, and wrote swiftly and steadily on, carrying his figures down to the bottom of the board, and then beginning again at the top, and so on and on until the long black surface was covered from end to end. There was no attempt upon the part of any student to follow the calculation. They watched the process as they would have done that of fermentation, crystallization, — any other of the mysteriously admirable operations of nature, — operations not more mysterious than they are certain.

"Isn't it wonderful!" Trent whispered to Thirlmore, who happened to sit beside him. "It is as sure and beautiful as the blooming of a rose. No mistake, no hesitation, no least uncertainty!"

"Look at Ghost Gibson!" Thirlmore growled in reply.

Trent glanced at the student thus alluded to. He sat upon the bench before them. There was nothing remarkable about him, except that he was thin and hollow-cheeked, and that his clothing was threadbare and evidently not adapted to the severity of the season. He was leaning more eagerly forward than any, a red spot burning in the centre of each cheek, his eyes glittering with excitement. At a nudge from Trent, Thirlmore looked at the hand of Gibson, which had hold of the back of the seat before him. It was like that of a skeleton, so bony it was, such a grip in it upon the wood. But nothing was heard in the deep silence, except the sound of the chalk upon the board as Guernsey wrote and wrote. At last there was a movement over the room, a breath of relief, almost of exultation. The genius of the college had laid down the chalk, was softly brushing off the white dust from his hands one against the other, saying with a child's bright face, and in a child's voice, "Am I correct, sir?"

"May I ask you, Mr. Guernsey," the Professor replied, "if you had seen this proposition before?"

"No, sir," was the simple reply.

"That will do, sir," Professor Rodney said; but everybody there understood the tones and the manner of the man. He had invented or discovered somewhere the most difficult problem in his power, and Guernsey had solved it as if it were the simplest! There ran almost a thrill through the room.

But what was Guernsey doing now? Instead of returning to his seat, he had begun to wipe the board clean. It seemed like the destruction of a work of art. The Professor was looking at him with surprise, not unmingled with alarm.

"Will you allow me, sir?" Guernsey said, and wrote a

mathematical formula upon the extreme left-hand corner of the board, as if to allow plenty of room for a long solution. "While I was at work *that* occurred to me," he said, lifting his innocent eyes to the Professor. "I know that it is unusual, but would you have the kindness — ?"

Now Professor Rodney was the most distinguished mathematician of the day. His mathematical works were text-books everywhere. Only the week before he had told the class that as yet they had not entered, really, upon the science of quantities. Not until they could handle the idea of two-ness as easily as they did that of oneness could they consider themselves qualified to begin the actual consideration of numbers. It was imperative, then, that he should solve the little problem given him upon the instant. It seemed to be such a small one, too, — not more than a dozen symbols. Alas! that was the tightness of the knot. It was a very small statement, because it was of the nature of a sublimated essence. The Professor glanced at the board. It was something he could work out only when by himself, and with sufficiency of time. Moreover, he now saw in a flash what Guernsey meant. Grumbles was his room-mate!

A minute later, the entire class, after staring for a while at the two, understood the trap laid for their dreaded teacher; and, as he colored and paled, first a giggle and then a peal of heart-felt laughter arose. Guernsey excepted, not a man present but had felt the sting of Professor Rodney's sarcasm, and now? — Never had the Professor been hit so hard himself!

"Silence, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, as Guernsey limped back to his seat with unruffled face, more than ever, if possible, the idol of his class.

"I will furnish you the solution, Mr. Guernsey," the Professor added, but no one had ever known his black eyes to glitter, or his nose and chin to seem quite so sharp, as they did at that instant. Amid the suppressed mirth, Professor Rodney glanced deliberately down the roll, as if in search of another name.

Partridge could not resist the temptation. He was a slight-built, light-haired, girlish-faced, rattle-pated fellow, who could no more study than could a grasshopper. Trent had a talent for the languages, Partridge's talent, equally decided, was for fun. Guernsey did not delight in pure mathematics so much as Partridge did in pure mischief; and he was as brilliant in that line as Guernsey in his. It illustrated the success which crowns the man who gives himself exclusively to one thing.

As the Professor looked down his list with an affectation of unconcern, he coughed, and there was a prompt reply of, "Yes, sir!" and Partridge, as if supposing himself called, hastened down the seats with cheerful alacrity, mounted the platform, took the bit of chalk from its ledge at the bottom of the blackboard, turned a beaming face upon the astonished Professor, and said, "Shall I proceed to do it, sir?"

The instructor looked at the daring fellow with darkening brow. It was so dark that the class trembled for Partridge, even while it broke out into uproarious laughter. There was no other student who would have dared to do it. "But, then, it was Partridge, you know,— Partridge," was the universal explanation afterward,— "*Partridge!*"

"I believe it was I you called?" he said with undismayed impudence, as his teacher regarded him in awful silence.

But the Professor remembered himself: his lips relaxed. "No, sir," he said, "I did *not!*" and yielded to the renewed laughter with which Partridge begged pardon, and returned to his seat.

"You are dismissed, gentlemen," Professor Rodney was heard to say, with marked sarcasm upon the last word. The class hastened out to have more room for its mirth, their cordial regards evenly divided between the man of genius and the man of impudence. During the rest of the day the last-named assisted to disseminate the news of his exploit by braying or cock-a-dooing,

now from one window, and then from another, of almost every building upon the College grounds.

"But I could n't help looking at Gibson," Trent said to his room-mate, when they had returned to their room. "Do you know, Thirlmore, that poor fellow actually boards himself in his own room? He buys pastry and bread of Cæsar Courteous, lives on that with a bottle of molasses once a week, a little Goshen butter, and that sort of thing. Is n't it dreadful?"

"Think so?" was the indifferent reply of Thirlmore, as he changed his wet boots for slippers. "I can't say I take much interest in him. No wonder the fellows call him Ghost Gibson, he is so white and thin, gliding about as if he did not have an ounce of flesh upon his bones! I never believed in spooks till I saw him. Did you ever see such an eager, cadaverous face?"

"But did you notice?" Trent asked, "he is wearing a thin, summer suit this bitter weather. Thirlmore," Trent added, rising, and walking to and fro, "I have found out more about him since he came into our club. That man is starving himself to death! I shook my fist at Cæsar Courteous the last time he was here. 'Why don't you go, in a quiet way,' I said to him, 'and tell Dr. McMasters about it?' 'Dat's de berry ting I have oblergated myself to do, sah,' Cæsar said. 'I done communicated de sarcumstances ob de case to de Doctor. He say, Bless my soul, can such tings be? Yes, sah, Dr. McMasters is a brudder in de ministry, an' I put on my Sunday close, an' went to see de Doctor a purpose!'"

"Did it do Ghost Gibson any good?" Thirlmore asked.

"It made things worse. Cæsar told me," Trent continued, "that the next time he went with his pies to Gibson's room the fellow took him by the throat, and almost choked him. You see, Gibson had got a letter from Dr. McMasters enclosing money. He had sent it back in a rage. Plenty of our fellows have tried to help him, as you know, in an off-handed way. It only makes him furious. And what is worse —"

"Is that he is studying for the first honor," Thirlmore said. "Certainly. Did you see his eyes while Guernsey was at the board? Smart as he is, starved and strung up as he is, Gibson has no more chance against Guernsey than a beaver has against an eagle. That 's one reason I don't try harder. Guernsey is a genius, — that is, in *his* way."

"And Cæsar tells me that he has no fire in his room. The poor fellow studies with all his clothes on, and wrapped in blankets from head to foot. Thirlmore," Trent added, coming up to his companion, "I intend to tell Miss Rachel about it. Gibson is in danger of worse than starvation. That man —" and he stopped.

"Steven Trent, my young and tender-hearted friend," Thirlmore said coolly, "what is the use of your making a woman of yourself? Gibson's case is only one of many millions in the world. There is horrible wrong going on all the wide world over. Now look here, it 's none of my business. If I could help him I would, but I can't. I did n't make the world, and I don't propose to govern it. What I intend to do is to take care of myself. Don't be a fool, Steve. — What a pretty girl that Miss Revel is! I say, Steven, I 'm glad I walked out there."

CHAPTER VII.

GUERNSEY AND GRUMBLES.

WHEN Guernsey came out of the recitation-room, limping and laughing, not a man of those crowding about him but would have been glad to walk with him to his rooms. He generally never stirred abroad without laying hold upon almost the first classmate he came across, and clung to him until he dropped him for somebody else, or had arrived whither he was going. Not a

student in Old Orange but was proud to be thus levied upon to help the feeble footsteps of the college genius; it gave one a standing to the end of his course to be seen in such companionship. It cannot be said that Guernsey imparted much wisdom as he walked. He laughed and talked all along, clinging and limping, and chattering away: Partridge himself did not talk as much pure nonsense as Guernsey did, genius though he was. The stout fellows who lingered about his door to lend him an arm to chapel, refectory, society hall, or recitation-room had the satisfaction of imagining that he was not so much superior to them at least, that outside of the class-room he was little more than a baby. They were content to let him do most of the talking, were careful what they said, for it was well known that he would not stand a certain style of conversation. What with his physical feebleness, his youthful beauty, his purity, and his talent, Guernsey was more like a young girl who had strayed in among them somehow, and had to be gently cared for. Men had to stop swearing when they saw him coming halting along, or got pretty well cursed for not doing so when he had gone out of hearing.

"Do you see that man there?" every student in college was sure to ask of any visitor whom he might be showing around, pointing out Guernsey to him at the first opportunity.

"You do not mean that round-cheeked lad?" would be the reply.

"Lad! That man takes one hundred, sir, every session; that means perfect, you know. Professor Rodney says he is the only genius he ever knew in Old Orange. Why, look here," the collegian would continue, "Stormworth, — you know him, of course? — well, *he* took only ninety-five. Guernsey takes the highest grade anybody has taken here for over a century."

If the speaker was from the South he was sure to add, "Guernsey is a Southern man, sir. Such men do not come from north of Mason and Dixon's line, sir, — no sir, never. For that man's heart, sir, is as big as his head, —

bigger." If the informant was a Northern student, he was certain to say, "Guernsey is a New-England man. The fellows from the South try to claim him because he happened to have lived there a little while; but his father and mother, and all his ancestors back to the Mayflower, were Massachusetts people. His father worked a plantation in Carolina, they say, and all he got by that was to have a negro nurse drop Guernsey when he was a baby and hurt him for life. A Southern man! When he was born in the North, like all of his people before him, and he is the smartest man in college!"

When Guernsey came out of the class-room the morning of Professor Rodney's defeat, he had firm hold upon his room-mate Grumbles, nor did he let him go as he passed through his admiring friends, until, rattling away as usual, he had reached their room. "Professor Rodney would squeeze the universe," he said as he sat down, "into his confounded angles and quantities. He tests and rates everybody by that. Say a fellow is dull, is n't zero also essential to calculations? The thickest-headed fellow alive has a heart, a soul, beyond the measuring of his mathematics. Give me men for my money, not books! Partridge may be a fool — Hey, what 's the matter?"

Grumbles had not opened his lips. He sat for a moment upon the old lounge with drooping head, and then deposited his lank length upon it, and lay there a ludicrous picture of despair, leaner, more freckled, more hopelessly countrified in appearance than ever. His long arm hung down, the yellow palm lying open upon the carpet beside him, in utter gloom. "Partridge is a fool for the fun of it," he groaned, "but I am a fool in good earnest," — and he put the other hand over his eyes.

"I would n't if I were you, Grumbles," the other began in soothing tones, as if referring to something to which he was accustomed.

"Can't help it. I did n't want to come here. When I joined the church," Grumbles went on, in despairing tones, "old Parson Vandyke said right away I must go

into the ministry. Ministry! I had never been off the farm in my life. All I knew was to feed the horse, cut the wood, hoe and plough, sow and reap. When I said, *Me?* me be a *minister?* they said, 'Don't you know that Old Orange will *fit* you for that?' But I don't want to go, I said. 'That is your carnal mind,' Parson Vandyke replied. 'But I *can't* go,' I said. 'No, you don't want to take up your cross,' they said. What I wanted to do was to work on the farm, to serve my Master there! O my Lord!"

"Why, Grumbles, a fellow as old as you and crying!" Guernsey remonstrated, and it was far from the first time. "Crying!"

"I fought against it," sobbed the other, "I never worked as hard mauling rails as I did against being sent here. They said they never had a candidate for the ministry from the old church yet, I was their first chance. They would pay all my expenses, the sewing society would make my clothes, and be glad to do it. There was nothing to prevent, they said, but my wicked heart. Was I willing to sacrifice my will to His, or was I not? Praying did n't make my duty a bit clearer to me. But I could n't stand out against them, and here I am, O my Lord!" and the poor fellow lay spread out as if every muscle was cut, weeping profusely, big as he was.

"Don't, Grumbles, don't!" Guernsey said, with deep sympathy. "You are nearly through."

"Through! Yes, six years of my life almost I 've given to studying, studying hard, and it comes worse to me every day. I stuck in the mud from the first, and I have stuck in the mud all along. It 's no use! I don't care for the fellows laughing at me! If I could feel that I 'm coming to understand! But I 'm ten times as stupid to-day as I was the day I began. O my —"

"Nonsense, old fellow. I 'll boost you along. Come, get up, wash your face, be a man!" Guernsey had been standing beside his friend, his white hand upon the wild and sandy tangle of his hair. Grumbles was the homeliest of men, nor did his distress improve his looks; yet, had

he been a prince, the other could not have seemed more tender toward him.

"You can't boost me, and you know it. As Parson Vandyke says, it is my wicked heart. It's worse," groaned Grumbles. "I get up early. No fellow in college drenches himself with more cold water when he gets out of bed than I do, and I eat as little as I can. I keep myself hungry all the time; but what good does it do? The instant I pick up Aristotle, my head begins to thicken. When I go at that calculus, my brain feels like a lump of putty. I tried as hard as I could, and I never understood one thing in arithmetic, beyond the first rules. There used to be unclean spirits, and it is a dumb spirit, an impotent spirit, has got into me. No fellow could try harder, but I can't see into that differentiating. The Devil is the prince of darkness, you know, and — O my Lord!" But there was no taking of any name in vain in this case; a dying martyr could not have been more sincere, as he relaxed into weeping.

Guernsey had sunk into a seat, and said slowly, "Never mind, old fellow, we'll fix it up somehow,"— and then there was quite a long silence. Had not Grumbles been so swallowed up of grief, he would have seen that his friend had grown queerly white, his lips especially. His eyes had dilated, his under-lip was bleeding, bitten tight in the effort to hide something.

"Never mind, Grumbles, we'll — we'll manage to get you out — out — some way," Guernsey repeated at last. It was said after a longer silence, but in such altered tones that the other looked up, then sprang to the door and locked it. In an instant more Guernsey was lying upon the floor in the agonies of spinal disease. Putting a pillow under his friend's head, the other unbuttoned his own vest in order to get at an inner pocket, took a key out of it, unlocked his trunk in the inner chamber, snatched a vial from under almost everything in it, dropped a dark liquid from the vial into a spoon, and held it to the greedy lips of his room-mate.

He had forgotten himself, as he gazed upon his suffer-

ing companion. It was a dreadful sight. Guernsey was rolling hither and thither upon the floor, in agony uncontrollable. That was the reason Grumbles had not laid him upon either the lounge or the bed. To this side and to that of the room he writhed, his room-mate removing chairs and table out of his way in silence. The doctors had done what they could. All that remained now was to wait.

"Can't you feel the drops yet?" Grumbles asked at last.

"No, no! More! more!" gasped the other. But his friend knew better, and stood looking at him. Accustomed as he was to the sight, he could hardly endure it. Guernsey had suddenly turned as into an old man, his face was so drawn, his eyes so large and old, as with the experiences of ages. His hands were clenched tightly, his body drawn into a knot, the sweat stood in beads upon his forehead. The other held his watch in hand and said nothing, as the sufferer continued to repeat, in broken gasps, "More! more!" It was in vain. Grumbles had locked the vial in the trunk again, had placed the key back in an inner pocket, and buttoned his vest over it.

One o'clock had come, and the dinner-bell sounded, but neither of the two regarded it. "More, Grumbles, more!" the sufferer said, in pitiful entreaty, crawling from the other side of the room to his feet.

"You know I can't, Guernsey," he replied. "I gave you more than the doctor told me to just now. Dear old fellow, I dare not! I am so sorry, but I dare not!"

"O Grumbles, I suffer so!" The other laid hold upon his friend, standing before him as he said it, and dragged himself up until he was upon his knees at his feet. "Please, please!" he gasped, "I cannot endure the pain! More! more!" He had clasped his writhing hands together like a child in prayer, the perspiration pouring down his face.

"The moment I can, I will," Grumbles said, his eye upon his watch. "Bear it, old chap, O my Lord!" for sincerer tears than he had been shedding upon his own account were now streaming down his homely cheeks.

No wonder Guernsey talked so much nonsense when he was walking with the fellows! It was reaction from pain, as well as from study. Now the sufferer was driven desperate. He glared at his room-mate like a wild beast. "You are a villain," he said, in shrill tones, striking him with his clenched fist. "And when you see me suffer so! Yes, you are right, you are a ——, yes, you *are* a ——" But Guernsey controlled himself even in the insanity of pain.

"Say it out. Yes, I am! Blockhead! dunce! fool! Out with anything you please. I don't care. I know it already. Dear old chap, hit away, as hard as you can lay on! I'm glad for you to do it!"

But Guernsey had rolled himself upon the floor to the other side of the room. He lay there until his friend saw by his watch that he could venture another dose. As soon after that as he dared, still another. But there was no relief. What should he do? There was not the least use of going for the doctor. He took his exhausted room-mate in his strong arms, laid him upon the lounge, knelt by his side, lifted his sorrowful face in prayer. "O my Lord," he began, "Thou seest that we have done all we could —"

But here he ceased. It had occurred to Partridge that a slight serenade would be acceptable to Guernsey. He deserved it for his mathematical ability in general, for his exhibition of both brain and heart upon the platform that day. Besides, it would refresh the college genius after his labors. Another student had kindly consented to accompany him upon a tin whistle, Mr. Partridge's instruments being a poker and a pair of tongs, which, keeping time to the whistle, he smote sometimes upon each other, and then upon the iron railing of the stair-way which ended at Guernsey's door. And thus, in the midst of the supplication, Partridge broke in with whistle and unmusical clatter: —

"O Jenny crack corn, I don't care how!
O Jenny crack corn, I don't care how!
O Jenny crack corn, I don't —"

But at that point Grumbles had thrown open the door and rushed upon the serenaders with such wrath in his face that they fled as for their life, and Guernsey broke into hysterical laughter.

"The pain will be back again," he said in a few moments; "get it out, old fellow! let me see it, let me see it!"

His companion needed no explanation. Going into the inner room, and again unlocking his trunk, he took out a big Bible, and, out of that a photograph, and, carefully locking the trunk behind him, handed it to his friend. Guernsey held the picture in his hand, looking at it as he lay as a child might have done. What with his disordered hair, and cheeks streaked with the traces of tears and perspiration, he had the appearance of a boy who had been severely chastised for some naughtiness. He was quiet so long, that Grumbles began to draw on his coat to go to dinner.

But the pain was coming on again. "Get the pipe, the pipe!" Guernsey cried, sliding off the lounge upon the floor.

His room-mate got it, filled it with strong tobacco, lighted and placed it between the lips of the sufferer, and then sat behind him holding the head of his friend between his knees. Now the sudden change from out of doors and hard work upon the farm had long ago ruined the digestion of Grumbles, and the tobacco made him sick. None the less he sat still, his face becoming more and more yellow in the ascending smoke.

"It used to help me," Guernsey groaned at last, "but it don't do any good," and, still holding the photograph in one hand, he threw the pipe across the room and sank upon the floor. "Grumbles," he gasped, "it is coming on worse than ever. Give me all there is in the vial, and let me die."

"Hold on! It helped you just now when you laughed. Listen," and the other began to sing, —

"Way down upon the Suwanee riber,
Ebbry whar I roam,
Dar 's whar my —

something, I declare I've forgotten what it is, is doing something forever,

> "Dar 's whar de old folks is at home!
> O my heart am sad and weary!"—

and the honest fellow put such a howl of pathos into the words that Guernsey laughed until he cried. He had never heard his room-mate attempt to sing before. His voice was as that of a crow which had caught a cold, and the sufferer laughed and laughed as if he never would stop.

"Dat am so. Hi, nigger! show de white gemplems how you can dance!" and the gawky, sad-featured candidate for the ministry threw his long legs out to the right and the left, whirling round and round, snapping his fingers over his head like one possessed. It was too ridiculous. His companion had drawn himself up into a corner of the room, the color into his cheeks again, the light into his eyes, laughing like his former self.

Grumbles began another stanza, and was in the act of revolving in another and wilder break-down, when the door was stealthily opened. In his distress for his friend, Grumbles had neglected, after his onset upon Partridge, to lock it; and now, in the midst of his gyrations, he saw that the tutor in charge of that floor was standing upon the threshold.

"I am amazed at you, sir!" he said. There could be no doubt that he was. His name was Meek, but his hair was very red, and bristled, although cut close to his head, above the glare of his spectacles. Having been appointed not long before, he had the zeal of a novice. "You have been drinking, sir. No, sir, not a syllable!" he said. "There can be no excuse! I will report you to the Faculty, sir. And you are a candidate for the ministry. *You!*" Tutor Meek was right. The wild hair, the long legs still outstretched, the flushed and guilty face attested that. "I perceive that Mr. Guernsey is absent, as I supposed. He will no longer allow you to share his room. No, sir, not a word! Your conduct

is disgraceful, sir." Tutor Meek closed the door as he said it, and the invalid leaned against the corner into which he had crawled, and laughed until he could laugh no more.

"I've done with pain for this time," he said, "it only needed *that* to cure me!" and he nestled himself down into his corner, pale and exhausted, and began to look in a languid way at the photograph which he had held in his hand through it all. Grumbles had lost his chance for dinner long before, but thought only of his friend as he sat down, tired out, to be ready for whatever might come next. And thus what was left of the afternoon wore away until the refectory bell rang out.

"There goes the poor-house tocsin," Guernsey said, "and I have been starving you to death, poor fellow. Go to supper, and bring me something to eat when you come back. When I get a little stronger, we will go over the differentiating together again," and he slid himself down into an easier position, photograph in hand.

It was singular that a man like Guernsey should care for a picture such as that. You could have sworn at a glance that its original was the most ordinary of country girls, — as certainly that it was the work of one of those photograph establishments which perambulate the back counties upon wheels, and whose terms are exceedingly low. Guernsey had spent some time at Scrubstones, where the old father of Grumbles had a farm, and the likeness was that of Aurora Ann, the young woman who did their cooking. The photograph was her very self, — the round face, red lips, honest eyes, and the toilet, which was evidently got up for the occasion, left no doubt of that. And yet as soon as Grumbles had closed the door behind him, the college genius kissed it again and again. Had it been the portrait of the most charming woman in the world, he could not have seemed more devoted.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SISTERS.

SOME weeks after their visit to the Vandykes, Thirlmore proposed to his room-mate, one afternoon, that they should go again.

"I ought not to go," Trent replied, rising reluctantly from his books, "but since you wish it, I will. It will take me all night after we get back to make up for it, but since you desire it —"

"You are a queer fellow," Thirlmore said, by way of thanks, but vouchsafed no explanation as they wrapped themselves for the walk, and went forth. The snow still lay thick upon the ground, but the wind was frozen, seemingly, at its sources; for the elms, encased in armor of ice, stood motionless as they passed beneath them. Trent had silently winced at his companion's words, for, grasping an iron rail of the Campus fence, as they entered the street running in front, and holding Thirlmore back with the other hand, he halted for a moment, and looked at the College buildings behind them.

"I suppose I *am* what you call queer, — that is, queer to *you*," he said. "If I do not say it, be sure that you and a great deal beside are very odd to me. It all flashes upon me now, the wintry day I first stood here. The snow was falling steadily, and it was through it that I looked for the first time upon those stone Bastiles. That will do. Let us go."

"O yes," his companion replied, as they walked on, "it is about the same story with every Fresh when he first arrives. Dear old Tommy took you to his house, made you stay all night, and gave you batter-cakes for breakfast. I know. Only I never was much of a baby myself."

He was not interested. They both belonged to a secret club, "the Divan," and Thirlmore was full, in ad-

vance, of the annual supper thereof, which was nigh at hand. But, as he talked, Trent was thinking of something else. He was back again upon the old plantation, in the days when the negroes and the climate were equally obedient to him. His childhood rose before his mind, a confused but delicious memory of the house with its ample porches, the abundant vines clustering about the door-ways, and climbing to the tops of the houses, — of the trees. He could almost see the orange groves, the profusion of flowers, the cypress forest, every bough draped with gray and hanging moss. Yonder was the long line of the Levee, behind which flowed the great river, and there, and at a lower level, was the boundless sea of sugar-cane waving before the breeze in perpetually changing shades of green. As he walked, he heard again the merry jargon of the mocking-bird, and through the dusk came the lament of the whip-poor-will. He remembered his father and mother as persons wholly unlike in type; his father slight, sunburned, and courteous; his mother fair, vigorous, full of energetic life; each deeply in love with the other, both passionately fond of him.

Thirlmore was talking steadily on, in his deliberate way, but Trent was thinking, his hat drawn down over his eyes, of the night of the flood, of the whirl of horror which followed, in which his mother, and then his father died; of the coming of his rough old uncle; of the brief weeks of his visit to the Vermont farm; and so again of the day he came to Old Orange, a shrinking, sensitive boy of seventeen. He shuddered for a moment, remembering the dreary vacations he had spent in college, when everybody was absent, and then he was back again in the far away and fragrant paradise of his childhood, — a paradise the more beautiful because in such contrast with what seemed one long, unbroken winter ever since.

"Yes," he said aloud, "I suppose I *am* unlike these people."

"You certainly are," Thirlmore said, indignantly. "I do not believe you heard a word I have been saying.

See here, Trent, this cold day is good for the health. Well, a little vigorous winter will be good for something more than for your body. Would you like some strong advice?"

"Go ahead, Thirlmore," Trent said. He knew what was coming. As a rule, the other said at all times what he thought.

"I said you were a queer fellow, because," his companion explained, "you hate to say no as you hate winter. With you to say yes always is a sort of Southern, summer, sunshiny sort of thing to do. Anyhow, you always do it. You did n't want to come to-day, but, knowing that I did, you could n't refuse. You care too much for other people, Trent."

"Do I?" but his companion was not without a pang as he said it. Yes, he had come of a climate and of parents in which and with whom loving was the chief end of living. How could he help it, since he also had been trained to love? His home had been a school especially for that.

"You poor fellow! how you did try at first to love Uncle Mac! I pitied you," laughed Thirlmore. "Up in Vermont, it was like a vine trying to wind itself about an old ruin. You found that it would n't do. The old fellow knows a cask of sugar when he sees it, but love is that one of the tropical products for which he has no faculty. He loved your mother a little, but he is only used to my mother, — he does n't really love her. You and I are to him very little more than the clerks in his store used to be, necessary nuisances. Strong men are always that way. I would n't care for people if I were you. If you suppose they will care for you, my fine fellow, you are mistaken. You make yourself weak and miserable. It 's a bad habit: break yourself of it. I don't intend to care particularly for anybody, I assure you." But the speaker did not really mean it.

Trent said nothing, for he half felt that his companion was right. Some men are consumed by avarice, others by ambition; he had this as his reigning passion, to love and to be loved. And yet Thirlmore was the only man

who knew it. To others Trent was reserved, and his reserve was like that of coldness of temperament. Such was his bearing that even Partridge was held at a distance by it.

"I wonder," he now said to himself as he walked, "if my experiences in this horrible North will wear this nonsense out of me. Nothing can kill yellow-fever but white frost. My fever takes a good deal of cold to kill it."

"I will tell you another thing, Trent," Thirlmore was saying. "You think Uncle Mac, myself, everybody, the whole world of the North, is hard and repellent to you. Very well, I 'm from Vermont, where we have nothing but ice and rocks and hard work, and we are sharp and strong. You will have to hear what I say. Look here, Trent, God himself does n't care for you as if you were a baby, and you are coming to see it!"

"Thirlmore," Trent remarked when they had walked along for a while in silence, "I have no wish to offend you —"

"O, speak out, man, I 'm not afraid!" the other broke in. "I have plenty of bone and muscle, but no nerves. Go ahead."

"What I wish to say is this. You have your opinion of me —"

"Certainly," interrupted his friend, "you are an Alpine blue-bell struggling to live upon the edge of an avalanche. You are —"

"Be silent!" The words were so like a blow, sharp and sudden, that Thirlmore was arrested in spite of himself. "What I wanted to say," Trent added, as they strode on through the cold, "was, that you also need plain speaking. You are a stout lad, — don't interrupt, — who has been raised in a cold climate, upon a stony farm, through severe privations. You have a good mind, have been prepared for college by a hard teacher, and have won your way by a sort of physical force so far. As you know only too well, you have fine qualities. There is a reserve of power in you for good or bad. It will take years, religion, severe suffering, to train you

At present, Thirlmore, you are a very rough, self-satisfied, at times an exceedingly conceited country youth. You must pardon my plainness, but you are a good deal more like Grumbles than you are like Guernsey."

"And you are the duplicate of Ghost Gibson," Thirlmore said very slowly. "Except," he added with judicial calmness, "that he is more ambitious than you, more talented I dare say, and that his starvation is of the stomach, — I was going to add and yours is of the heart, but I don't know about that."

The last words were said with a provoking drawl. Trent colored under concealment of the collar of his overcoat drawn about his ears, and of his hat pressed down upon his forehead, for it was very cold.

"I like that Miss Revel," Thirlmore continued after quite a silence, as they descended the long hill toward the Vandyke place. "As to Miss Peace — "

"Be careful what you say," Trent interrupted, in sharper tones than his companion liked, but he went on as if he had not heard him.

"She is more than I can quite understand as yet. The fact is, Grumbles and I *are* alike as you so politely remark; at least, Miss Peace is to me about what one of Rodney's formulæ is to Grumbles. And the more I see of her, the less I understand."

"The more you see of her!" Trent exclaimed.

"Did n't I tell you? I went out there once last week. We had a delightful time. They asked after you. But," Thirlmore continued, "one understands Miss Revel from the first. She is pretty and she knows it. Did you ever see anybody so full of life? Anybody can see whether she likes him or not. Sensible girl, there is no mystery about *her!* Miss Peace I give up. But, look, here we are," Thirlmore added, "and I do entreat you, Trent, to curb your wild ways. Take me for a model. Be sober and — ah, yes, if you love me devote yourself to Miss Rachel, to Miss Peace, to the old gentleman. I am sure Miss Revel would prefer to talk with me. Ahem! I will knock."

Miss Rachel was glad when she came down-stairs to see them. She clothed herself in habitual cheerfulness, as she did in her daily raiment. When she had any special trouble she put on a special cheerfulness, exactly as she put on her best silk of Sundays, — it was a religious duty. Trent had come to know this, and therefore his heart sunk within him when he saw how almost hilarious she was that evening. He was right, that very day a deacon had called to tell her that it was almost impossible to collect the pew-rents. Not only were the people failing to pay the long arrears of salary, they would not subscribe for the future. "Old Mr. Vandyke is getting too old to preach, — now he *is*, is n't he?" the deacon had said to her, and it was not the disaffected Deacon Ruggles either.

"And this is the end," Miss Rachel had said to herself, "of half a century of faithful work! The people to whom he has given his life are casting him off. Was it not written, 'Even to hoar hairs I am he?' Is God false too? It will kill him to resign, and what will become of the girls?"

Therefore it was that Miss Rachel went up-stairs as soon as the deacon was gone. All by herself she had indulged in a good long cry. Then she bathed her face, arranged her silvered hair at the glass, and went down-stairs again clothed as in the very purple and fine linen of an unusual gladness of manner soon after the cousins came.

Yes, she was glad to see them. Not that she attached any expectations to her visitors. They were "nothing but students," without even a profession as yet. Too many crops of young men had ripened in Old Orange, and passed out into the world for good and all, and under her own eyes, for any reliance to be placed upon these two, even for a moment. Years ago she had been an Old Orange belle, and more than one bitter, bitter lesson she had herself learned.

And she had not failed to let her nieces know all about students. Revel knew, so did Peace. They liked

the two young men, but they were wise girls, silent also, each in her own way, and it was because they understood things so well that they again, each in her own way, could enjoy an evening's visit from the cousins, — and that was all.

The fact is, Revel and Peace had done a wonderful deal of darning that day. Not merely of stockings. Table-cloths, napkins, towels, carpets even, had flimsy places which needed it badly. Things were wearing out. Both of her nieces, too, knew what their aunt's unusual cheerfulness meant. Before the despondent deacon came, a sorrowful parishioner had been closeted for hours with their grandfather. The old man was so deaf, his visitor had to speak so loud, it was impossible not to understand what their talk was about.

"It is Mrs. Ruggles," Revel said to Peace, as they worked down-stairs together, "and she is *sure* this time that it *must* be the unpardonable sin she has committed!"

Certainly the old gentleman was unusually cross at dinner afterward. The house had been dull all day, very dull, to say the least of it. Revel and Peace found quite a relief in the company of the young men. They played for them, sang for them, conversed with them, upon whatever topic came up. Peace listened with a fresh interest in her eyes, seeming, to Trent at least, to be more dove-like than ever. She wore a gray dress which fitted her beautifully, the smoothness of her hair was in such harmony with the softness of her tones, with the quietness of her manner, that Trent found himself sliding more deeply in love with her, not suddenly, violently, as his father had done with the fair and rosy Scotch girl whom he had come upon so unexpectedly at the table of Donald McGregor, but none the less distinctly tending in that direction, and held back merely by the Scotch caution which had come to him from his mother.

Revel had this advantage, — not long before the coming of the cousins, she too had enjoyed a good cry in her room. The tears had brightened her eyes, — her spirits

had reacted. She had never seemed so charming before. Her aunt was not more surprised at her than she was at herself. Peace had lifted her eyes at her, as Revel had talked with Mr. Thirlmore across the room. When the two stepped out a moment before supper to help their aunt, Revel had remonstrated with Peace upon the sobriety of her demeanor, — had even pinched her, by way of stirring her up.

It was not much that the old parson had to say at supper. As usual, he buttered his bread heavily, cutting the slice as it lay upon the cloth into squares after he had done so.

"You believe in Scripture, I see," he said to Thirlmore, when supper was ended, pointing to a fragment of cake which that gentleman had left upon his plate.

"I do not understand," the guest had replied; and, as to every one of the many college youths at his table before, the old parson had hastened to say, "You believe that a remnant shall be saved, — a remnant shall be saved." All laughed, as in duty bound.

As requested, Mr. Trent returned thanks; and the young people went back to the parlor, the old gentleman straight to bed, and Miss Rachel remained behind to clear up.

"I do not blame Trent," Thirlmore said to Miss Revel, not long before he and his cousin withdrew.

"Do not blame him?" the lady asked.

Her companion explained himself by looking across the room at Trent, who was seated upon the music-stool, which Peace had vacated, and was looking up at her, as she stood at the end of the instrument, a roll of music in her hand. Possibly she knew as much of Miss Rachel's sore trouble as Miss Rachel did herself. Certainly, what she knew hurt her far more than it did her aunt, who had coarser nerves to begin with, and who was toughened, as well as bronzed, by years of suffering. Miss Peace did not weigh so much as her joyous sister, by a good deal, nor was she so tall. In fact, neither Trent nor Thirlmore had known a young woman so com-

pact as she. The word fails to express the lithe, graceful vigor which breathed in her face, as well as in her person. She made upon them the impression which a small hand, perfectly gloved, would have done. It was not that she seemed to be herself cold, but that somehow she had clothed herself against the cold, — had reserved herself from touch. Her complexion was the clearest white Trent had ever seen, and she smiled and conversed as easily with him as with a brother, but chiefly listened. Any reserve in her did not extend to her eyes. They compelled Trent to talk freely, they questioned so eagerly.

Thirlmore conversed with Revel Vandyke at perfect ease, — largely to vindicate himself, so to speak, against Trent, who seemed to be so much at home with the family. He was no more daunted by women than he was by men. He was on the point of saying to Revel, "If you will promise not to tell her, your sister is like what books call a blessed ghost. She seems, in some way, to be shrouded from head to foot in a misty veil: all you really know of her are her wonderful eyes, looking through at you." But upon the whole, he concluded not to say it. "Is it possible you two are sisters?" was all he did say.

"Everybody asks us that!" his companion replied, — in such a way, too, that Thirlmore hastened to explain, and very sincerely, that what he meant was not to the disadvantage of either.

Trent came to his help. Strange to say, he was thinking the same thing, when he overheard Thirlmore; for he had crossed the room to say good-by. "There may be two roses upon the same stalk, Miss Revel," he said; "and one not open, as yet."

"What did you mean by that nonsense," Thirlmore demanded of his companion, the moment they were out of the house. "Don't you know that they are twins?"

"But did you not see how Revel bloomed when I said it?" Trent replied. "She was like a damask rose. Ah! I know what you are thinking of, Thirlmore!"

"What am I thinking of?" the other replied crustily, drawing his collar about his ears, as they hurried on.

"You are thinking that Revel Vandyke is going to be the sweetest, most womanly, most charmingly beautiful woman you ever knew," Trent said, with enthusiasm.

"You are nothing but a girl yourself! What about Miss Peace?" the other growled.

"O, she is different," Trent replied, — "very different indeed. She has more intellect, is deeper, stronger, superior, somehow." But it was too cold to talk, and they walked rapidly along.

"Trent," Thirlmore said to him as he went to bed, on arriving at their room, "why did n't you tell me before about those Vandykes? Does n't old Grumbles come from somewhere near them? They were talking about Scrubstones, where his father lives, to-night. Who would have thought such people as those girls were living out there? And, I say, Trent!"

"Go to sleep, Thirlmore. I must study," Trent remonstrated.

"I say, Trent, I intend to go out there again before long. You can go with me on one condition. I won't have you coming over to my side of the room. Miss Revel, too, would rather you would talk to her aunt or her sister. Anyhow, you let us alone."

His companion hoped he had gone to sleep. He was mistaken. "Trent," he said, an hour later, "they are nice girls; but I would have walked ten times as far to have seen my dog Brute. I would n't give my horse Nebuchadnezzar, no, nor my red ox Peter, for a wagon-load of women."

CHAPTER IX.

OLD ORANGE.

ONE day, not long after this, the tidings ran through College that the President of the United States would visit the town, accompanied by his Cabinet. The news was the more interesting as the President was very heartily hated by the students in general, who were, and almost to a man, devoted adherents of his great rival in politics. For a week the excitement rose higher and higher. It reached a climax when, at the set time, a carriage drawn by six grays drew up at the iron front gate of the College grounds, and the President alighted and entered, followed by his Cabinet. Instantly, to the disgust of Trent, and to the astonishment of all, Thirlmore sprang upon a stool he had ready, waved his hat above his head, and called for three cheers, not for the President, but for his rival. It was as a spark to powder, and the cheers were given with a will.

The next instant Trent had plucked the stool away, had mounted it and was crying out, "Three cheers for our guest, the President."

There was a sudden electric force in the tones of Trent. He was known to be a partisan of the rival; but the students understood his purpose instantly, and the cheers were given, and then three more, and yet again three more, with a volume and force which made amends for what had gone before.

"I only did it to smash the programme," Thirlmore said to Trent when they were alone together. "I am in favor of the President, and you know it."

"I despise the man. He is a traitor, sir," Trent said. "But did n't you see how white his hair is? He took off his hat when you began to call. It was an outrage. I could have knocked you down."

Thirlmore looked at the glowing face of the other, and then added, with the utmost deliberation, "You would? What *do* you suppose I care for the President, for the other man, or for you? Bah!" — and he turned slowly away in contempt.

The same afternoon Thirlmore went out to the Vandykes, and alone. Old Mr. Vandyke was lying sick up-stairs, and none of the household had gone in to see the reception of the President. Miss Rachel came into the parlor but for a moment, and the visitor gave the young ladies an account in general of the events of the day. Miss Revel seemed to be graver than even her grandfather's sickness would warrant; and the conversation, for a time, rested chiefly with Thirlmore and her sister. He exerted himself to be agreeable, told them about the stupidity of Grumbles, the genius of Guernsey, the struggles of poor Gibson, the witticisms of Professor Davy, the sharpness of Professor Rodney. Both of the sisters became interested at last. Revel, called out by her aunt, returned to the parlor with a dish heaped with ginger cakes hot from the oven, and the conversation became quite animated over them.

"Do tell us all about Cæsar Courteous," Revel said at last. "Are his pies really as bad as they say? Does he talk like Dr. McMasters? How is that funny Mr. Partridge? Grandpa is old and sick, and we do not go out very much."

But Peace did not give their visitor time to reply. "Revel likes to stay at home. If I had my way," she said suddenly, "I would be going all day. Early in the morning I would get into a sleigh with a pair of fine horses, and I would wrap up well, and I would drive as hard as I could, and never come back."

"You would take your sister," Thirlmore remarked, surprised at the placid energy with which it was said.

"No, Revel would prefer to stay at home."

"She would be afraid to go, perhaps," their visitor suggested.

"You do not know Revel, — she is afraid of nothing.

When she cares for anything she would fight for it like a tiger. No, I should go alone," Peace replied.

"You would take me," Thirlmore pleaded.

"No, I would not!" The young girl had been closely confined by her grandfather's sickness, and a desperate mood was upon her. "I am glad," she said "that I am sufficient to myself. If the horses held out, and the snow too, and the oceans were frozen, and I had a little something to eat, I feel as if I could drive round the globe."

"I really had no idea,—I did n't know," Thirlmore began, and with admiration in his tones too, at the quiet but intense face before him.

"You gentlemen in college think you know a vast deal," Peace said, lightly, but with color in her cheeks, "Greek, Latin, and all that. You do not know us girls though! We can talk and darn and sew, you think, and — that is all you know about us."

Evidently there was something their visitor did not understand. He thought he detected moisture in the lids of the young girl as she spoke, and a tremor in the sharpness of her words.

"Peace, dear," Revel said. "I never knew you to talk so," with loving surprise.

"Of course I do not mean a sleigh and nothing else. I want to *know* more! I have read about noble women —"

"Charlotte Corday," suggested Revel, "and Joan of Arc. Have you read, Mr. Thirlmore, about Theroigné, the young woman who rode upon the cannon to Versailles? About the maid of Saragossa, too?" added Revel, laughing maliciously.

"Bless my soul," the gentleman interjected, "I had no idea —"

"Revel is only joking," Peace interposed; "but for my part I *would* like to know. There is so very much we can learn. You have forty Professors in College, Mr. Thirlmore, what do they all tell you about? And you spend four years there and read so many books. What

are the books about? Sometimes I am almost desperate to know. To know — knowledge."

She did not seem desperate, except in her eyes. Nobody could have been more composed in manner. There was a deeper color in her cheeks, that was all. Her tones were placid, but she held him with her eyes, — in which shone a certain hunger. "We women feel so ignorant. At least I do," Peace explained.

"Remember Mother Eve and beware," Thirlmore said, regarding her with new interest. "You know how Satan — "

"I will risk Satan," cried Peace, interrupting him.

Miss Rachel had never forgotten the grim old radical, Professor Rodenstein, the socialistic grandfather of her nieces; and she had her foolish fears in regard to Peace, watching her at times with eyes which had in them a sudden sharpness. Had she been in the parlor at the moment she would have been startled, Peace looked so much like the Professor. It was but for the moment, the next her eyes fell; she evidently regretted what she had said.

"Peace is superior to me," Revel said. "Now I like housekeeping. I do not care so much for books as I ought. You have no idea, Mr. Thirlmore, how happy you would be if you were to put on an apron and go to work stewing fruit, and making pies and cakes. Peace lives in her library. I don't. Who cares to read books? What I want is to *do* something." She looked, as she said it, so much prettier than Thirlmore had observed before, that he took her side of the question at once.

"You are right, Miss Revel," he replied, "I am keeping you both too long from your grandfather," and he rose to go; "but I must warn Miss Peace against books. I can learn more from my horse Nebuchadnezzar, or my dog Brute, in one summer's day, than from any book. It is all humbug, Miss Peace, — about studying I mean! Go into our College library and see. There are tiers upon tiers of books, from floor to ceiling. What good are they? If they ever had any life, they are as dead as autumn leaves. Nobody ever opens them. So

it will be fifty years hence with the books of to-day. Except as a kind of exercise, to make a fellow's intellect more muscular, there is no good in books. It is little I read them. Now," he continued, forgetting to drop Miss Revel's hand as he said good-by, and turning to her sister, "that is where I differ from my friend Trent. He is a good fellow, a sincerely good fellow, Miss Peace, very good indeed; and he cares no more for a dog than if it were a frog, and he is very sensitive, and loving, and all that. But he is too bookish, too obedient to people, too submissive and patient. He is good, you know; Trent is a better man than I am. But I like for a fellow, you understand, not to be a woman. Women are the loveliest things in their way God ever made. But a woman likes a man to be strong, even if he is coarse,—likes him to be—O you know!—a *man!*" There was no doubt but that Thirlmore was himself an illustration of what he meant, as he muffled himself up in his wrappings, put on his hat, took it off again in a final farewell to the sisters, as they stood together in the hall, and then departed.

"That is why Trent never told me about them," he said to himself, as he walked away. "I had no idea—" But he bent down to the long walk and to thinking things thoroughly over as he strode along.

"I never knew any person to improve as much as he has done since we first knew him," Revel said to her sister in the end. "He is splendid. But," she hastened to add indignantly, "what did he say that about Mr. Trent for?"

"Revel," her placid sister added, "Aunt does not think grandfather will get well. You will have enough to do, and I shall have enough to learn, very soon.—Yes, Aunt, we are coming," she replied to a voice from up-stairs. "Don't cry, Revel, we must be silent and strong."

In consequence of his visit, which possibly was made as excuse for absence, Thirlmore was not present at the coming together of the literary society to which Trent and

himself belonged. It was an interesting meeting. The guest of the College was already an honorary member of the society, having been made such when he was Governor of Virginia, and he was to be initiated that night. The presiding officer had first named Steven Trent as the person to escort him; but he had refused to do so, supposing that there would be many who would be glad of the duty. Now Trent's father had not only been a student in his day at Old Orange, he had been a member of the society, and had left distinguished traditions behind him. No man stood higher now than his son. If *he* declined to escort the apostate President, that must be the thing to do, so student after student arose in turn as his name was nominated,— arose, and, with the diplomatic gravity of veteran statesmen, respectfully declined.

A moment after, Trent was upon his feet, withdrew his refusal, was appointed to act, and hastened to the house at which the President was dining in great state.

The host of the occasion was a wealthy man, as well as a distinguished politician, and his guests had just arisen from table. Trent was announced, and felt his spirits rise as he came in; it was as if he had been away from his own sphere all the time. The Governor of the State was present, a Senator or two, generals with whose name he had long been familiar, a celebrated author, in addition to the gentlemen of the Cabinet. Dr. Stormworth was there too for a wonder, and Professor Rodney, who had made the address of reception in the Campus, his black eyes glittering with excitement. The President had married, but a little time before, and Trent was introduced to the lady and to her husband standing beside her. She was a young and pretty bride, all ringlets and diamonds, her eyes and cheeks radiant with light. With a laugh, she poured out a glass of wine for the student, but he declined with thanks.

"They say that you do terrible things when you initiate people in your horrid hall," she exclaimed, clinging in a girlish way to her husband, who towered above her with his hollow temples and nose like an eagle's

beak, aged and care-worn. "But I am not afraid to let him go with *you*, sir," she said, after looking at Trent for a moment, "I see that I know you."

"Know me, madam? I fear not," he replied, greatly flattered by her manner.

"Yes, I do," she said, "and I will explain if you bring my husband safely back. Remember."

The modest student was perplexed, as he escorted the venerable novice toward his initiation. What could she mean?

The bride was in waiting for them upon their return at midnight. "Do you still desire to learn how I happen to know you?" she demanded, in her charming fashion. "Well, I saw at a glance that you were from our South, the President's South and mine. But anybody can see that!" and she made him a laughing courtesy. Compliment greater than that who could imagine?

CHAPTER X.

THE MIDNIGHT SUPPER.

IN his craving after something more satisfying amid the wild waste of College life, Trent had slowly got together a club. He had begun with Guernsey and Thirlmore at an early period of their course, had named the club the Divan, and had insisted that the membership should be very small, and that its existence should be concealed. Thirlmore had been Grand Turk, or President thereof, from the outset; Guernsey, Grand Vizier; and Trent, the Ulemi or Censor in general. From his entrance Guernsey had urged the admission of Grumbles, who had accepted the dignity of Grand Scribe. There was a certain student in college, a thick-set, dark-complexioned fellow, Macroy by name, who possessed the

most wonderful of voices. When he declaimed Milton upon the chapel platform, and alluded to linked thunderbolts, and the spouting of cataracts of fire, the effect was tremendous; and, as the representative of eloquence, he became Omar, the orator of the Divan. After long consideration, Gibson had been elected, though with small hope of his consenting to come in. He refused at first, but at last entered as Caliph of Bassora. Except in chapel and recitation-room, the club was the only place at which he mingled with his fellows, and, apart from its meetings, he had no intercourse with even its members. He seemed to enjoy it the more for that very reason. It was Gibson who had suggested the election of Gruffden, a coarse-visaged, burly-framed man, already mentioned, evidently from the lower order of people. He was supported at college by an eccentric philanthropist, who had been struck by the sledge-hammer ability of the youth at a village debating society. Created Bey of Tunis, he added a deal of rough vigor to their meetings.

From the first, Guernsey had urged the election of Partridge. "It is not because that, like me, he is from the South," he said. "I don't go about in the winter, as he does, wearing the lightest of clothing, and with my vest unbuttoned to show my scorn and defiance of the Northern cold. It is because I consider Partridge the choicest specimen of human folly in Old Orange. Elect him? Of course."

And so, to his great delight, Partridge came into the club with the title of Sheik of the Bedouins; but with his admission the Divan became hermetically sealed to all others.

The club met, once a week, in an upper room in a distant part of the town. When it had assembled, every door was locked, every shutter closed, and, the value of the proceedings being in this manner greatly enhanced, a journal, edited in turn by each man, was read, some current topic discussed, and, with mystical ceremonies, a frugal lunch partaken of, the occasion ending in con-

versation and good-fellowship in general. No two of the members were in the least alike; every man was, in his way, of marked character. Like the fragments of a perplexing puzzle, the individuals fitted together perfectly; and, by its own unanimous consent, the club was voted the quintessence of the College, its proceedings the cream of its curriculum.

The night of the annual supper had arrived. Thirlmore, assisted by Partridge, had undertaken the arrangements, and by ten o'clock the eight members were stowed away in a large sleigh, — for the snow lay deep, — and were speeding into the country as swiftly as the best four-horse team could bear them. It was in great part for the sake of the horses that Thirlmore had come, for he spent a good deal of his time about the livery-stable from which they had been taken. He had a personal acquaintance with every horse by name, insisted upon driving them himself, which he did at a tremendous pace, and was happier than he had been since coming to college. Instead of the customary bells, Partridge, who sat beside Thirlmore, had substituted a number of cow-bells, and the dolorous clangor as they sped along was appalling. At the solicitation of Gibson, Trent had conferred beforehand with Professor Rodney, who had laughed and consented to the expedition; but the rest did not know of this, and there was a sense of guilt which added zest to the ride. With Partridge, to break college law was rather the routine of things. Not so with the others. For months, for long years, they had plodded steadily on, neglecting even needed exercise, and their blood was stirred as never before. The moon arose as they left Old Orange. What with the smooth, swift motion, and the white world spreading in veiled splendor around, it was as though a new existence had suddenly opened to them. Their road ran along the railway, and from one direction or the other trains thundered past them with a roar, a blinding flash, a vision of illumined windows, quickening them to the fact of the world of urgent movement and activity which

outside the college walls sped on forever, day and night.

Partridge, perched beside Thirlmore, added to the din of the cow-bells by occasional peals upon a stage-horn, four feet long. Sleepy-looking houses flew past on the right hand and on the left; a spray of snow broke over the passengers now and then. At one moment the road ran between ridges drifted high, then, in an instant, a wide landscape lay open before them, ending in hazy distance. And thus, laughing and talking, singing and shouting, in almost an insanity of reaction from long restraint, the club found itself by midnight at the tavern, twelve miles out, at which they were to sup.

It was a hearty meal of turkey and ham, pies and custards, and with the coming in of the latter, the exercises began with great energy. Macroy declaimed; Gruffden proved with violence that twice two is *not* four; Gibson blazed forth in an original poem, which astonished the hearers; Grumbles told a story; Guernsey and Trent rehearsed a dialogue; Thirlmore made a speech; Partridge, in and out of season, sang songs. The triumph of the occasion was when Partridge disappeared, and then returned, bearing the pudding in a dish ablaze with burning brandy.

"The glory of this pudding consists, gentlemen," Partridge remarked, "in its sauce. The very smell of it brings tears to my eyes. When my venerated grandfather was dying," the master of cermonies continued, as he stood knife in hand over the smoking platter, "he summoned me to his bedside, and said, with streaming eyes, 'Partridge, my beloved grandson, I esteem and love you beyond all the world for your virtues. In token of that esteem I make you my heir, — heir to a treasure which has been the joy of my childhood, the strength of my manlier years, the sole consolation of my declining days. It is this.' Motioning me to stoop down and listen, he whispered into my ears with his dying breath, gentlemen of the club, the Recipe for this Sauce."

It certainly seemed very nice. The long cold ride had made the Divan hungry. There was something in the manner of Partridge's fun, however, as well as in the flavor of the sauce, which arrested the attention of Trent, and he partook sparingly. Hot lemonade had been brought in, and he imagined a kinship between it and the sauce. His suspicions became certainties when Macroy insisted upon being heard. Planting himself at one end of the room, drawing a deep breath, and unbuttoning his vest that his lungs might have full play, he plunged with such vigor into Campbell's Pleasures of Hope as to draw almost every inmate of the house into the doorways. His face grew darker and more portentous as he proceeded, his hands were clenched, his eyes glared until he reached the point,—

> "When, wrapped in fire, the realms of ether glow,
> And heaven's last thunder shakes the world below."

The stamp with which he emphasized it was followed by a shriek from below, and the remaining lines were drowned in a shrill cry of "Stop that, you are kickin' down the plasterin'!"

At this juncture, Guernsey demanded that Grumbles should sing and dance for them, which, to the unspeakable astonishment of all, that gentleman did, throwing his long legs hither and thither with a certain melancholy fury as he rotated round the room, Thirlmore accompanying him with vigor, but in a wholly different song, popular among the lumber-men of his section.

Next Gibson was upon his feet, calling out. It was the first time in his life that the pallid student had been intoxicated. Both stomach and brain had been for so long a time under severe strain, that they could not stand it. By an odd peculiarity of his case, in destroying his judgment, the alcohol seemed to invigorate him in every other sense.

"Gentlemen," he thundered, "I *will* be heard! I have been silent long enough. Listen!" and he spoke in

such tones that none could choose but hear. There was no hesitation in voice or manner, he had never seemed so cool or strong, as he said, — "You wonder why I have held aloof from you as I have done. Do you suppose I do not know that I am called Ghost Gibson? Do I not know that I have not a friend on earth? Look at this coat," and he held open his thin black garment, which had been buttoned up to the throat. "Do you call *that* winter wear? As God sees me, this is the first full meal I have had this season. And I have n't been warm before to-night, men, since last summer. But don't you suppose I know what I 'm about? A little while longer! If I can only hold out — "

Except Trent, every person at the table was pretty thoroughly intoxicated by the spirits which Partridge had inveigled them into taking; yet not one but was terrified at the face of the speaker. The middle of each cheek was red, the eyes had a stony expression, there was deeper eloquence in the appealing hands and pathetic tones than Macroy had attained to as yet. "I have struggled long, I can but die, I will not be torn away," — and the poor fellow turned as he said it, and struck at Trent, who had got his arm around him and was trying to draw him aside.

At this point, Partridge began to sing, Thirlmore to make another speech, Guernsey was clasping his arm around Gibson, assuring him that he would not stand in his way for the first honor; while Grumbles was contemplating the confusion with owlish gravity. Gruffden was the only man upon whom Trent could rely. Aided by him, and with the help of the landlord and a man or two, the party were at last bundled into the sleigh, and it drove off.

Who can say what telegraphic communication there may be through our atmosphere, and without wires? At that very moment, Donald McGregor was seated in his room, the bulky wills lying upon his table, his nephews never as low in his estimate as then. Why should he bestow his money upon young Thirlmore? His college

standing was low, — he was indolent, almost stupid. Certainly he had never shown any affection for anything on the farm except his horse or his dog. He was a strong fellow, and could make his own way in the world. As to his other nephew, the uncle had not seen him for years, he did not understand him, he was ardent, sentimental, visionary. Moreover, had not he, their uncle, done his full duty by educating them? Money very likely would merely ruin them. Let them force their own way upward, as he had done!

There was another consideration. The old Scotchman had been member for a long time of the chief benevolent Board of his denomination. At the reiterated request of the Board, he had at last attended an important meeting. At this, documents had been read, accounts examined, speeches made, which had interested him. He had met at the Board some old business associates of his, of the highest wealth and standing, had seen how sanguine and how liberal they were, and had been appealed to by them as a man of their own grade in religious as in business matters. There had been also a largely attended public meeting in behalf of the Board. Maps of the world had there been unrolled, and the wonderful things already accomplished had been explained by the aid of red crosses with which the map was plentifully dotted; ardent prayer, enthusiastic singing, liberal collections, had accompanied the proceedings. Besides, while the Boards of other denominations had lately received large bequests, this Board was perilously in debt. The old and cautious merchant had not given a penny so far, — he was considering matters up till to-night.

At the moment when Thirlmore was roaring out his song, his old uncle was saying, in his lonely room, "My nephews will not bear my name, and they tell me I can endow a Donald McGregor Mission, or Hospital, or College. And I am getting very shaky. Who kens but I may drop off at any moment?"

He locked up the wills when he went to bed that night,

and, as he did so, he had pretty much locked himself up likewise to an iron resolve.

The cold air had its natural effect upon the riotous crew. Trent himself had not escaped so completely as to be without a burning desire to chastise Partridge with the first stick in reach, and small notice was taken by any one of the way along which they went. Possibly it was the best thing that could have happened; but, just before entering Old Orange, as day broke, the sleigh ran too near the edge of the canal which bordered their road at that point, and in a moment the club lay prostrate upon the frozen surface, in a chaos of buffalo-robes and drifted snow. There was little doubt that Partridge had brought this also about; at all events, he was first upon his feet, assisting the mass to disentangle itself and regain the sleigh. The overturn had sobered them sufficiently for each man to get safely to his room at last.

When, a week after, the members dropped in at the rooms of the Divan, they were met by Trent, and informed by him that, as he had originated, so he now dissolved the club forever. There was a good deal of noisy recrimination, in the midst of which Trent marched out, the archives of the club under his arm, and, like many another institution of this evanescent world, the Divan ceased to exist.

CHAPTER XI.

PARTRIDGE.

WITHIN a week after this, the question ran one night from end to end of the supper-tables of Old Orange, "Have you heard about Partridge?"—"No, what?"—"He went out hunting this morning. There

is no game, you know, except frogs or sparrows. Two or three fellows went with him, but Partridge only went because the Faculty had forbidden it. Of course his gun went off by accident. They brought him in town just now with a load of shot in the back part of his head. Just to think of it, Partridge shot! Partridge!" It appeared to be impossible. For disaster to befall Partridge seemed an absurd joke.

None the less was it a fact. He was lying unconscious at the house of Professor Rodney. Thirlmore and Trent had been the first to see him. The wagon had driven up to the Professor's door as they were passing, and they had helped to bear the wounded man into the house. Trent could not realize that it was indeed Partridge. The foolish fellow had attained to a sort of dignity, he lay so pale and still, his hair all drenched in blood. He had been thoroughly frivolous, utterly irresponsible, defiant of all rule and decorum, but everybody liked him, light-hearted, careless creature that he was.

"He persisted in being a child, and we are all getting to be so old," Trent said to Thirlmore, standing with him beside the bed.

"He is a fool," Thirlmore replied.

A celebrated surgeon had been summoned from the city, and the cousins remained till he arrived, had finished his examination of the wound, and had done all that was possible for the present.

"Everything depends on the help I have," he said to Professor Rodney standing by. "For days, weeks, months perhaps, there will be a perpetual growth of fungus upon the wounded brain. I must have some one who can hold his head between his hands, as if in an iron vice, while I cut it away. If the man's hands are not iron, if the head is moved a hair-breadth, — and the poor fellow will struggle terribly, — my instrument may penetrate the spinal cord, and kill him. Is there any one here who can do it?"

His cold, quick eye glanced at Trent as he spoke.

"Too emotional," the surgeon remarked to himself,

as he saw the almost pleading eyes of the young man fastened, in the intensity of his pity, upon himself and the sufferer. "Women have their place in a sick-room, but—" and as the surgeon thought this his glance fell upon Thirlmore. "I want *you*," he said to him without hesitation, "to hold his head. Be here every day at two. Good-by," — and he hurried off to catch the cars.

"He was cool about it," was all that Thirlmore said as he walked away with Trent; but underneath his indifference, he was greatly pleased.

Trent was not pleased. A sense of conscious weakness cut him to the heart. "And it was because I was so anxious to help," he thought. "The more a man cares for other people —" But he checked himself.

"That fellow's eyes are as sharp as his tools," Thirlmore said of the surgeon. "How does he think, and be hanged to him, I can get time to be there! He talked about Partridge's brains. Partridge! Brains! Bah!"

But he attended none the less so long as he was needed; and more than once the surgeon thanked him for his help. Nor was Thirlmore unconscious of having outranked even Guernsey in consequence. There was not a student but glanced at him with envy, as well as admiration, as Thirlmore passed by in his deliberate way. He seemed to care nothing for it.

Either together or separately, the cousins were often at the Vandyke place during these days; and one thing struck Trent as something he could not understand. Whenever Partridge was mentioned, Revel and her aunt were full of sympathetic questioning in regard to him, while Peace had little to say, — was at times almost sarcastic in her remarks.

"She worships intellect, and she knows what an ass Partridge is," Thirlmore explained to Trent one day, and the latter was amazed at the degree to which Thirlmore was unconsciously yielding himself to the opinions of Peace. He spoke at last as if it were rather a sick kitten than a man that he was nursing. Such was not the way in which the College looked at it. "Poor Par-

tridge!" It was said a thousand times a day in Old Orange. Few students there were who did not walk past Professor Rodney's house at least once a day; and they trod more gently and spoke more quietly wherever they went afterward. The Professor wore an aspect of greater severity than ever in the class-room. Everybody knew it was mere affectation; and not a student but had become more respectful toward him, as well as more careful in his demonstrations at the black-board.

"Does Partridge ever say anything while the doctor is cutting into his wound?" Trent asked of Thirlmore when he came into their room from Professor Rodney's one afternoon, a month after the accident.

"Only this afternoon," Thirlmore replied. "I was holding his head, and the surgeon was carving away, when Partridge said, 'Tell you what it is, fellows, it hurts!'"

"Poor Partridge!" said Trent. "I wonder if it is possible for him to get over it?"

"Over it? Not exactly: he is dead! And I must say," Thirlmore added, as he drew on his dressing-gown, "that he was the biggest fool I care to see. I don't grudge him my nursing, exactly," Thirlmore went on as he sat down to his books; "but I told the doctor once or twice that it was folly to try so hard to save such a fellow as Partridge."

"Partridge dead! Is it possible? Partridge!" Trent cried out. He had expected the news every day, but it was a greater shock than if a wiser man than the light-headed madcap had died. Yes, the College Mercutio was dead!

"Partridge!" In truth, Thirlmore was the one student who seemed to care little about it. The College was greatly sobered already, and now a deeper hush fell upon it. The men walked more slowly across the Campus, and gathered, in groups of three or four, about the door-ways. Before the friends took the body away, there was a brief service in the chapel. Dear old Professor Tommy broke down when, in the midst of his remarks, he glanced at the face of the dead in the open coffin;

and Professor Rodney had never seemed as little cold and unfeeling as when, in taking Professor Tommy's place, he had to suppress his own grief. The long line of students filed past, each glancing at the well-known countenance as he went by.

"Partridge!" The reckless, frivolous, devil-may-care aspect had changed into the grandeur as well as the marble of death. For many a year thereafter the students handed down from class to class, and as precious traditions, the manifold escapades of this the Achilles of fun. But it was not till the men who had known him were departed that the rehearsal awoke laughter.

In conversing about matters with the Vandykes soon after, Trent, notwithstanding his passion for Peace, was perplexed at her comparative indifference in regard to the dead. Miss Rachel wept when she spoke of him, and Revel seemed to be deeply touched, — why should Peace care so little? And why was it that Thirlmore — always so prompt to assert himself against every one — should seem to take, and more and more, the color and tone of his thought from Peace, — even while he seemed most interested in her livelier and more sympathetic sister? It was worse than one of Professor Rodney's problems.

CHAPTER XII.

CÆSAR COURTEOUS.

COMMENCEMENT day was near at hand, when, in passing along the main street of Old Orange one afternoon, Steven Trent saw a loud and excited crowd moving slowly up town, accompanying a wagon, in which two men were seated. He was hailed at the moment by Gruffden.

"I say, Trent!" he called out, "you are from the

South too, are n't you? Fall in! you are the very man we want. Some of the rascals about here have been talking about trying a rescue. Fall in, fall in!"

Trent began to understand. He saw that Gruffden was one of a number of students who had formed into a body nearest the wagon, with (every man of them) a revolver in his hand. There was small need of explanation. One of the men in the vehicle was Cæsar Courteous; the other was a white man armed to the teeth, whom Trent knew must be the United States Marshal.

"You see? These fellows are from the South, — every student of them," Gruffden said to Trent. "Cæsar Courteous is a runaway negro; his owner has got the papers for him, and these fellows are ready for any Abolitionist, if he dares show himself. Fall in!"

Now there is a certain value in artificial flowers, the work of cunning fingers out of muslin or wax; and there is a certain other worth in even the commonest primrose which comes to us, instead, out of the soil. So of these printed leaves, any real life and value in them is as they grow out of nature itself. One stain in Steven Trent, then, of the dirt of the field, if you please, was that he hated an Abolitionist. How heartily he hated such it is hopeless to try and express. When out hunting in the bayous near his father's plantation his canoe had occasionally struck upon an alligator. Half serpent, half tiger, it was as loathsome an enemy as he could fire at, and he did it by instant instinct. But an Abolitionist! From his birth, the name had stood with him for Yankee swindler, thief, free-lover, infidel, incendiary, assassin, the inciter to the outraging of helpless women, a something, half madman, half monster, and wholly dedicated to the devil. And yet he recoiled from obeying Gruffden and falling into line.

"*You* are not from the South," he replied to him fiercely.

"No, but I am of their party," Gruffden replied, and he looked the embryo politician as the jackal cub resembles the jackal. The contempt of Trent was echoed

in the self-contempt of the man. It was as though he had been kicked in the same instant from within and without; saving that, by a curious peculiarity of character, kicks and kisses have not the difference to such men which they have to others. But Trent had forgotten him, had climbed into the wagon and stood beside the negro, his hand upon his shoulder.

"Mars Steven!"

"Hush, boy, I'll fix it!" As the words were uttered, there was the going out from each toward the other of an affection such as shall never be again between white and black as long as the world shall endure. For the negro was in a pitiful case. He had lived in Old Orange for years, had picked up so much information that he was pastor of the colored church. Moreover, he had modelled himself so long and faithfully upon Dr. McMasters that he really was the duplicate in ebony of the urbane divine. He had been seized while on his way to officiate at a funeral among his members, and he had on his best broadcloth; his necktie and linen in general were clerical, a white handkerchief protruded from his breast-pocket, and even Dr. McMasters was not hatted and gloved more correctly. But the feebleness of his race lies in this, that it cannot stand a blow of sudden disaster, not at least, in the instant of the shock. Although the man knew how to swim, he would have forgotten it, and drowned, if he had fallen overboard from a boat; and now the sleek divine had in an instant disappeared, and from head to foot, from centre to outermost portly circumference, he was a slave again, — a *thing*, and, for the hour at least, nothing more.

To add to the confusion, his wife had heard of the arrest at the funeral, and had come flying up the street in her silks and ribbons, weeping and screaming and trying to force a way for herself to her husband through the crowd, which was becoming every moment more closely wedged around the wagon, until at last it could not move. She was a comely mulatto, whom the runaway had married since coming to Old Orange, and

to whom he had never dared to tell the fact that he was a slave and a fugitive. As she at last forced a passage to her husband, Steven Trent whispered a few words to the Marshal, who listened eagerly, for he was anxious to be done with his business. Then Trent held up his hand to the students about the wagon.

"Gentlemen," he said, "my father once owned this boy. I knew since I came here all about it. We have known each other ever since I can remember. Like me you feel that you are here in a sort of foreign land, that you must stand up for the South. You would like to have a row if only for excitement's sake. But look here, fellows, this boy has got a wife in Old Orange, has lived here for a long time, and don't want to go back. Some of you have plenty of money. Suppose we buy him! Langdon, I know I can count on you. Clendennin, you have a rich father in Mobile. I am glad to see Rutledge among you, and Craft of Mississippi, Walthall too, and Jennings. You know how poor I am; I'll give," — and the speaker named a sum which would leave him after it was paid almost as poor for the time as the day he was born.

The runaway had fast hold upon the hand of his friend. He now got up; his rotund dignity was gone, but not his politeness. "If you gentlemen will only take it out in pies," he began. The proposition was drowned in shouts of laughter, and Trent, encouraged by cries of "Go ahead, old fellow!" wrote down in his note-book the names and amounts given in.

"I thought so!" he said at last. "Good for the South! But this is only a beginning. Take by the throat every fellow from the South you can lay your hands on, and make him give something. I am off for a raid upon the Faculty."

He hastened in the first place to Dr. McMasters. The venerable gentleman was seated in his comfortable study in dressing-gown and slippers, but had heard already of the arrest. As Trent hurried to his house, he had been saying to himself of the seizure, "Somehow, after

all, it is horrible, horrible!"— but he was none the less shocked when Dr. McMasters began, "It is horrible, horrible! Ahem!"

"You do not mean—? It cannot be possible—?" his visitor began, recoiling from the old clergyman.

"That I am an Abolitionist? What do you mean, sir?"

The noble face of the divine crimsoned to the roots of his white hair with indignation. "*No*, sir!" with the utmost energy. "I am *not*, sir! I am astonished at you, sir! St. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon, sir. I abhor Abolitionism with all my soul, sir! But I will gladly contribute as you request,"—and he drew up a subscription paper with methodical care, and headed it with a sum as far beyond his own means as what Trent had given had been beyond his.

But the old clergyman walked up and down his study for a long while after his visitor had gone. He was perfectly familiar with the history of the race from Eden down, profoundly versed in what were the purposes of God to men to the end of the world, and forever after. No man had ever fathomed more accurately all infernal depths, or scaled more joyfully all celestial heights, and yet he had no more idea of the awful woe that was impending than the rest of us.

But Trent had no disposition to moralize just then. For the first time in his life he was begging, and he gave himself no leisure to be shy. Professor Rodney, Professor Tommy, Dr. Stormworth even,—he left no leading man unvisited. He endured rebuffs where he had counted on a cordial greeting, and found help where he had expected refusal. Hiring a buggy for the first time since he had entered college, and armed with letters of introduction, he scoured the region round. It took weeks to do it, but he made up the amount at last, and the slave was free. Ever after he had to be on his guard against Cæsar Courteous. Whenever he saw the negro coming, he turned down side streets, struck across vacant lots, anything to escape the grati-

tude of the man he had rescued. Had he not locked the door upon her, Mrs. Courteous would have taken his linen for washing by physical force. As to pies, he might have supplied the College with them if he had not bolted her husband out as well.

From the outset of the affair, Thirlmore had not hesitated to express an astonishment at his cousin's course in regard to his former slave, which ripened at last into contempt.

"I knew the poor fellow when I was a child," Trent urged, unable to comprehend Thirlmore.

"If it had been a horse or a dog, I could see some sense in it," the other said, and more than once. "But the idea of tearing around the country to get money for a negro, when he is no longer your own, I cannot understand. You are one of those fellows, Trent, who give way to their feelings. You are lifted and lowered by them, as a chip is by the sea. Who do you think will exert himself that way for *you?* The more you expend yourself for other people, precisely so much the less will other people care to do anything for you. You may say it ought n't to be so, — but then it *is* so, you see. The Bible itself says, 'Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself'; they only despise you when you are sacrificing yourself for them. They will say, 'O, yes! Trent is a good fellow,' — meaning that you are a wishy-washy, weak sort of a chap. Ask Uncle Mac what he thinks about it. I would come down out of the clouds, if I were you."

"Thirlmore," Trent replied, "there are two men struggling in you for the mastery. You used to tell me so yourself; but you are changing every day. The original savage in you is the strongest: it is becoming stronger hour by hour. Take care that it does not so master and choke down the better self in you, that you will come to forget even that you ever had a nobler self."

"My young and sentimental friend," the other answered, with the utmost deliberation, "if I was green at one time, I do not propose to remain so forever.

Listen! When I was in the city last Saturday, I strolled into a synagogue while service was going on. I picked up a greasy old prayer-book, and read it while I sat there with my hat on. It was the most sensible prayer-book I ever opened, for I came across this petition: 'I thank thee, O God, that I was not born a woman!' I said, 'Amen, good Lord!' I dare say I said it out loud; for the hooked-nosed old rascals sitting in the pews turned to look at me, and I came away."

"Well, what of that?"

"I have not time to explain, for I am about walking out to the Vandykes. But I can tell you one thing, my fine fellow," Thirlmore lingered to add, as he put his hat upon his head. "I did n't understand Miss Peace at first, she seemed to be so silent and saintly, you know. You had better believe I do now, and I give you fair warning, the person who gets Miss Peace Vandyke will have to be of the opposite sex from her own. Good-by."

The admonitions of Thirlmore had been abundant of late, and to the same effect. The day came soon after, when their practical effect upon Steven Trent was to be severely tested. It was the last day of those which had been devoted to the examination of the graduating class for degrees. A critical time it was for Trent. Now that Guernsey, as we shall see, had left Old Orange, the race for the first honor lay between Gibson and himself. Professor Rodney's mathematics had been reserved for the last day of the examinations. When the students had been locked into the class-room for the dreaded ordeal, every man of them saw, in one glance over the test papers, that the Professor, as if savage at the escape of Guernsey, had exhausted his malignant energy in devising the most difficult questions. Thirlmore slowly picked out the two or three which he thought he could do, worked them out, then laid pencil and paper aside, and, leaning back in his seat, gave himself for the rest of the time to hatred of Professor Rodney, gladness at his approaching release from college, and rambling in im-

agination about his uncle's farm, with Brute at his heels: his horses, his oxen, his sheep should be the only companions of his life, if he could have his way.

Trent devoted himself steadily to his work, not daring to look at the second test until he had wrought out the first. He labored with utmost intensity of application, his courage increasing as he mastered and wrote out, in neat and clear characters, each accomplished proposition in order. He could hardly believe his eyes, when he found at last that he had finished the list. It was his Austerlitz; and Napoleon could not have been more elated at his wonderful victory. He closed his eyes: his heart seemed to stand still, and then to bound within him. The face of Peace Vandyke came before him, and he knew the keen pleasure she would have in his success.

Then he opened his eyes. There was dead silence in the room. He glanced over the rows of heads bent down, as the students strained themselves to their work. Then he glanced at the platform. Professor Rodney sat there as still as a stone; but Trent caught the sharp eyes fastened upon him, as if in inquiry, and he flushed, and lifted his head proudly. As he did so, he thought, and for the first time, of Gibson. The gaunt student sat at the other end of the semicircular seat. Trent had not supposed that even Ghost Gibson could be so pallid. A scarlet spot burned in each cheek, and, pencil in hand, the poor fellow was unconscious of all the world as he toiled on.

Very slowly but very steadily the case of the starving scholar came to his mind as Trent looked at him,—came to his mind with such force as it could not have done if his own nerves had been strung less high, or his gladness not so great. Then came an idle fancy, which grew swiftly into an actual question for consideration, then ripened into a purpose. As Trent shrank from it, the wild purpose had become a resolve! He took into his hand the last of the many loose pages over which he had wrought so well. It contained the hardest of all the tests, but he had done them every one! Could even

Guernsey have done them better? Trent, at least, had reached his highest point of power in his success therein. No, there was a level unspeakably higher than that. "If my father were living, or my mother," he thought, "I ought not. Peace Vandyke? I refuse to think of her now!" And the cherished page was lying in fragments under his feet. Then came upon him a deep calm, and with it that peace which is the highest strength. "Let him have the first honor!" he said. Alas for even the noblest nature! "But I am certain of having the valedictory!" he thought. And with the thought came back the old nervousness. "It is too late now to copy my work out," he enforced upon himself; "and I am glad — yes, I am *glad* I did it!"

CHAPTER XIII.

SCRUBSTONES.

ON the afternoon — to go back a little — of Partridge's funeral poor Grumbles was so unfortunate as to break down in the class-room, even worse than usual, under a cross-examination of Professor Tommy as to the nature of the Greek Digamma. Possibly the other solemnities of the day had helped to unnerve him; but when Guernsey limped to their room an hour after, he found Grumbles in such a morass of despair as barely allowed him to breathe.

"I am a hopeless blockhead," he announced to Guernsey. "You knew that before; but I am likewise a deliberate rascal, to let our church waste its money upon me. To think of the years I have been hammered at, and for what? I tell you, Guernsey, my conscience hurts me more than your spine does you. If ever a fellow prayed to be smart, I have, — fasted and prayed, — and God won't do anything about it: and he is unchangeable. It

only stupefies me, trying to understand. I can plough, mow, dig potatoes; but—" And the poor fellow let his books slide from his lap, as he got up. "I cannot understand! I will be—" In the extremity of his desperation he clutched at the invisible with both hands,—"I will be—yes, I don't care if I *do* say it,—I will be"—and his voice sank into a whisper, for he meant it to the depth thereof—"I will be —— if I can!" The next moment he had sunk upon the floor in a worse agony of remorse at this yielding to the devil.

All that Guernsey said was, "Grumbles, your field is a corn-field, and—I am going to leave Old Orange right off."

"And miss taking your clean one hundred?" the other said, forgetting himself, and with large and dry eyes. "O Guernsey, what a pity! The class were so proud of it, too; and what will Professor Rodney say?"

Grumbles did not ask the College genius why he did it: he knew that his chum was thinking of Ghost Gibson. Moreover, Guernsey was in all things a law unto himself. Whatever he did must be, Grumbles thought, as inevitably right as his translations of Plato, as accurately correct as his demonstrations in mathematics.

"If you go, I go with you," Grumbles suddenly added. It was an inspiration. For six years the slow fellow had been making up his mind. It was made up at last. He had as he said it a sense of amazing relief, but he sank down upon the old lounge and into the ruins of an utter despair in the same instant. "The church will despise me," he groaned. "It will take years of hard work to pay back what they have spent upon me," he added soon after. "And I can go to work at that, and try and not mind 'em. Do you remember, Guernsey, how I handled that flail last vacation?"—and the ugly face of the poor fellow began to brighten.

"I should think I did," said the other, who had spent some weeks with his companion upon the Scrubstones farm. "And everybody knows I am ill," Guernsey continued. "I shall tell the Faculty I can't stand it any

longer. Yes, sir, I am going to leave. If Trent don't beat him, old Gibson will have a clear field. And I'll tell Rodney that you are falling into such disreputable courses, you blessed old wooden head, that it is my duty to take you back to your friends!"

"They won't give me a diploma, any way," Grumbles said, paying small attention to the rattling talk of his chum which followed, and which seemed to have found new stimulus. "If I graduate, it will only bring out how low I stand. And you *will* go home with me, Guernsey? Aurora Ann will be glad to see you. So will father and mother. Aurora Ann shall make goodies for you from morning till night. And you will help me explain things to the church. Trent says he will come after vacation. It will be grand!" In his excitement he gathered himself up off the lounge, — a new light in his fishy eyes.

"You let me have old Ball in hand once more," he cried, — "only let me get Buck and Brandy in the plough again, with a good grip on the handles. Gee! Haw! I want you to see me swing a cradle, Guernsey. Hi! Whoop!"

In his enthusiasm, Grumbles kicked the chairs out of his way, as he whirled about the room. "Happy?" he shouted. "The biggest sunflower you ever saw is nothing to it. Hur—" But at that moment he bethought himself of the church, and sank back upon the lounge in the deepest gloom. "I'm glad he's dead!" he said with desperation.

"Who's dead?" Guernsey asked.

"Old Parson Vandyke. Did n't you know? He had set his heart upon my being a minister; and I am glad he did not live to see me apos — apos — yes, apostatize!" And, relaxing his loose joints over the lounge, he abandoned himself to remorseful tears.

Guernsey only laughed the more. "I'm done with books," he said; "and I'll get away from them to living people. I love people best. Hurrah for men, women, and children! I'll take your place in the pulpit, Grumbles, or I'll make some better man do it. Brighten up, old long-legs! We'll fix things."

Within a week, and against the utmost efforts of the Faculty, the two men had departed. The death of Partridge was almost forgotten throughout College. "Guernsey gone?" It was a grave calamity!

What had been the parish of old Parson Vandyke was broken into two very dissimilar portions by a ridge of rocky woods. On one side was the small settlement where stood the parsonage; on the other, known as Scrubstones, were scattered farms, of which Deacon Ruggles owned the largest and most important. The Deacon had come to be almost a duplicate of the brownest of the boulders among which he lived,—only harder, more rude and aggressive. Scrubstones seemed to be a thousand miles from Old Orange, so obsolete was it.

So rough were the roads thereabout that the easiest access to this region was by railway, the Scrubstones Station being one at which the train rarely stopped. When Guernsey and Grumbles alighted there after leaving Old Orange, it was still two or three miles to the farm, but Aurora Ann had driven old Ball over for them in the wagon. She was a young woman of about eighteen years of age, plump, and no coarser than is comely for a country-girl, while through her freckles shone the ruddy hues of a health which was plainly that of the soul as well as of the body. Any one could see that she had donned all her Sunday clothes and little trinkets, while her honest, wholesome face was as radiant with smiles as a harvest moon.

"Old Mr. Grumbles could n't come, because he is hackling flax," she explained, "and Mrs. Grumbles, she 's a dyeing."

"Dying! O horrible!" Guernsey exclaimed. But he understood perfectly well: a glance at the vigorous hands of Aurora Ann, blued by the dye-tub, explained matters. He seemed to be absurdly happy, and, seated beside her, insisted upon driving with one rein while she held the other. The rambling old farm-house looked, when they got to it, as though it had not been painted for years,—the paling, the barn, the very dogs and poultry, seemed

as though they were drying themselves after a high wind and a heavy rain. There was a porch in front, which opened into a narrow hall, and from this Guernsey went into a parlor upon his left hand, to lay aside his wrappings. Everything was as clean as could be, but very plain. The uncompromising chairs of cherry-wood had been recently revarnished, in view, it was evident, of his coming.

"Aurora Ann insisted on doing it," Grumbles informed his friend when he came down-stairs after carrying Guernsey's trunk to his room; "and she's got new curtains to your windows up-stairs," he added, "and a whole lot of flowers. She's put her sunset quilt upon your bed. It's grand, I tell you! She began it when I started for college, and only finished it last week. Don't you remember seeing it in the frame when you were here last? Aurora Ann thinks everything of you, Guernsey."

"Ah! but this is good," Guernsey said. He was seated on the hair-cloth sofa. It was very tightly stuffed, exceedingly slippery, and so narrow that he had to hold on to the arms to keep from sliding off. "This is what I like," he added, as he stood before the little book-case in the corner, containing Patent-Office Reports and unbound numbers of an agricultural journal. "It is vastly better than Old Orange," and he renewed his acquaintance with the celebrated generals depicted in their frames upon the walls.

"*I* never saw horses carrying on that way," Grumbles said of the fiery steeds upon which the conquerors were seated, and whose dilated nostrils, flying manes and tails, and hoofs in the air, were strikingly delineated.

"Because you never saw them in battle," the other explained, and there certainly was enough direful conflict raging around them to justify the artist.

Hanging on either side of the fire-place, freshly painted now and filled with evergreens, were portraits of the father and mother of Grumbles. They had been taken soon after their marriage, at a reckless disregard of ex-

pense, the countenances as singularly alike as if created by stencil-plates. Upon the mantel was a brilliant blue clock adorned with gilded spiral bands, the end of whose existence was accomplished by its gorgeous appearance, for it had not marked the time for many years. On either side stood green vases filled with artificial flowers.

"Aurora Ann made this," Grumbles said, looking down at the rag carpet, and especially at an oval rug before the fireplace which was made up of woollen rags plaited into party-colored strips and coiled upon each other. "Aurora Ann is—"

But at this moment Mr. Grumbles came in from his hackling. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and was a little old man, resembling, except for his sandy white hair and bushy whiskers of the same no-color, nothing in the world so much as the last apple left by autumn upon a crab-tree. His wife followed him, his duplicate as nearly as was possible, save that she was taller, thinner, and a trifle harder of aspect.

"We are downright glad to see you again, Mr. Guernsey," the old man said, shaking hands.

"Downright glad to see you," the old lady echoed, her knitting in one hand. "But I can't shake hands. See!"

Her hands had just issued from the dye-tub, and Guernsey kissed her instead. It was evident from the rapidity with which she knitted immediately after that she was highly flattered, while her son, who had not kissed her since he was a baby, grinned from ear to ear.

"I see you are the same you were," said her husband, rubbing his hands together.

"The same you were, just the same," his wife repeated. There was a softness in her face, as well as a color which it had not known for a long time. Even her husband detected something new in the tones and eyes of the old lady, as she stood regarding their visitor with a motherly smile.

"But, come, supper 's ready, supper 's ready," the husband said, bustling around.

"That 's so, supper 's ready. Your hands look clean enough, you need n't wash them, — come right in," Mrs. Grumbles added, leading the way to the other side of the house. "Come, Jeremiah," to her son.

"Professor Josephs used to talk to us about magnetism," Grumbles said to himself, as they sat down. "He 'd make a dozen of us pile upon a board laid through a hay-scales and show how his big magnet could lift us and hold us. But only look at Guernsey. What sort of magnetism would he call *that?*"

It was wonderful. The old farmer on his side of the table was in his shirt-sleeves still. Grumbles sat next to their guest, while opposite them sat Aurora Ann, flushed from the cooking-stove, as well as from continually sitting down and getting up again to bring something a little hotter for the already abundant table. But every soul was hanging upon the words of Guernsey, as if he were either a very great man or a very small and exceedingly petted child. Grumbles had never seen Guernsey so happy. He was full of glee, laughing, chattering arrant nonsense, eating heartily. The dull old house, the sad-visaged and homely old folks, the hard-working country-girl, all seemed, under his influence, to be new people.

"The queerest thing about Guernsey," Grumbles thought, "is that he has just as much genius in his heart as he has in his head."

CHAPTER XIV.

BREAKING UP.

GRUMBLES was right in saying that old Parson Vandyke was dead. That had been the news which had run its languid race about Old Orange. "Parson Vandyke? Who is he? I never heard of him before!" Such, at least among the students, was the general remark in return. For the old man had not been at all famous, even in his own region, during his half-century of hard, humble, underpaid work. He was an alumnus, however, of the College and Seminary. If he had never done anything great, neither had he been guilty of anything worse than dulness, and a place was always allotted him in the procession and upon the platform at Commencement, but that was all. Never did the patient face of the old collegian fail from the annual scene, and never had he been called upon to take any part therein. Now, Old Orange was one of the markets of the world in which the heart is proclaimed to be standard coin of the king's realm; yet, such being the case, it was singular what currency mere intellect, to say nothing of reputation, wealth, bodily appearance even, had in the place. Had the old Parson been, instead, one of the long-buried fathers, a ghost revisiting Old Orange, he could hardly have been more impalpable to men than he was.

At least until he was dead. It was different then. Resolutions were passed in his honor, sermons were preached, Latin inscriptions were laboriously composed; there was such recognition, in a word, made of him now as must, if he knew it, have distracted his attention from the glories of heaven.

But it did not change matters. Deacon Ruggles summed it all up as the vast concourse which attended his funeral was dispersing.

"I voted against Parson Vandyke," that old and exceedingly cross-grained pillar of the church said to his neighbors as he went homeward,— "voted against him over fifty years ago, when he was a candidating out here from the Seminary,— voted against him because he was not gifted enough. He was a powerful weak preacher if he was a good man. I 've said so every Sunday since he first came. I 'd say it if he was to rise from the dead. I 'll say it as long as I live, and I will tell him so forever when I get to heaven. For he *was*, and you all know it. These here streamers, three yards long, on our hats, can't change *that*."

The only reply to the deacon's life-long perversity was, "I wonder what they will do now!" For old Mr. Vandyke had left nothing to his household beyond their home,— nothing whatever. Even had his salary been larger, Miss Rachel's weakness toward the struggling theologians would have prevented saving. The welcome she gave to her supper-table was so cordial, that they were certain to come back, always bringing classmates with them. Not a single student of them all would have knowingly imposed upon her hospitality; but the fact is, there were many students, and the succession of them never ceased. Moreover, Miss Rachel wore the raiment of a cheerful manner so perfectly, and it had come to fit over her sorrows so admirably, that no one had any idea how poor the household was.

"We will manage," she said almost radiantly to her nieces when the funeral was well over. "It was a little drain upon us so many people dropping in to meals while your grandfather was sick, but we 'll arrange some way. During vacation we will take boarders. We can have plenty of those."

"O Aunt!" Revel exclaimed, "when you know that you will set such a table, and never will let them half pay. Besides, I have got the promise of regular work, work I can do at home, from dressmakers in Old Orange. I engaged it when I was seeing about our mourning."

For a moment, the smile died from the eyes as well as

upon the lips of her aunt. Dressmaking! And her grandfather a minister, too!

Peace Vandyke was dusting the furniture as Revel spoke. She paused, looked silently at her sister with her large and questioning eyes, and went on dusting. The next morning she took a walk. Two miles from Old Orange was Scrubstones. As we have said, it was a desolate realm of rocks and scrubby pines, wild as though it were a thousand miles from civilization. Among the very plain families scattered about in this desert stood a school-house, which bore the same relation to the College that a particularly small acorn does to an oak. The school committee were assembled in the little clapboard building to elect a teacher, when Peace Vandyke came in. She had hard work to make them understand that she really desired the situation. They looked at her with a species of ox-like wonder. Some of them had known her all her life; but her black dress made her seem to them smaller, and she appeared, also, to be much more tense and determined. Long before that day, Trent had said to Thirlmore, "I believe that the human eye is a specimen of the material which will compose our bodies after death." It was said as the two men were walking back from a visit to the Vandykes'. Thirlmore only replied, "Do you think so?" but he remembered that Trent had confined himself the whole evening to Miss Peace.

It may have been to her eyes that Deacon Ruggles yielded also. "You know I never liked old Mr. Vandyke's preaching," he said; "but that 's no reason we should n't app'int you." This settled it, for the Deacon was chairman of the committee. "But your salary will be mighty small, Miss Peace," he added,—"we a'n't agoing to raise it even for you."

The soul assimilates to itself something more than the eyes even in this world. Revel glanced at her sister with surprise when she entered the dining-room upon her return. "Look at Peace, Aunt Rachel," she exclaimed, for they were about sitting down to dinner. "What is the

matter, Peace?" she asked, for she had never seen her look like that before.

"I am hungry," was the reply. It was not till the meal was over that Peace told what she had done. During her father's illness, and since, Miss Rachel had arrayed herself before she came down-stairs every morning as with the Sunday silks of her most determined cheerfulness; but when she heard what Peace had to say, it rent asunder. For the first time in the experiences of her nieces, she broke down, and even wept aloud over the fowl she was in the act of carving. It was not that teaching was objectionable; Revel had chosen a more undesirable business than that. But the people up among the hills, the Scrubstone people, were proverbially coarse,— their school-house was such a miserable shanty,— the children were savages. "And it is two good miles from home," she sobbed. "Our man has to use the horses upon the place, and you cannot walk that distance and back every day. Who knows what men you might meet? I cannot, will not consent!"

"Aunt is changed," Peace said to Revel as they went to bed that night. "Part of her is gone with grandfather."

"And do you notice how much more she looks like him?" Revel asked, — and she wept silently through the night. Peace lay beside her as silent as the dead, but Revel was mistaken in supposing her to be asleep. None the less both were brighter than usual at breakfast next morning, but all three women were very quiet.

CHAPTER XV.

COMMENCEMENT.

WHO of us in visiting a factory has not watched with interest the way in which the heaps of raw cotton are steadily drawn into the machinery, going in mere material and coming out cloth? It seemed to Steven Trent somewhat thus in regard to the railway and Old Orange, along whose verge it ran. The students were but as a mass of material fresh from the cotton-field, the incessant trains day and night were the flying shuttles drawing them in to be woven into the uses of life. As the college year drew rapidly toward its close, the great shuttles seemed to speed back and forth upon their double track more rapidly, and with insistent roar, as if eager for more.

The day after examination, the class dispersed until Commencement day should bring them together again for the last time, and then give them up, for good or evil, to the insatiable machinery of the world. Trent and Thirlmore went out to board till then at the Vandykes'. The latter was like a horse out of harness, almost riotous in his escape from bondage. Every year since Trent had known him, his cousin had surprised him by new and unexpected developments of his character. Now he was a sort of Hercules who, having ended his labors, was relaxing himself. He hunted, fished, walked about all day, and gave the evenings to conversation with the ladies, or to hearing them play and sing, and was nearly as full of his nonsense as Guernsey or Partridge even. As matter of course, Trent walked almost every morning with Peace to her school.

"Trent is certain," Thirlmore said one day at table, "to take the first honor. If Ghost Gibson gets that, it will be all the better. In that case Trent is valedictorian.

I would a thousand times rather be valedictorian if it were I."

"What will you take, Mr. Thirlmore?" Miss Rachel asked from the head of the table.

"Coffee, if you please. O, you mean what honor! None at all, I thank you. If I get my diploma it is the utmost I expect. The fact is, I have not tried for anything. That is the reason I go rambling about as I do every day, — lounge, talk to you ladies, do as nearly nothing as I can. Who cares? Look at Trent. See how thin he is. He cannot eat, sleep, go to town, hunt, fish, — do anything until he is sure whether he has the first honor or the valedictory, — he does not know what to do. What does he talk to you about, Miss Peace?"

The lady lifted her inquiring eyes, but it was Trent who colored. There was that in her which reminded Thirlmore of pictures he had seen of the Sphinx, — her eyes asked, but did not answer. It was Revel who laughed and talked; on which account she seemed to be younger than her twin sister. And yet there was an almost motherly, as well as purely womanly something in Revel, which Peace lacked.

The decision of the Faculty as to Trent arrived at last. It was early summer by this time. One afternoon, he was loitering at the gate with Revel. Thirlmore had gone to Old Orange, and Peace was expected home from school. Trent was looking up the road by which she might appear at any moment. Suddenly they heard a shout. Thirlmore was coming from toward town. He held something white in his hand, and was waving it over his head. When he drew near to them, it was in a slower, more deliberate manner than was usual even to him. There was, likewise, a certain indefinable self-assertion about him which caused Revel to open her eyes and then glance at Trent. Peace joined them silently at the same moment, her little satchel in her hand, from the other direction.

A close observer could have surmised how matters stood by noticing the gladness which came into Trent's

eyes as Peace approached. Thirlmore, too, seemed to refer to Revel, as though she were the only person present beside himself.

"Have some camphor ready, Miss Revel," he said. "I have bad news for Trent. Gibson has taken the first honor sure enough. You are second, Trent. Bear it like a man. Here are the documents telling all about it."

"Thank God! Poor Gibson will be so glad!" Trent exclaimed.

"Who cares for the first honor!" Revel said. She was looking remarkably well. The death of her grandfather had sobered her abounding spirits, and the necessity for self-exertion had given depth to her chastened vivacity. "I am glad you did not take it, Mr. Trent," she added. "It always goes to dry mathematicians, and then you would have to make a long Latin speech. The people on the platform always look as wise as owls while it is being spoken, and not a soul of them listens to it any more than the rest of us. It is the valedictory I want to hear about. I hope Mr. Trent has taken it, don't you, Peace?"

"Of course," her sister replied. Her lips were slightly parted, she was panting a little after her long walk.

"Yes," Thirlmore said, "the valedictory is the glory of the day. There is hardly a fellow but would rather be valedictorian than king."

Revel Vandyke must have had a woman's intuition as to the passionate desire of Trent in that direction. The poor fellow had been very silent since examination, very restless. She glanced at his face now. It was quite pale, his lips were dry, but he said nothing. It was for the sake of Peace Vandyke he wished to take the valedictory, and thus be the chief orator at Commencement. It was because she wished it so intensely that he did. She was not like her sister. Revel Vandyke was open, impulsive, glowing, fond of mirth and of music. She conversed easily and well, and liked to make other people talk. Steven Trent knew that Peace, on the other hand,

was of a cold nature, — but cold only in an outer sense; inwardly she was ardent, yet ardent in regard to other things than Revel. He had known her for two years, but he only knew this, that she was unlike any other woman. One thing he did know perfectly, which was, that, if he wished to please her, it must be by making her proud of him.

"But the valedictory! Who is the valedictorian?" Revel exclaimed, with eager eyes.

"Would you really like to know?" Thirlmore asked, not hurrying himself in the least.

Trent glanced at the face of Peace. She was looking at Thirlmore. Yes, he knew how intense her gratification would be to hear that he was the man. Never as yet had he asked her to marry him; but, his mind was made up, if he was valedictorian he would do so. Why not? He was poor, but if the Faculty thought him the one out of all his large class to be the orator of the day, there was no fear but it would be easy for him to make his way in the world. As to Peace, what would it not be for her to have the valedictorian at her feet? No student could be more than that!

"Yes, who is it, Mr. Thirlmore? Who is it?" Revel was demanding.

"Miss Revel," Thirlmore said, and taking off his slouched hat; he bowed low to her, speaking very slowly, his eyes full upon hers, "allow me to present to you as valedictorian — myself."

"You!" The words broke in a cry of pain from the heart of Trent, — not from his lips. Peace was there to see his defeat. It was sharper anguish than he had ever known. A stranger could not have conceived the effect of the news upon the sisters, as well as upon the one who had so eagerly expected the prize. For the moment, the three were alike stunned as by an explosion. Even in that instant, the eyes of Revel had turned from Thirlmore to Trent. They filled with sudden tears, as she saw how haggard he had become as he looked at Peace. For Peace had not taken her gaze from Thirlmore, but was

looking at him, forgetful of all else, with a sudden wonder of admiration. He must have been conscious of it, for he drew himself proudly up, a glow came into his cheeks, a new deliberation into his manner, and he began talking about other matters with careless indifference. Only Revel understood the agony of disappointment, of mortification, endured by Trent; but all felt that, in some way, the world was altered to them all.

Trent congratulated Thirlmore as they walked to the house, and, long before Commencement day had come he had mastered himself so as to be outwardly, at least, very cool. When it did arrive, it was as fine a day as June ever brings.

The President of the United States was upon the platform, which was crowded by an unusual number of distinguished persons. Contrary to the usual order of things, it had been arranged that the second-honor man should speak first, in order that Gibson, as first-honor man, should make his address immediately before the valedictorian, whose oration would close the exercises. The building was packed to the ceiling, and Trent opened the long series of speeches with a salutation in Greek, which he had made as brief as possible. He spoke with dignity, and when he sat down, the applause was as rapturous as if anybody present had understood it.

As it died away, Trent examined the audience until he saw where Miss Rachel was seated, a niece on either side. For many a long year she had not missed such an occasion; but she sat with drooping head,— one homely, patient old face was absent from the platform. Revel caught Trent's eye, and she gave him a bright smile and called the attention of Peace to him.

Except to the personal friends of the orators the eighteen speeches that followed were a severe experience. The band broke into exultant strains when the last of these, taking his seat, wiped his hot face and thanked heaven it was over. People everywhere in the audience drew long breaths, moved about and congratu-

lated each other that the exercises were nearly at an end.

Trent was seated between Gibson and Thirlmore. The former had seemed so nervous, as his time to speak drew near, that Trent had ventured to whisper to him to be cool and collected. To his surprise, Gibson had turned and stared upon him as though he were an utter stranger, — stared at him with stony eyes and said nothing. The next moment the music had ceased, and Gibson was standing in his flowing robes upon the platform.

He bowed mechanically to the President of the United States, the Trustees, the Faculty, and the students, and pronounced in Latin, as if doing so by rote, the salutation due to each. Then he turned to the audience. It may have been his hollow eyes, his face so gaunt and ghastly in contrast with the black of his gown, certain it is that the thrill of impending disaster ran through the vast multitude, whitening the cheeks of those upon the platform. Gibson had striven and starved himself for years with reference to that moment. Not only had he put his body and soul into the long strain toward it, he had also drawn upon and anticipated the energy, so to speak, of years to come. The mechanism of the familiar Latin had carried him through so far. At last he stood facing the audience as upon the edge of a cliff. This sea of faces before him was the wide, wide world for which he had toiled to fit himself. But all that nature had to give him was spent. With it went the remainder of the Latin address he had so painfully prepared, and his reason. He stared with dull eyes at the people. "We are very poor at home," he began. "My father is old. His head is white. He said I ought to stay at home and help them. What I wanted to do — "

His face was burning as with a white flame; he held out an imploring hand, his voice was pathetic as that of a sick child. A shudder ran through the audience.

"What I wanted to do," he wailed, "was to help them all at home. I could do it better, you know, in this way. I have worked hard. You have no idea, good people,

how hard, *hard* I have worked," — and he stopped and stared at them with eyes dry and terrible to see.

There was a moment of silent astonishment, then a woman screamed, and all was confusion.

But Trent had gone to his side, had passed his arm around him. "He is overtasked, is ill," he said, in a voice which was heard by every one. "Please excuse him," — and then added, in lower tones, "Come, Gibson," drawing him away.

"Yes, father," Gibson said, in the accents of an obedient child, falling as he said it into the arms of his friend. Many had clustered about to assist. A few days later he was in a lunatic asylum, and for life.

But the brass band began to play, the confusion subsided. "He must have been drunk," was the whisper which ran through the crowd. As the music ceased Thirlmore arose, advanced to the centre of the platform, and stood silent for a moment. For several weeks now he had said to himself, "I was a fool not to have known it all along. There was no other whom they could appoint." People turned to their neighbors and whispered, "What a fine-looking man he is!" but no one there was quite as conscious of the fact as Thirlmore himself.

He began with deliberation. As he proceeded he felt that his voice filled the house, and he spoke with ease and force. The disaster to Gibson had made the audience keenly sensitive, and Thirlmore felt as though he were standing more firmly, as well as higher, because lifted upon the ruins of the man who had fallen. Pathos was not to be expected from so strong a man, people murmured to themselves, but, what with his flowing robes and his grand way of saying what he did, his oration was a wonderful success.

The President of the United States was not the only one who assured him of it when he had done. And yet the valedictorian was not in the least flurried about it. The fact is, not even Peace Vandyke rated his success so highly as he did himself.

"We had decided upon Mr. Trent," Professor Rodney

said in confidence to his guest that night. "Mr. Thirlmore's standing was not high, but geographical reasons altered our decision in his favor. We are by no means sorry that we did so. He has astonished us all. There seems to be more in him than we had supposed. I would not be surprised," added the astute Professor, "if the events of to-day go far toward revolutionizing the character of Mr. Thirlmore. Evidently he is a strong man. There is no telling what he may make of himself."

There was one man, at least, who had a definite idea upon the subject, old Donald McGregor. He read an account of the exercises aloud one night to his sister from the paper. Neither made much comment; but when the uncle went to his room he took one of the bulky wills from its hiding-place, dated, and signed it. Nothing but the attestation of witnesses was lacking to make the orator a very wealthy man upon the death of his uncle.

CHAPTER XVI.

AURORA ANN.

WHEN Grumbles shook hands with Steven Trent before leaving Old Orange, he said, "You will find our farm a rougher place than old Parson Vandyke's, where you boarded before. But Guernsey likes it, and you 'll come, won't you?"

Yes, he would. Why not? Thirlmore returned, of course, to Vermont. Donald McGregor had written inviting Trent to come with him, but he was disinclined to do so. He wanted freedom. It was plain from Thirlmore's manner that he considered himself far along toward the Thomas Chalmers grade of men, and his cousin had small inclination to accompany him, especially as Thirlmore had expressed no wish to that effect.

Above all, Trent was in an almost stunned condition in regard to Peace Vandyke. He had never understood her. Even when he had admired her most, he was conscious as of a certain alpine height in her, — an elevation as cold as it was cloudy, which he not only did not comprehend, but from which he shrank. For a long time he had seen with wonder that she had turned, almost imperceptibly, from him, and toward Thirlmore. Not that the two seemed so much to love each other, as that Peace seemed to be moulding Thirlmore into her own way of thinking. The others may have been unconscious of it, but Trent recognized it in spite of himself. His pride was wounded. Peace had chilled him from her. He was glad to go to Scrubstones. Time might make things clear.

When Trent got off the train at the Scrubstones Station, Guernsey was waiting upon the platform, and fairly took him into his arms. Grumbles was there too, and looking better in his homespun suit than he had ever done in his college broadcloth. But Guernsey would not suffer him to say a word, he was so full of fun and chatter. "Hop into the rattletrap, Trent," he said to their guest, after he had himself climbed into the old wagon and grasped the reins. "Heave in his trunk, Grumbles, that 's what you are good for. Get up, Ball," — and the old horse started off, leaving Grumbles to run after them and climb in behind as well as he could. In fact, Trent soon found that Guernsey was the big and badly spoiled baby of Scrubstones. He had not had an attack of pain for some time; his cheeks were plump, although pallid, and he was almost wild with reaction from college life. "We came mighty near being over that time," he said, as the wheel struck against a rock. "That 's what I like here. It is the roughest, rockiest, obsoletest old place you ever saw. Grumbles is a specimen, they are all like him and a good deal more so. See that dull old river?" — he pointed it out to the left through the trees as they rattled along; — "we fish there in an old dug-out which has fifty leaks and no oars. When you go in

swimming, you are up to your knees in mud. You can't eat the fish after you catch them, they're full of worms. The worse it is, the better I like it."

"They say Thirlmore made a splendid valedictorian," Grumbles suggested.

Trent cordially assented; and Guernsey added, "It is the worst thing that could have happened to Thirlmore." It was said with a certain gravity in curious contrast to his light-hearted manner of the moment before; but he changed the conversation to the sad fate of Ghost Gibson, which occupied them until they reached the farm.

"We're glad to see you," was old Mr. Grumbles's greeting upon the porch. "Jeremiah's told us a good deal about you."

"We're glad to see you, Jeremiah's told us a good deal about you," his old wife repeated. Not merely were the words the same, the intonations were duplicates. Any one could see that they were a sincere old couple, but there was the same hardness in their tones as in their hands and faces.

"Never before did I know," their guest said to himself, "what the word countrified meant. But everything here is as thoroughly true and good as soul can desire. I can see that."

"Jeremiah's gone to put Ball up, he'll be in directly," old Mr. Grumbles remarked.

"He'll be in directly," echoed his wife. "Jeremiah's gone to put Ball up."

"It is Jeremiah, Jeremiah, from morning till night," Guernsey broke in. "He's their only child. They pretend to think everything of him, but it is me they love most."

"O Mr. Guernsey!" said the old farmer, rubbing his hands slowly together as he sat.

"Ah, Mr. Guernsey!" his wife repeated; but they both looked more lovingly at him than they ever did at their son.

"I hate the parlor," Guernsey exclaimed. "Come

on, Trent. They let me do as I please. Aurora Ann is frying doughnuts. I smelt them before I left the station. They are for you, because you are company. Let 's go and get some." But Trent held back; and Guernsey went into the kitchen alone, leaving his friend to be entertained by the old people.

"No, Mr. Guernsey, — indeed, you sha'n't!" the newcomer heard a minute after, through the doors left open. And next, "Go away, sir! You know how sick they made you the last time."

Then came the sound as of a struggle; and the old farmer said, laughing silently, "What a man he is!"

"What a man he is!" the wife added. "We can't do anything with him."

"He is worse than a bad boy," the farmer remarked.

"Worse than a bad, bad boy. I never saw his like," the old lady chorused.

It really seemed so in the kitchen at the moment. Aurora Ann was at the cooking-stove, a long fork in hand, turning over the lumps of dough as they browned themselves in a skillet of bubbling lard, — trying to do so, at least; for the genius of the College, fork in hand, was dodging, first upon one side, and then the other, of the cook, endeavoring to secure one for himself, — the girl preventing him by interposing herself, projecting her elbows, and brandishing her implement.

Everything was new to Trent. He had never before seen pork and greens at supper when he went in to that meal. Nor had he been used to seeing a gentleman eat, as did old Mr. Grumbles, in his shirt-sleeves. The pies were a revelation to him, as were the iron-pronged and horn-handled knives and forks.

"It *is* queer, is n't it?" Grumbles asked, as he walked out after supper with Trent to look about a little before night fell.

"Queer?" Trent echoed, with some color in his cheeks.

"Yes, about Guernsey. I have been," Grumbles went on, "his room-mate for a long time, and yet I can't

make it out. He used to compose their speeches for ever so many fellows. I've seen him sit down as I went to bed, and he'd scribble a poem for the next College Monthly, a paper on history, mathematics, whatever it was, his pen flying over the sheet as if it was a letter to somebody instead. It made me feel as if I were a perfect fool. And now look at him! He has n't opened a book since he came. He hates books, he says, and he's always busy."

"What does he do with himself?" Trent asked.

"I don't know, but he is always on the go. If he is n't talking, teasing the dogs and cats, or feeding the chickens, he is trying to play off some joke on me. Now and then, he will take a notion to hoe in the garden, and will go at it until the sweat streams off from him. One day he bought a wagon-load of lumber, and had a carpenter come to help him. He would n't tell us what he was up to. Would you believe me? — he had hundreds of yards of box tubes made, and men to lay them under ground from a spring in the hill orchard, and see here!" Grumbles led the way to a large new trough, at a back door, full of water, which was boiling up in it from a hole in the bottom. "Never in my life," Grumbles continued, "did I ever see a man as delighted at anything as Guernsey was after this was done. When the water came pouring in, he laughed, clapped his hands, danced, gave my father a thump upon his back which knocked his breath out of him, seized on me, and whirled me about as if he was crazy. And it *is* a grand thing! You have no idea how convenient it is. We were stupid, he says, not to have thought of it before. That's so!

"But this is only one thing. All the neighbors know him," Grumbles went on with enthusiasm. "Guernsey goes about all the time. He makes himself at home everywhere. Down to old Ball, the oxen, the dogs and ducks, everybody likes him. One week he insisted on going to the school-house, — not that of Miss Peace, another, — and helping teach. He has taken the chil-

dren pounds of candy, and told them they had better be playing than poring over miserable books, as he called it. Do you know, he brought a bundle of broadcloth for father, and a piece of black silk for mother, when he came? Much good it does them: there's nobody here to make it up. He gave Aurora Ann a set of jewelry which almost frightened her. She never wears it, except in her room Sundays before she starts for church. Did you ever know such a man?"

There was a glow of pride and love in the tones and face of Grumbles as he said it, which made Trent look at his lank companion with new interest.

"We don't care for his presents," Grumbles added, coloring a little, "it's him we like."

"What is he going to do with himself?"

"I don't know. And he don't know. He says his guardians — he is an orphan, you know — are rascals, and he will have nothing to do with them. Some day he intends to write books, he told me, but he has to spend his money first. He is rich, you know, — he owns an island down South somewhere. He is just overjoyed to get away from Old Orange, and that's about all."

"Grumbles," Trent stopped long enough to say as they strolled about, "you know Guernsey better than I do; but Professor Rodney told me that Guernsey's talent is merely another name for his spinal disease. He shrinks from the one as he does from the other. His restlessness, his nonsense too, is the struggle of health against malady. That is the reason he hates college and loves the country."

"O, yes!" Grumbles assented, "and that is why he has always liked me. From the first he picked me out as the greatest dunce in reach, and he clings to me as such. I may be a blockhead, but," added the sensible fellow, "I am not a fool. But he likes Aurora Ann best."

"Aurora Ann?"

"And we did n't introduce you! Somehow we think everybody knows *her* already. Father adopted her when

she was a baby. She helps mother do the work. Guernsey thinks the world of her."

"Look here, Grumbles," Tent asked seriously, "you know how the fellows talked in college. It is none of my business, but we all like Guernsey so much, you know. Now, you won't let him indulge in opium."

"Not if I can help it," the other said, putting his hand upon his breast-pocket as he spoke, a sudden care-worn expression upon his homely face. "You are the only man I would tell, Trent, but you can't think what times I've had with Guernsey. And over and over again. When he needs it I let him have just so much. There 's a little drug-store at the station. Guernsey has plenty of money, and, you know, people will do anything for that. But I never let him go to the station without me and it 's three miles off. I watch him like a dog. Fact is, that 's what I am good for, to follow after him like a big brindle dog all the time. But he thinks most of Aurora Ann. Her right name is Aurora Ann Lobbins; but," Grumbles explained, "we 've got into the way of calling her nothing but Aurora Ann. She 's so homelike, you see. Guernsey almost lives upon cookies and puddings, and she *will* make them for him. He eats too much of such things, and how he does run on! But what can we do? Let 's go in."

One evening, within a week after the coming of Trent, a sudden whim seized upon Guernsey. He insisted upon having supper cleared away as soon as possible that he might read to the household. And it must be in the parlor, he said. In a little while old Mr. Grumbles and his wife, their adopted daughter, Grumbles and Trent, were disposed around the room. A lamp had been placed upon a table in one corner, and Guernsey sat beside it. Although he was always abusing books, he had brought a trunkful of them with him, which he had not unlocked until now. He would read them, he said, the story of a woman who had been badly treated, and, in a few words, he gave them an account of the adventures of Jason and Medea up to the time Jason

began to separate himself from her. Then he read the tragedy to them, translating as he read from the Greek.

It was a curious spectacle to Trent as he glanced around. The old farmer had fallen asleep as soon as he sat down, his head against the wall behind him, his mouth open. Old Mrs. Grumbles sat bolt upright, knitting steadily upon a blue stocking hanging down between her hands. Grumbles was occupied with keeping himself from slipping off the sofa upon which he had stretched his homely length. Guernsey had perched upon the back of a chair to be above his audience, the dull light of the lamp full upon his pallid face as he read.

But Trent was chiefly interested in Aurora Ann, for whom, as he well knew, the reading was chiefly intended. She was virtuous, good-natured, full of the industry of perfect health, and almost as fond of chewing spruce-gum as her cow Daisy was of its cud. In fact, Daisy and Aurora Ann got on amazingly well together, for they were uncommonly alike; the difference between the two lying largely in the possibilities belonging to the girl as a girl. She had done a hard day's work at the wash-tub, and was sitting opposite the reader, her tired hands crossed upon her lap, her head drooped forward, her mouth slightly open as she listened.

Trent noticed that Guernsey read slowly and distinctly, making the story very easy of comprehension as he went. Even Trent had never been so interested before in the cold rascality of Jason, or in the passionate pleading of Medea, when she finds herself about to be driven from her home in favor of another wife. As he read, Guernsey put his soul into the outcries of the wronged Medea. Aurora Ann leaned forward listening more intently as Medea reveals the terrible deed she is about to do, her lips parted, her hands clasped upon each other.

The voice of Guernsey grew deeper, softer, more plaintive, as Medea addresses her children before slaying them. Old Mrs. Grumbles knit steadily on, her eyes in the air. She was calculating how many turkeys she would be able to sell next Thanksgiving, and hoping that

Mr. Guernsey was nearly through, so that her husband could go to bed. Grumbles was swinging one foot, as he lay thanking heaven he was done with such stuff, and wondering whether he had not better break that young steer for the fall ploughing. But the wife of Jason became more desperate in the person of Guernsey. The eyes of Aurora Ann stared upon the reader with horror, her mouth opened. A line or two more, and, as Medea rushed upon her children, Aurora Ann cried out, "Stop her! stop her! O, don't let her do it!" and burst into hysterical weeping.

"Bless my soul! what ails ye, child?" exclaimed old Mrs. Grumbles, who had not listened to a syllable. Her son let his struggling steer go, and sat up in surprise, while his father snored steadily on. Without adding a word, Guernsey took the lamp and went up-stairs to bed, leaving his friends in the darkness, and to comfort the girl as they best might.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SUDDEN DECREE.

THE next Saturday after this, the old people had driven Ball to the station with a wagon-load of butter and eggs. Trent was helping Grumbles in the barnyard with the steer he was trying to break, while Guernsey and Aurora Ann had the house to themselves. It was afternoon, and the girl was baking, the sleeves rolled up from her muscular arms, a check apron girded about her, and a smutch of flour across her glowing face.

Guernsey did not like pork and greens, and Aurora Ann busied herself, as usual, to supply him with dainties. Seated upon the edge of the kitchen table, he was paring turnips for Sunday, for "he *will* do it," his companion had often affirmed. He was talking about

Grumbles. "He did right to give up college for the farm," he said. "In Old Orange he looked like a crane in a desert. Yesterday, I watched him mowing in the meadow, and I saw at once what his ridiculous legs were made for. He puts on airs of superiority towards me, actually wants to protect *me*. Give us another cake, Miss Pulcherrima."

"My name is Aurora Ann, I thank you."

"Did you hear Grumbles laugh? It was only a mile off. In college his Greek was all Choctaw, but he can laugh splendidly. I love to hear him,"—and the mathematician nibbled around the edges of his cake, hot from the oven, until it should cool enough for a good bite into the soft brown centre. "Do you know what Homeric means?" he asked.

"I know a town named Homer," Aurora Ann replied.

"Well, Grumbles laughs like the people living there. They call it Homeric laughter. I said something funny, and his inextinguishable laughter shook the skies. Got another cake ready, Aphrodite."

"Aurora *Ann!*" the other suggested.

"Grumbles has got back," the epicure continued, "to the age of bronze. He is resuming the amplitude and freedom of the Cosmos."

"What nonsense! Don't, Mr. Guernsey!" the other added in the same breath. For, as she spoke, her companion had suddenly seized upon her hand, and was looking at her with a wild pain in his eyes, like an animal struck on the instant by a flying missile. The next moment he had seated himself upon the oaken bench beside the table, the turnips scattered about the room, his hand clenched about her wrist.

"Don't call any one, please don't!" he said eagerly. "It is one of my little attacks. Please let no one be here but you. It does not hurt me very much," he continued, setting his teeth, and holding her terrified eyes in his with a grasp like that of his hands.

"But can't I do anything?" asked the frightened girl, who had heard of his attacks. "Is n't there any medicine to get? Let me call Jeremiah."

"No, no, no!" the other said, framing the words with difficulty. "He can do no good. No medicine can help me. The doctors are idiots. Nobody can help me but you, you! Please let me hold your hand for a little while, — just a moment, a moment." The poor fellow was panting, the great drops of sweat beading his broad white forehead. "Nobody else," he groaned, "but *you!* I won't hurt your hand," and he relaxed his vise-like hold a little. "If you but knew!" — and he looked up at her with eyes which turned her affright into weeping. "Please, please — " His head drooped forward as he spoke under the pressure of over-mastering agony.

The girl managed to seat herself by his side, her hand still held in his, while, his frame rigid with suffering, he rested his head upon her shoulder. "O Mr. Guernsey!" she kept saying, the tears streaming down her face. "If you would only let me do something for you! If Mrs. Grumbles were only here! There is such a nice pain-killer on that shelf. Once I burned myself with a pot-lid. You can rub it on, and you can take it inside, too. It burns, but it don't smell bad one bit. Let go only one moment, please."

She might as well have spoken to the dead. Had he been alone, or with any other, he would have rolled upon the floor. Now he clung to her, and was silent. In vain she entreated, tried to draw her hand away.

"Can't you be still!" he said sharply, "when it is all I have got. Electra! Yes, and I am Orestes."

There was dead silence, except for her sobbing. The clock ticked loudly in one corner; a yellow cat lying upon the window-sill got up, stretched itself, and lay down again; the flies buzzed upon the window-panes. There was the sound of talking in the barn-yard, and then a loud burst of laughter.

"The pain will pass off in a moment, now, — in a little while — " But the murmur of the sufferer changed to a cry of intolerable anguish, and the girl gave way to wild weeping.

"Let me," she sobbed at last, — "let me get the things out of the oven: they are all burning up."

But he did not hear her. He was enduring the flickering heat of a furnace seven-fold heated, in which things more lasting than her dainties were being prepared. With his head still upon her shoulder, his eyes shut, he was chanting to himself the prayer of Hildebert: —

"'In intrare me non sinas,
Infernales officinas,
Ubi mœror, ubi metus,
Ubi fetor, ubi fletus,
Ubi tortor semper cadens —'

'Tortor,'" he repeated, "'tortor'— "

"O Mr. Guernsey, what nonsense!" the girl exclaimed, after trying to gather some meaning out of the words. Her tears did him good. She was near him, and yet she was so far away.

"Don't you remember?" he said, and he repeated line upon line. "Yes, 'me receptet,'" he added at last. "Thank God! —

'Me receptet Sion illa,
Sion David urbs tranquilla' — "

"Mr. Guernsey," the other said, "I must go. Don't you smell the things burning?"

"Burning? Are they? Don't you remember? No, you don't, but it is a fact: —

'Cujus Faber auctor lucis,
Cujus porta signum crucis' — "

"I *will* go!" she broke in. "You are getting crazy! It will kill you!" And she tried to wring her hand from his.

"I wish it would!" he said. "I ought not to have held you so. I did not think. The pain never was so bad before. Ah!" His face was ghastly to see. "It *is* killing me! Please kiss me!" he panted, with imploring eyes. "I have no mother, no sister, no — "

"That I will, Mr. Guernsey!" she said, and kissed his forehead once and again, as a mother might have done. Her tears were dropping upon his face. He loosened his grasp upon her hand.

"Leave me to myself, and don't call anybody," he said, as he leaned his head upon the edge of the table.

Guernsey was still resting there, Aurora Ann going about her duties with a light step, as in the chamber of the dying, and crying abundantly, when Grumbles came in. "O Guernsey!" he said, his hand going to his breast-pocket. "Why did n't you call me?"

The family saw no more of their guest that day; but he was at the breakfast-table next morning, haggard and weak, yet almost as full of his eager talk as ever. "It is Sunday, and I had to come down," he explained. "Grumbles here is up for trial after church to-day, and I promised to help him out."

Trent excused himself from going to church in the morning. He had not seen Peace or Revel since Commencement, and he did not care to meet them at church. Guernsey was eager to do so, but Miss Rachel and her two nieces were too heavily veiled behind their crape for him to get a view of them when he got there.

"Miss Peace teaches school," Grumbles told him as they drove home after service. "She is a silent sort of young lady. I used to know her, but I can't quite make her out in these days. Her grandfather was a Dutchman, you know, and an infidel. He killed himself. But everybody likes Miss Revel. Aurora Ann thinks the world of her. So does mother. She is as bright and open as you please. I believe she laughs at me, but I like her, — that is, she used to laugh at me. Please beg Trent to go to church this afternoon. I want you both!" the poor fellow added with a face of dismay.

It was on this account that Steven Trent consented to go after dinner. But he need not have nerved himself for the task, as none of the Vandyke household were present, except Miss Revel.

The church was still without a pastor. As a relief, after

a dozen or so of candidates, Dr. Augustus McMasters preached that Sunday. But Trent had detected the voice of Revel in the singing, and heard very little of the sermon. It brought Peace Vandyke to mind, and Thirlmore: he could not think of the one without the other. After service he made a point of assisting Revel into her buggy, for she had driven herself over.

"We shall be glad to know of your welfare," she said to him, as she gathered the reins into her hand. Trent looked hastily at her face, for she had thrown her black veil aside. He could not understand her, she seemed so cold toward him, — no, not cold, but timid, unlike her old self; and, dropping her veil again, she drove off without saying more.

"Her grandfather's death has hurt her worse than I should have supposed," he said to himself. But there was something beyond that, — he could not comprehend her.

He had no time to think about it. Dr. McMasters had called the officers of the church together to hear a statement from their candidate for the ministry. When they seated themselves solemnly together in the vacated church, they proved to be serious-visaged farmers, very much like Deacon Ruggles, who was evidently their leading man. Grumbles sat upon a bench before them in deepest dejection, Guernsey upon one side of him, Trent upon the other. To one side sat his father and mother, dressed in their Sunday black, very solemn of countenance.

Dr. McMasters presided. There was a prayer, and then a statement upon the part of each officer in turn. It was a terrible showing for the culprit at the bar, whom the church had been educating for the ministry so long. He had been prayed for every Sunday, as well as at every family altar, for years. And now he wanted to undo it all. "Bring down the gray hairs of his old father and mother to the grave," Deacon Ruggles remarked at the end, with a wave of his hand toward old Mr. and Mrs. Grumbles. "And," the Deacon added, "for a man to

take money all along to do something, and then not do it, sir, it looks to me mighty like swindling!"

Whereupon the prisoner arose. "You *know*," he said, "that I intend to pay back every cent! If I work myself to death I'll do it! And you know," he continued, "that I did n't want to study for the ministry. When I fought and fought against it, you said *that* was Satan in me. But I did what you wanted. If ever a man tried — tried hard — to study, I did. And you ask these men," he waved a desperate hand toward Guernsey and Trent as he said so, "if there ever was such a — such a wooden-headed dunce in Old Orange. Ask them if I was n't the greatest fool ever seen there. You ask them, — just ask them! And I did try to study, — tried my best. O my Lord!" — and the poor fellow sank into his seat and wept profusely.

But Guernsey had got up, had asked and received permission to speak. To the session, Old Orange was the summit of learning; they knew that this large-headed, pallid-faced boy was the genius of that institution, and they looked at him with awe mingled with curiosity. There was no nonsense about him now. In a few grave words he told them of his long acquaintance with Grumbles, of the desperate efforts of Grumbles to study, and that it had been at his suggestion that his friend had given up his fruitless efforts.

"This dear old chap," he said at last, his hand upon the shoulder of his old room-mate, seated, his head drooping to the earth, beside him, "is the sincerest, most self-sacrificing, most entirely good man I ever knew. But it would be impossible for him to preach to men," with an inclination toward his hearers, "so thoroughly taught in Scriptures as you are; or to be the peer, Dr. McMasters, of a man like yourself. Grumbles is the best man, but he is, as he says, the greatest dunce I know. I love him more than I do any other man living. It shows how stupid he is, gentlemen," Guernsey added with a smile, "that he should have forgotten one small point. This very day I lent him a little money toward paying off his

indebtedness for his education. Allow me to hand it to you, sir."

As Guernsey placed a roll of bills in the hand of Dr. McMasters, Grumbles lifted his tear-stained face. His mouth had fallen open with astonishment. The old minister looked at the money, passed it to the officer next to him, threw himself back in his chair, and gazed at the giver almost in dismay.

"I know the officers of the church don't care for the money, but," continued Guernsey, "you might like to buy a parsonage, or to repair this building," — and he glanced round upon the weather-beaten structure. "My friend will repay me. Besides," he added, "I know of a better man than Grumbles. There is not a student in Old Orange so well qualified for the pulpit as the one I have in view. He will recognize the hand of Heaven, and take the place of your candidate, not to be supported by you, but as a minister."

"Whom do you mean?" demanded Dr. McMasters, while Grumbles and Trent looked at the speaker with curiosity.

"Whom do I mean?" — there was a certain subtle force in his words. "Whom could I mean?" — and he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the friend beside him. "Whom *could* I mean but Mr. Trent?"

"I thank you," Steven Trent was upon his feet, and very angry, before he knew it, "but no man disposes of me in that way! I dispose of myself!" — and, with a slight inclination to Dr. McMasters, he walked out of the building.

Guernsey sought a speedy opportunity after he had got back to the farm to apologize. "I know Thirlmore," he said in the end, "and I thought I knew you, but," and he looked at Trent with steady eyes, "I find I do not, and I am glad of it."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT OLD ORANGE AGAIN.

ONE day, before graduating, Gruffden remarked to Macroy, with whom he chanced to be passing the Theological Seminary, "What infernal fools men must be to box themselves up in those brick tombs after leaving College! As if they had n't had enough of Old Orange!"

"They prepare for the ministry there, and I tell you —" began Macroy.

"The ministry! Pah! I 'd a thousand times rather die at once," Gruffden exclaimed, "and be done with it."

"I don't know," Macroy remonstrated, "if a fellow has any oratory in him, the pulpit is a splendid place to show it."

"Nonsense! No, sir! I 'm going into the law," Gruffden said. "A fellow can be eloquent before a jury, can't he? A lawyer can rush round to all the ward meetings, get to know everybody, go into politics. That 's my plan. I 'm going to Congress myself. You can make speeches there all day long, — make money, too, plenty of it, you bet. When I am dead, I may be a ghost and a saint, but blast my buttons if I intend to be one before. No, sir; I propose to become a lawyer and a statesman."

Since Commencement, Gruffden had gone with all singleness of soul into the path thus defined. He was right. Nature intended him to be a demagogue as definitely as she intends that a jackal shall enter, when teeth and claws are grown, into the jackal line of business. Six months after graduating, he had got so far along in his law studies, in an adjoining city, as to have quite an acquaintance among the hangers on around the courts, as well as among lawyers and possible clients; and he was already, at least, beginning to be known as a prom-

ising young fellow in corner groceries and ward meetings. Not that he did not read law. No man could endeavor more eagerly than he to perfect himself in whatever would give him the strongest grasp upon whomsoever he wished to use.

All people are not like either Macroy or Gruffden. A very large proportion of those who studied for the pulpit in Old Orange, as elsewhere, did so from the purest purposes. In regard to the valedictorian of his class, it is hard to speak. When the session of the Theological Seminary opened, Thirlmore found himself in Old Orange once more, as by matter of course. Donald McGregor had not conversed five minutes with him upon the subject, and yet his nephew knew that such was the wish of his old uncle, and, without five words in relation to the affair, he came on and entered himself in due time as a student for the ministry. A river turns toward the east rather than toward the west as it flows, not that it has any preference for the one direction over the other; the general incline of things that way decides it, and that is all. However it may turn afterward, however it may afterward broaden, deepen, be fed by tributaries, or sink into the sand, that was the one course to it then. Thirlmore had brought a pure purpose with him when he first came to college, years before. Under his lumbering and sullen exterior, he had hidden a devout desire to preach the Gospel. But this had changed. He now came to the Seminary simply because events were urging him that way. For he was not like a river; he resembled, instead, one of the big boulders upon the old farm, and he yielded sluggishly, where he had no preference, to the lift of such levers as happened to be applied to him.

He made a call upon the Vandykes, in a few weeks after entering the Seminary. "How do I like it?" he said, in reply to a question of Miss Rachel. "Well, it is about what I expected. We have chapel in the morning, and I don't like to get up any more than when I was in college. So far as I can see, we have about the same fare in the refectory. After breakfast we have Greek,

Hebrew, Chaldaic, and theology. We have a plenty of it, I assure you,— didactic, polemic, patristic, exegetical, hermeneutic, pastoral,— a good many other kinds. Then there are lectures upon church history and the like. We take long argumentative walks of afternoons, and go to prayer-meetings at night, — that is about the whole of it."

Miss Rachel did not like the tone in which her visitor spoke, but she had gathered from Peace that Mr. Thirlmore was an exception to ordinary theologians.

"You have pleasant companions," Revel took for granted.

"Certainly, O yes! Flexden sits near me at table," Thirlmore said; "he is a bright-faced, quick-witted fellow, who makes all the puns. Then there is Orville. They say he has written a poem, Christ in Neptune it is called, not the water god, you know, but the planet of that name. And then Meek is there. He was a tutor in college, has red hair, wears glasses, is terribly earnest in regard to the temperance reform."

"And Mr. Macroy is there," Miss Rachel said, for Revel had excused herself and left the parlor.

"Macroy? O yes! He is an elocutionist, you know. I must tell you about him," said Thirlmore. "He is a broad, thick-set fellow, but very dull, — the one thing he has is a magnificent voice. He was in college with me, you know. He is determined to make the most of himself along his line, and he has been expanding his chest for years by using dumb-bells, Indian clubs, and that sort of thing. So long and hard has he been at it, and he takes no other exercise, that he has developed his chest amazingly. The trouble is that it is at the expense of his legs. I met him yesterday, and he looks like a big bull-frog, all bosom and nothing else. But you ought to go down to the woods back of the Seminary of evenings; it is there the fellows go to develop their organs for preaching. A swamp of frogs is nothing to it, and you can hear Macroy's deep boom above them all. Cats are nowhere. It is the most diabolical uproar you can think of, Miss Peace."

For Miss Rachel was called out just then, and the entertaining of their guest rested upon the younger lady. Thirlmore was certain that he had never seen her look so well before, and she was interested in all he said, — very much interested.

"Is there not a Mr. Vandoren there?" she asked. "He is a singular man. I was told that he went to Dr. Stormworth in an agony of remorse for having killed a mouse. I wonder if it was so?"

She did not laugh. Her eyes were calm and had a certain critical something in their steady demand upon Thirlmore, which always held him. He was glad the others had left the room. It was as if the atmosphere had become clearer as well as cooler, — he could speak precisely what he thought.

"That was before I entered the Seminary. O yes, he is there," he replied. "I would have given anything to have seen Vandoren and Dr. Stormworth together. The Doctor is a grand old fellow, you know, with a body like a Titan. His great round head always reminds me of the globe. Imagine Vandoren standing before him, a mere wisp of a fellow, thin, stooping, long-haired, with hollow temples, wistful eyes, plaintive tone. He is one of those men who live on brown bread and religious biography. His is n't the religion which can grip and conquer the world, it is merely the whimpering of dyspepsia. They say that Dr. Stormworth was actually kind to the poor fellow, told him he ought to go off and hunt or fish for a while. But I can't stand Vandoren," Thirlmore added; "he has a way of beseeching the brethren at prayer-meetings to do this, and not to do that, which sickens me. How do you like teaching, Miss Peace?"

As a rule, Peace said very little of her occupations, but she was led on to say more than she intended before they parted. The conversation turned at last, and very naturally, upon Mr. Thirlmore himself. The young lady sincerely admired the valedictorian, and he came away in an excellent humor with himself.

"He, at least, has no seminarianism about him," she said, incidentally to Revel. "He is not goody, meek, humble, fervent. — How I despise all that!" she added, but it was to herself.

On his walk toward Old Orange, Thirlmore stopped at a field in which a number of horses were grazing. It was growing dark, but he leaned against the fence and looked at them. Then he held his hat in a hand which he had thrust through the pickets.

"Cope, cope, old fellows," he said, and whistled to them. In a little while every animal was at the fence, and he stood until it was too dark to see, talking to them, rubbing their noses, scratching their ears.

CHAPTER XIX.

PEACE VANDYKE.

THE morning after this Peace Vandyke awoke early, and from a sleep which was deep and unbroken. She inherited from her German mother a thoroughly healthy and vigorous body. So did her sister, who had slept as sweetly beside her, and who was growing more like her mother every day, — rosy and bright, and full of laughing indifference to the smaller evils of life. But, as the weeks rolled by, Peace was less like her mother, and more like her German grandfather. She was slighter in frame than Revel, her intellect more on the alert. Even when a baby, Miss Rachel fancied there was something quaint, almost foreign, about her; and a certain subtle iron was apparent in her strength these latter days, which seemed as if it might one day become steel.

Between the puffs of his meerschaum her grandfather, Professor Rodenstein, said things — as on the day when Miss Rachel visited him — in denunciation of all govern-

ment. Whether it was monarchical, like that which had driven him from Germany, or republican, such as that which had welcomed him to its American bosom, he abhorred government as such.

"But society eferywhere is an obsolete and infernal feudalism," he perpetually asserted. "Marriage. Property. Dis childish Christianity!" The words had a certain metallic clangor in them, he had rung the changes so often upon their syllables. All were but parts of the same accursed despotism. And all tyranny originated in, and was based upon, the imaginary existence and rule of God. "Verry well, Gott must be an-ni-hilated." And Lucifer could not have given himself more zealously to the task. For even Satan did not seek to strike his spear so deeply into things as did the Professor. "One day a German Professor," he said, "in beginning his lecture, remarked to his class, 'Gentlemen, I will now proceed to construct Gott.' Gott is but a spectre of de Brocken, and he made him, verry easy. Verry goot, but I will demolish Gott instead. Do you ask how? Listen. I haf no war upon de religions," the old radical continued. "African or Aryan, Hindu, Syrian, Teutonic, Yankee, — what care I for dem? No, not dat puff of my pipe! Religions are all of dem but eruptions of de central disease, — de manifestations, all of dem, of de small-pox in de blood of de race. Religion is not a faculty of de man, like de sight or de reason. *Ach Gott*, no! It is de sentiment of religion; yes, *die Meinung*. It is — ah-h-h! *der Krebsschaden*, — what you call him? Yes, de *cancer* of de race. I seek to — what you call? — murder? kill? ass-ass-inate dat! De inmost religious *sentiment*, — dat shall be rooted out. How I do hate it! Ah-h-h-h!" And, from long and energetic practice, the Professor could express disgust beyond most men. With pen and tongue he toiled as vigorously as so desperate a surgery demanded of him.

Now Peace, like Revel, had been nurtured in the most Christian of homes from birth. As to Revel, religion, not so much as taught by Parson Vandyke, but as prac-

tised by her aunt, had gone into the make of her entire nature. More than that, there seemed to be in her very blood a certain recoil from the hereditary radicalism: her religion was, at least, more a part of herself than is common to young women. Not so with Peace. She had her fine eyes from her German grandfather, her lips had the satirical curve which characterized those of Professor Rodenstein before they had disappeared forever beneath the heavy fall of his beard. Possibly, his disgust for religion ran in her blood. Or it may be that the reading of the Professor's books had affected her, for she had taught herself German enough to read them. From an infant she had an aversion to her grandfather, the old Parson; and his dull piety had been despicable to her since she could remember. And then there was the penuriousness of the church toward the parson, the pitiful squabbles among church-members. Not that she had any definite arguments in her mind against religion: she seemed to be growing singularly indifferent to it, and to a good many emotions usually connected with it. It was the man struggling within her as against the woman, the intellect against the heart.

Upon the morning of which we speak she sprang up almost the moment she awoke. As soon as possible she sat down at the window with her Bible; Revel still slept. The autumn sky was of a deep cool blue. At breakfast her appetite would be excellent; now it was the sharper craving of her mind which demanded satisfaction. She read purely in order to know. Then she glanced at Revel, asleep with her rounded cheek pillowed upon her arm, and knelt in prayer. It was not that she cared for communion with any invisible Person beyond what that Person could give her. She asked for vigor of mind, opportunity, development: when Revel prayed she came to Christ as if bearing her alabaster box; but Peace wanted to get, not to give. "There can be nothing sordid in asking for intellectual power," she said; "that is what is meant, I suppose, by spiritual good."

As she walked to her school after breakfast, she took

a little book out of the satchel which contained her noonday lunch, and read now and then as she went. It was Thomas à Kempis. She knew what circulation the book had, what influence. Hers was by no means a definite calculation, it was a silent instinct, but it was to this effect: "There are grindstones enough upon which to sharpen one's mind; this bit of book is as an oil-stone by which I can give the last razor-edge to mine." As she walked she noticed a rock upon the roadside. She had often observed it before; but now she put her book back in her satchel, went off the highway, and climbed up and upon the rock from the rear, standing at last upon the top which overhung the road. Panting a little after the exertion, she stood there at length, looking all about her. Her small, spirited head thrown back, she peered this way and that between the pines, until she caught a glimpse of the steeples of Old Orange in the distance. Toward them she gazed long and steadily. Hers was not the excitement which brings a flush to the face. Had the rock been the pedestal, had she been the marble effigy of Diana upon it, she could not have seemed more passionless in her clear-cut features as she looked and thought. And she was a Diana, — a Diana halting for the moment from the chase, but from such a chase as the goddess with all her hounds never knew. The Greeks imagined many things; but they could never have even conceived of that which this young woman, and distinctively as a woman, more than imagined, — fully intended for herself.

"The poor, poor old parson!" she said to herself in the end; "and dear, good Aunt Rachel, too! Ah-h!" She did not know it; but there was a more refined, yet intenser disgust in the exclamation than even Professor Rodenstein had attained. And then she came down, and walked toward her deplorable little school-house.

That night Miss Rachel and the two sisters were together after supper. Peace was reading; Revel was at her sewing-machine; their aunt was mending a black dress which had done excellent service in its day.

"It is strange," Miss Rachel remarked. "It is *so* strange!" she repeated a moment after.

"What is strange?" Revel halted the rattle of her machine to ask it, but Peace did not look up from her book.

"It is so *very* strange!" Miss Rachel exclaimed. "Girls, when I was one, were merely *girls*. I don't understand it: *he* don't understand it any more than I do. Peace."

"Yes, Aunt," her niece said, her attention still upon her book.

"Do *you* understand it?" Miss Rachel seemed to be sadly put out. Revel colored; but her work went on, possibly with greater energy.

"Understand it?" It was as if Peace were still standing upon the top of the rock as she asked it. Every day her aunt and sister appeared — although she was unconscious of the change in herself — to be farther away, lower down.

"What is the matter?" Miss Rachel spoke almost sharply. "Before that day when we learned who had taken the valedictory everything was different."

"Different?"

"Yes, different. Mr. Thirlmore did not seem to care for anything except Revel. How you two did carry on, child! And there was Mr. Trent. He is a gentleman, and is more refined in his ways; but if ever a man loved a woman, he loved you, Peace." It hurt the aunt to say all this, but she could be silent no longer.

"Do you really think so?" Peace asked; but it was Revel whose color came and went.

"Nonsense!" Miss Rachel very rarely spoke with so much feeling.

"We did not know each other," Peace remarked sweetly. "He was mistaken in me, and I was in him. Aunt?"

"Well!" Miss Rachel answered roughly.

"It was," Peace went on demurely, "not me Mr. Trent wanted, it was Revel."

"*Peace!*" There was a sudden fire in the eyes and tones of Revel, as well as in her cheeks. So much, in fact, that the aunt started, dropping spools and scissors to the floor.

At that moment there was a knock at the outer door.

"If it is that Mr. Thirlmore, you can entertain him yourself, Peace," Miss Rachel remarked with sullen dignity. "I am not sure there is cake enough in the house to go round, and you need not ask him to stay to supper. Revel, dear, how would you fix this skirt?" And then, "Do you understand her?" Miss Rachel asked of Revel, for their eyes had met as Peace left the room. The hands of the aunt had fallen upon the work in her lap in despair, "*Do* you, Revel?"

"No, I do not. Yes, I do," was the reply, although in sentences far apart and hesitating. "Yes, Aunt, I do," Revel repeated after a while; but there was so much color in her face, pain even, that Miss Rachel returned to the matter of the skirt.

But it was Steven Trent who knocked, and we must turn for a time to him.

CHAPTER XX.

STEVEN TRENT.

STEVEN TRENT did not accept Guernsey's suggestion, and become a minister. However it might be with others, he had a sense, so deep and strong that he could not explain it to himself, that it would be too much in the line of a merely emotional development for him to go into the pulpit. His tendencies must be diverted into stonier paths, if they were to be made more masculine. He corresponded with his uncle before he graduated. After the affair of Grumbles

and the church officers, he visited the farm in Vermont upon the same errand. Donald McGregor and his sister seemed to him to be colder, as well as whiter of hair. It was plain that their hopes were centred upon Thirlmore; and Trent found no objection to his purpose of studying medicine, — small comment even.

And thus it came to pass that he entered himself at a medical college in an adjacent city, in which Gruffden was devoting himself to law and politics. Securing modest apartments in the neighborhood of the college, he took his meals at whatever restaurant he found himself nearest during his walks. For he lived out of doors, among men, more than he had done before. There had been an undue development of mere sentiment in him; he would try a coarser and healthier regimen.

Peace Vandyke's treatment of him had done him so much good, — but it was a severe experience. "Peace, as is plain, makes," he reasoned sadly to himself, "an accurate estimate of things. She does not blindly love, — that is not her way; she silently, but deliberately, weighs, measures, values, and prefers Thirlmore to me." It was hard to know this; but no man had a more sensitive pride, and it helped him greatly. Very often, none the less, the face of the girl came between him and the text-book, as he pored over it in his little room at night. Sometimes at lecture the thought of what he had lost would drive, as he sat, the attention from his eyes and the blood from his cheek. Even after days of hard work he could not always sleep soundly of nights. "But is Thirlmore to blame for being what he is? Certainly Peace is not. I am sensitive to affection," he thought; "but some people are as much so to music, to color instead. Peace has as keen and instant a sense of value as have clerks in a bank, who can tell by touch the difference between genuine money and counterfeit." All he could do was to turn, if possible, his dross to gold, — to wear it out of him, if that were not possible, by constant association with men.

They were a hard, rough set, the medical students

among whom he was thrown, and he was absolutely destitute of all companionship. One day he could endure it no longer. He would make a last call, and find out his fate once and forever, and he took the train to Old Orange. It seemed to him to have been years since he had been there, as he walked the familiar streets. He had almost an aversion to the place, and, hiring a horse at the livery-stable, he rode out in the evening to the Vandykes'.

Nothing could have been kinder or more lady-like than the greeting with which Peace let Mr. Trent in; but, at almost the moment of entrance, his mind was made up. He had not been mistaken; a film had grown over the woman he had loved so well. Up to that instant, he had tried to persuade himself that he was mistaken. His affection had perhaps been so great, he thought, as to have become over-sensitive. Possibly the intangible ice which seemed to have frozen upon her was nothing but her maiden reserve. But no, it was too self-wrought, too deliberate, she was too unlike to what she had once been. He could no more doubt the change in her than he could define it.

"What is the matter, Peace? What have I done?" The question had broken from his heart to his lips, but he did not allow it to pass. He knew only too well already. Outwardly he was as composed as herself. He conversed upon indifferent topics, and she replied smoothly, her eyes full in his. In her heart she was saying, "I did almost love you once. But that is gone with my other childish nonsense. One must do the very best for one's self. You are good, but he is strong. Who knows but he really loves me? Revel could never appreciate such a man. He is a demigod, but I do not intend to love anybody. I have taken myself in my own hands, and I am going to make myself into something, — something."

A great wrath was kindling in her former lover, as he watched her. Doubtless she was merely waiting for him to speak that she might stab him with her final answer. She held it ready in her hand as a murderess

might have held her dagger. Medea? No, she was Jason rather. Aurora Ann was ignorant and stupid,—as coarse as clay to this fine lady; but even she could sympathize with love when she saw it. Somehow, Peace seemed to him like a foreign woman just landed. Stupid? Yes, this soft-spoken lady was stupid, not in mind, far from it; she had a stupid heart, that explained it. But was she to blame for it? How beautiful she was, how graceful, what perfect control she had of herself!

His love fed the fever of his anger. He felt for her a momentary insanity of almost hatred. "You cat!" he thought, and of himself, "Yes, and I am mouse!" But all that he said was, although with a white face, "Are Miss Rachel and Miss Revel at home?"

"I should have thought of it before," Peace replied, with a sweet smile. "Excuse me for a moment, — they will be glad to see you."

Trent rose from his chair as she left the room, went to the window, and looked out. "And yet she did love me once, she almost said so!" he thought. His hands were clenched, his face was ghastly to see. "Am I so very despicable?" he asked of himself. Tears of mortification came to his eyes. "Thirlmore is strong because he cares for no one. I am weak because I love," he said.

Had Peace known his anguish, it would have changed her. But, alas! it would have changed her only in this sense, that she would have despised him as well.

"I dare say," she thought, as she went to call her aunt and Revel, "that my poor old Grandfather Vandyke was as nice a gentleman as this when he was young. When he was visiting his lady-love I dare say she became enthusiastic over him. Who ever heard of *her* afterward? Yet all his long, hard, pitiful life, what was he but a poor despised creature, and she another, starved to death, both of them, body, mind, and soul. Grandfather was a poor preacher, and *he* will be a poor doctor. No, Mr. Trent, if I ever marry, it must be a man who is strong. You are a gentleman, and you are talented and loving, but you are not the man to strike for your-

self, — strike down, if need be, whomever you strike. Please excuse me, sir."

Miss Rachel was glad to see their visitor. He saw that there was something which was specially troubling her, saw it in the unusual cheerfulness of her manner, and he knew that it must be her knowledge of the course of Peace toward him. What he could not understand was that Revel should seem to be so shy,— even in his distress he observed that. He made his visit as short as possible, declining to stay to supper. His pride was hurt, and he registered a resolve never to enter the house again.

"I am sorry, but I seem to have offended you in some way," he could not help saying to Revel in a low voice as he bade her good-by.

"*Me?*" It was all she could reply, but her eyes showed her astonishment, her lips were parted, her face so rosy the moment before was pallid, and then the blood returned, dyeing her face as he bowed himself out and departed.

"We shall never see him again," Miss Rachel said, with such fierce displeasure at Peace that she hastened up-stairs without remaining for supper, and was seen no more that night. During the night, Peace wakened to hear Revel weeping at her side, — weeping so softly that Peace could not have heard it had she not listened so intently. But she went to sleep again, and the sun was high when she awoke.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHANGES.

IT was laid down at the Seminary as a leading law of effective elocution that the speaker should reserve his most personal, most direct and powerful sentences for the last. Macroy understood this. He would rise

upon the platform like a cloud out of the sea, low, dark, silent, imperceptible, slowly ascending the horizon, steadily suffusing the skies, with ever-increasing wind and deepening thunder, until, with lurid lightning and a crash which shook the souls of men, lo! the orator had disappeared from the scene, leaving the world in a tremble of sensation behind him. As the Seminary session drew to a close, Providence itself seemed to conform its course to this law of final effect.

First came the case of Burke McNeil. He was, in a word, a brilliant young Irishman from the Far West. A worthy pastor of that region had made his acquaintance somehow, had received him into his church, had gradually allowed him to speak in his prayer-meetings, to superintend his Sunday school, at length to conduct services by himself at mission stations in the neighborhood. The good minister was more than delighted. He had learned from the modest but brilliant young man that he had been educated at Oxford, England, where he had taken valuable prizes for poetry and eloquence. Painful circumstances, upon which he was unwilling to dwell, had constrained him to come to America. But Mr. McNeil had not been idle since coming. He had contributed to the leading papers and to the magazines. His poems, his stories, his articles upon European politics, had been so remarkable, that he could have secured an ample income from literature; but, coming under the influence of the Western pastor, he had suddenly turned, like Saul of Tarsus, from everything else, and had given himself up to religion. His contributions to the Western papers, his addresses upon the Sabbath, especially his temperance speeches, had awakened such enthusiasm, that, by the advice of his pastor, he had come on to the Seminary for a brief course of study before entering the ministry.

"You have no idea," Thirlmore remarked to Peace one evening, "what an orator he is. Poor Macroy is entirely eclipsed, for McNeil is as highly talented as he, and highly educated beside. But it is his fervent piety which has flashed upon us like a revelation. We

had fallen into a humdrum routine in our theology, and McNeil has stirred us up wonderfully. I will bring him out to see you."

Such was the admiration of Thirlmore for the accomplished stranger that he arranged matters, and a few Sundays after Mr. McNeil supplied old Parson Vandyke's vacant pulpit. The venerable building was crowded. Many of the best people came from Old Orange to hear him; among them, more than one Professor from College and Seminary. Everybody was delighted, and Thirlmore took him to tea, and to spend the evening, with Miss Rachel and her nieces.

Peace was almost enthusiastic over him. "He is as unassuming as he is eloquent," she said to Thirlmore when he visited her a day or two after. "What a good thing it would be if we could have him as our pastor! Old Deacon Ruggles is so delighted with his sermon and his suavity of manner that he says he will treble his subscription if we can secure him. He has harnessed up his horses, and is driving around to every house in the parish to see what he can do before Mr. McNeil is snapped up by some other church. But I am afraid," Peace added, "that it is impossible to secure him."

"Yes," her lover said coolly, "I am afraid it *is* impossible. He came into the Seminary last night roaring drunk, smashed the windows, kicked in the door-panels, and made us all feel as if a whirlwind had struck the building."

Revel, who was present, uttered an exclamation of dismay, but Peace was greatly amused.

"You should have heard him," Thirlmore went on more eagerly, as he glanced at Peace. "He cursed with astonishing fervor. Beginning with the janitor, who had seized upon him, he went through the whole Faculty, finishing off with a malediction upon Dr. Stormworth. You have read the letters of Junius, Peace? — well, this eloquent rascal blazed away as vigorously, and almost as elaborately, as he."

"Is it not dreadful?" Revel said, at length. "But Aunt

Rachel did not like him at all. Neither did I. His sermon sounded wonderfully well, but the soul did not seem to be there. He was too fine to be sincere, I thought, but I blamed myself for it."

"Mr. Trent would have liked him," her sister said demurely.

"Yes," Revel said, with a flush, and very promptly, "Mr. Trent is so noble that he cannot imagine ill of any one. But what has become of the — the poor man?"

"The next time you see a fly light upon a horse," said Thirlmore, "you will understand what I mean when I say that the Seminary shuddered him off. He is gone."

"I hope it won't shock anybody," Peace remarked after a while; "but, for my part, I am more interested in Mr. McNeil than before, there is such an audacity in him. You are all so good and so dull at your Seminary, I should think a little explosion of human nature would brighten you up. But it is a sin not to be stupid, is n't it?"

Thirlmore laughed. "You are right," he said, and laughed again. "I believe Dr. Stormworth would have enjoyed it," he added, — "he likes force. The truth is, Dr. Stormworth is the one genuine man among us."

"And he believes everything, does n't he?" Peace asked with the artlessness of a child.

"Of course, I suppose so," Thirlmore replied, with some surprise, while Revel glanced at her sister with an expression of pain.

Miss Rachel entered soon after, and the conversation changed.

Every time Thirlmore visited Peace Vandyke he was more deeply impressed by her. He found that she was most interested when conversing with him about persons, events. She enjoyed whatever he had to tell her that was amusing, but somehow her attention slackened when anything of a pathetic nature was introduced.

"I am afraid I am not like most women," she said to him that every evening. "I like facts, but in some way

I begin to cool as soon as it comes to mere feeling. Whatever is bold and daring, I enjoy."

To a degree, Thirlmore did not imagine he was influenced by her. It was as though an elephant were being led by a thread of silk, — unconsciously, his thought took shape and color from hers.

To Dr. Stormworth it was reserved, as was fitting, to make the last and profoundest impression of the Seminary year. Only a Sunday or two before the term ended he preached the grandest sermon of his life. The building was packed, as was always the case when he officiated. Town's people, College professors and students, seminarians and their friends summoned from abroad, visitors who came on Saturday night from the cities for the express purpose, crowded every seat. The venerable President had preached the Sunday before. He was an emaciated old man, long celebrated for the childlike simplicity of his original eloquence; and he had spoken with the strength which lies in patriarchal piety to those who were about leaving Old Orange to begin active life.

"O yes, I liked him," Thirlmore had said afterward to Flexden. "He has what Trent used to call the strength of seraphic sweetness, or something of the kind. But the old Doctor reminds me of Vandoren: I am not fervent myself, you know."

"No, you are not," Flexden said, with some emphasis. "I hope," he added, "you like Dr. Stormworth however. He preaches next Sunday."

Thirlmore did like the Doctor. Peace had never heard him speak so warmly of any one as he did that Sunday night. "I like him because he is such a powerful man, — as a man, I mean," he said in closing his account of the services. "When I go to a show, I don't want to see the birds or the monkeys, the snakes or the people: it is the lion I care for, the elephant, the rhinoceros, the horses. I love to stop when I am in the city, and watch the big dray-horses of the brewers: they are so strong, and how they can pull! So with Dr. Stormworth. I

like him. He began the moment he got into the pulpit, and without the hypocrisy of pretending to pray with his hand over his eyes. He had a certain business to do, and he stood up and did it. What he wanted of the Almighty he asked in his opening prayers, and —"

"Did he implore to be delivered from conceit of his own powers?" Peace inquired, her questioning eyes full upon those of her lover.

"Yes, he always does: he always will do it. Most of us in the pews would be doubly fools if we needed such help. But never mind that. It was a sermon to see such a magnificent man. He stood there, broad as a barn, vigorous in every muscle and nerve as a prize-fighter. What grandeur there is in such a head! His voice is in keeping with the rest. It is a great advantage to him that, like Lord Bacon and many another hero, he has never loved a woman, — is not bothered about butcher's bills and children."

Peace winced a little. Her eyes were steady, but her lips betrayed it. She was fast learning to govern even her lips however. She rarely spent an evening with Thirlmore without his hurting her in some way; but she blamed herself for the weakness, and gloried in Thirlmore only the more. "What was the sermon about?" she asked now.

"Well, it was about the vanity of the world," her companion reluctantly admitted. "He said all that can be said about that. There is a great deal of flummery, of course, in that kind of talk. The strength and splendor of the discourse was a refutation of its subject all along. You remember, Peace, how Massillon lifted his hands to heaven over the dead body of Louis XIV., and, while the vast crowd in Notre Dame hung on his words, he said, 'God alone is great!' Nonsense! What the people thought, and what Massillon meant, was, that Massillon was great."

"And Dr. Stormworth was — himself —? I hardly know how to word it," Peace said.

"I understand," Thirlmore assented. "One look at

him was enough to confute what he said. Not to confute its power, its eloquence, you know, — that was perfect. I never before saw him yield himself fairly to the torrent of his thought as he did to-day. His words rushed along, the veins upon his grand forehead were swollen, we sank back when he ended as if dropped from a powerful grasp. I hear him as often as I can. He is not in his prime yet. It is not often I admire a man. Whenever I catch myself doing so, I have a sense of mortification at being fool enough to do it. So far in my life, Dr. Stormworth is the one exception to it. I never hope to meet another. — I wonder," he added, reflectively, "what the Doctor will be twenty years hence. He is in splendid health; he has nothing else on earth to do, and he gives himself exclusively to hard study. There is no limit to his development."

Peace listened to her lover, pale with a silent excitement. Had he been making ardent love to her instead, she would not have enjoyed it a tithe as much. "I love to hear you say that," she said. "There is nothing like it. For a man to take himself in hand like a block of marble, and be his own artist, making himself into a hero, a demigod, — it is the one thing worth living for!"

"Or for a woman either. Because," Thirlmore continued, in his slow way, gazing upon her with sincere admiration in his eyes, "when a woman does it, in making herself into a strong and highly educated woman she makes herself also, and without knowing it, as beautiful as an angel."

He had not intended to say it, but her face sparkled as he did so, her hands yearned toward him, she fastened her wonderful eyes upon him with answering admiration, almost adoration.

"My king!" she said, and he yielded his lips to hers. "O, I am so glad, so glad!" she said, with almost a sob, as she released herself from his arms. "So glad — that —"

"That you turned over poor Trent to Revel," he suggested, — "so am I," — and in quite a deliberate fashion he kissed her again.

"But Revel is a better woman than I am," Peace suddenly said. The words broke from her as though she had not intended to say them. "She is better, better!"

"She is, is she?" and her companion looked at Peace with a momentary surprise. "Well, I dare say Trent is a better man than I am, and," Thirlmore added indolently, "I prefer you to Revel, and I certainly prefer myself to Trent. Please sing something. I was hoping the Seminary choir would have had the good sense to start the Marseillaise when Dr. Stormworth sat down. One gets tired of the doxology."

To the surprise of Peace, her lover called again the next evening.

"Have you heard?" he asked, before taking a seat.

Although he was endeavoring to control himself, it was evident that he was more excited than Peace had ever known him to be, but she became only so much the more composed. It was as though her nature had the structure, almost the instinct, of the arch, — the greater the pressure, the steadier the resistance.

"Dr. Stormworth is dead!"

Peace had never seen such a look in the eyes of any man before. The death of poor Partridge was as nothing to this. Thirlmore had never experienced such a surprise, for the great preacher had fallen as if shot. It was some disease of the heart, of the brain overcharged with blood, as yet no one knew what. Thirlmore had been affected as men in battle are when a cannon-ball flies too near them; he was pale, terribly shaken, he had hastened to Peace Vandyke as a mariner struggles through the foam toward the nearest rock when his vessel has suddenly foundered from beneath him.

She would have been as rock in any case, but when she saw the face of this strong man, his hands reached out toward her, she felt herself harden as it were. Thirlmore had counted upon her being surprised. She was not surprised in the least.

"Nothing was more likely," she remarked, "to a man of Dr. Stormworth's portly habit," — and she proceeded to

speak of the event as of the most matter of course affair. It was not what she said, it was her composed manner of saying it. Thirlmore began to be ashamed of himself. He had been weak, unduly nervous, somewhat of a fool. To be with her was to get into the cold, clear, calm world of common-sense again.

"You know," she said at last, "that I have no talent for music, though I can admire music when others make it. It is worse than that in this case. I have no comprehension, even, for the sentimentalities of earth and air which interest Revel, and I dare say Mr. Trent, so much. So utterly am I without the organ of veneration, without even the faculty of fancy, of faith, whatever you call it, that I can hardly understand, much less admire, it in others. You had better marry a more lackadaisical woman, Mr. Thirlmore. It is not my nature."

Her lover had never known her to be so entertaining. She told him what she had been reading, things she had heard. As a great favor, she read him a little satirical poem she had written, and which he admired greatly, it was so crisp and sharp. There was a certain sparkle about her steady common-sense; it was like water from a mountain spring, cold and very clear. And she was so beautiful too. Most of all, she assumed all through that her lover was superior to the pitiful weaknesses of lesser men. They laughed as they talked.

Thirlmore stayed late, and walked back to Old Orange with a vigorous step. He had asserted himself at last against whatever even death could do. Peace Vandyke was the noblest of women, and he was her superior.

CHAPTER XXII.

WITH GRUMBLES.

WHEN vacation came, Steven Trent was glad to drop medicine for a while and visit Scrubstones. Grumbles was waiting for him at the station, and his homely face did Trent good, for he had been studying hard, and was rather sick than otherwise of the round of the hospitals and the dissecting-table. He was becoming hardened to the sight of suffering, as was necessary, but he was glad to escape from it for a little time. The old people were as delighted as it was possible for them to be at seeing him. He regretted the Sunday dress which Aurora Ann had put on in honor of his coming, and he could have wished that she had bestowed less labor upon the arrangement of her hair, but he soon forgot it. His sleep that night seemed, like the food, to be of a purer quality than that of the city.

But best of all was when he lay upon the fragrant hay in the meadow next day, looking at Grumbles pitchforking it upon the wagon. The poor student was really wearied to death. Peace Vandyke had been a more trying experience to him than any one of the manifold forms of disease in his new studies. He had few intimates, and it was his silent but ceaseless scrutiny of her singular character which had so exhausted him, the more that she had become almost an abstraction from his not having seen her for so long. It puzzled him that he could remember Revel Vandyke more vividly. The warmth of her hand, the glow of her cheeks, her very eyes and tones of voice, were as though he had met her yesterday.

"Revel has more heart, — no," he groaned, "more of mere flesh and blood, I mean; but Peace has more intellect, that is, Peace has more —" He was going to say soul, but it did not seem to be the precise word. He

was trying to rest from her also, as he stretched himself out upon the heaps of freshly cut grass. "O, how good it is!" he said. The sky overhead was blue and deep. On one side of the field rose the rocky ridge separating Scrubstones from Old Orange; but its cliffs and boulders were hidden by the pines and undergrowth which made a sort of blessed barrier between himself and Peace Vandyke, as well as Old Orange. A group of black-coated crows were arguing together upon the branch of a tall tree which overhung the meadow. "Theologians," Trent said lazily to himself, "but, thank heaven, no punster is here to say that their discussion is as to caws and effect. O, it is good to be here! The air is so pure, the grass smells so sweet. Yonder lies a cow doing nothing. Look at the oxen with the wagon, how sensible it is in them to lie down while it is being loaded! How much better to be an ox than a lion! Hallo, Grumbles!"

That individual could not reply on the instant. He had struck his pitchfork into the earth, had wiped his streaming face, drawn a brown jug from under a pile of hay, and, holding it at his lips and toward the sky, was restoring the waste of perspiration.

"Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring!" Trent called to him, as he lowered the jug, and drew near with it in one hand, and its corn-cob stopper in the other.

"Have some?" he said. "It's first rate. Aurora Ann made it. Only molasses and water and vinegar, you know, but I keep it cool under that heap of hay. Try some!" And he looked on as if he also were drinking, while Trent, lying on his back, poised the jug to his mouth, and drank, not because he was thirsty, but because it was a something he did not do in the city. "It's better out here, ain't it?" Grumbles demanded, as his friend lowered the vessel, and drew a deep breath.

"I should think so!" But Trent had special reference to Grumbles standing before him as he said it. The droop had gone from his shoulders, and he held

himself erect; his face was badly sun-burned, but the red was better than the yellow of his college days; the kindly eyes were bright, and the lankness had departed. Grumbles was no more an Apollo in body than in mind; but a sturdier son of the soil, honest and true, it would be hard to find. The man was in his own place, which is the soul of harmony.

"Let me tell you something, old fellow," Trent said; and still lying upon his back, he declaimed, his hands in the air, "*Tityre, in patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi, Sylvestrem tenui.* Remember it?"

"Don't I?" Grumbles said with a grin, as he corked up his jug. "That 's what bothered me, the words don't come next to each other in Latin. What 's the use of sticking in a dozen words between?" And the sun-burned face was clouded with the old perplexity. So much so, that Trent laughed, until Grumbles joined in. "Guernsey despises Latin," he said, "and Greek, too. He has told me so often. Mathematics also; likewise history, science, and philosophy. It 's an awful humbug, the whole of it, Guernsey said. *He* likes Scrubstones."

"No wonder. And he is off attending to his business, you told me?" Trent's heart fell in asking it, when he saw the anxious look which crept upon the face of the other as he did so.

"I wanted to tell you about it. I ought to understand even such a fellow as Guernsey by this time; but," Grumbles said, "it is the queerest thing! One moonlight night he insisted — you know what a man he is — upon our going out of doors after supper. 'The house is n't big enough to hold me,' he said. Next, he *would* perch himself upon the rider of a ten-rail fence. 'I am so happy, I must get as near the angels as possible,' he told me. 'For I 've a secret to tell you, Grumbles,' he said. 'And so have I,' was what I answered. 'Out with it, old fellow!' he said, 'and I 'll tell you mine, for I am as happy as a king to-night.' O well," Grumbles went on hesitatingly, "it was a secret only to him, — everybody else knew it. Fact is, it is one reason I left college.

After he had begged me for a little, I told him that Aurora Ann and I were soon to be married. We always intended to be, you know. Would you believe it, Trent, Guernsey never said one word, — just climbed down the fence, and went to his room up-stairs. It is the queerest thing!" Grumbles went on, after another pull at his jug. "That very afternoon he had teased Aurora Ann to make him some pumpkin-pies. The queerest thing! She got up ever so early to make them; but, bless you, he had gone! He had n't been to bed at all, when we came to look. There was a note on the wash-stand, saying he was obliged to go, that was all. He had packed some of his things in a carpet-bag, and had walked to the Depot. I thought about the laudanum, and tore down there half dressed. He has a craving for opium, you know. Poor fellow! it was all that would relieve him once, — formed the habit, you see. But he had n't been to the drug-store. He had taken — is n't it the very *queerest* thing you ever knew? — the freight-train when it passed hours before. Aurora Ann cried as if her heart would break. For weeks after she would burst out crying at the table, over the wash-tub, wherever she was. She had n't made a pie or a cookie since, till we told her you were coming. We think the world of Guernsey. I 'm dreadfully afraid —"

Little haying was done while the two talked the matter over. "There 's a sight of trouble in this world," remarked Grumbles, who had resumed the dialect of his earlier years. "See how the sun is shining, how green the grass is, and the trees! The birds fly about, the oxen and things don't care, but what a bother is always going on among people! If it is n't one thing, it is another. There 's our church. Since old Mr. Vandyke's death we 've heard about five hundred candidates. You see Deacon Ruggles says he had to hear poor preaching for fifty years. Now, what *he* likes the rest don't like. The Deacon is seventy-five, you see. He is like an old cross-grained steer: the rest of us have to pull him, as well as the wagon. He says, now that the

others have had fifty years of their sort of preaching, he 'll" — and Grumbles added it with the most solemn of faces — "he 'll be darned if he won't have *his* style of preacher next. After our last candidate, father told the old Deacon it was high time he died, and went to heaven. 'You may like Parson Vandyke when you hear him there,' he told him. 'If he only sings, may be so, — not if he preaches,' the Deacon said. It 's a bright world," Grumbles added, looking around him with a certain slowness of manner in common with his oxen. "That is, when it does n't storm, and it is n't night. But there 's a world of bother in it. Now there 's Miss Peace Vandyke, for instance."

The farmer was putting in and pulling out the stopper of the jug, in a meditative way, as he said it, or he would have noticed the change in his friend's face. Trent lay upon the heap of hay suddenly pale and still. It was to him as if the sunshine had suddenly gone out of the air.

"You know what a fellow Guernsey is," Grumbles continued. "When we were talking about her that day at dinner, after I had been to the school-house, he said, 'This is the devil's own world'; he says what he pleases, you know. He 's right! Scripture declares that Satan is the god of this world," Grumbles added.

"But what about Miss Vandyke?"

The tones of Trent were so changed in asking it, that it was strange his friend did not glance at him.

"What about her?" Trent repeated.

"O, nothing," Grumbles went on, still occupied with jug and stopper. "Only I drove up to her school-house with a load of wood one cold morning. We take it in turn supplying the wood, you see. It may be the fire was too low in the little old stove. Perhaps the school-house *is* too flimsy. It was a dreadfully disagreeable day, nothing but snow, and rain, and slosh. The room was full of children looking as if they had never been anywhere else in their lives, or ever expected to be, all of them cold and fractious. I was sorry for her, Trent.

She hardly said anything, and it may have been the cold, but she was like blue steel."

"What do you mean? I boarded with her aunt, you know. Did she seem to be hard, — sharp?" Trent asked.

"I think determined would be the word. But won't you ride on top of the hay to the barn? I don't understand women, — not even Aurora Ann," Grumbles said. "I see them both, Miss Peace and Miss Revel, at church and Sunday school, and," he added, "Miss Peace may have most character, but I like Miss Revel best. Come, let 's go home."

The next day was Sunday. Trent declined going to church.

"People say he used to think everything of Miss Peace," Aurora Ann remarked to the rest as they rode to church. "I should think he would have liked Revel best. That 's what I do, and I happen to know she has refused ever so many of the best men about here."

But old Mr. and Mrs. Grumbles had arrayed themselves in their Sabbath silence, and no more was said. When time came for the afternoon service, Trent was ashamed of himself, and went to church also.

"Miss Peace don't come to meeting much these days," Grumbles remarked, as they drove along, — "I suppose it is because we are candidating. We have about our seventieth candidate to-day, is n't it?"

"Our fortieth, Jeremiah, — fortieth only," his father corrected him.

"Only our fortieth," his mother echoed.

Alas! the minister who preached was evidently so desirous to please, that the congregation, exceedingly critical by this time, held itself sternly aloof, and refused to be pleased. From the outset, the preacher was painfully aware that he addressed neither sinners nor saints, it was a church full of judges instead; his heart failed him, he did not do half as well as he meant to have done.

Trent had so far recovered that he would rather have met Peace Vandyke than not, but she was not there.

Revel sat in the pew alone. Returning on foot and by himself, as he had insisted upon doing, he had to pass the buggy in which she was seated about to drive home. The wagon of an old farmer had been so backed against her vehicle by a skittish horse that she was waiting, reins in hand, for the way to be clear. It was impossible for him not to stop a moment and speak to her. He had been without female society for a long time, without, in fact, anything which could be called companionship, and her bright familiar face was very pleasant to see. Except that she seemed more silent than of old, she evidently was glad to meet him. Yes, Peace was well, but Miss Rachel had been quite sick, and he asked so many questions that Revel had to tell him all about it. Trent had fancied that she shrank from speaking of Peace, and his pride was aroused, — he was not the pining lover she had supposed.

"I wish you would let me drive you over," he said. "Miss Rachel has been very kind to me, — I would like to see her," — and he was glad he had asked it as they rolled slowly away. Revel did not say much, but he soon began to tell her of his life at the city, the queer experiences he had in his medical studies. So utterly was he alone in the world that it was impossible he should not have enjoyed the opportunity of speaking about his plans, especially to one so deeply interested in them as herself. He was astonished to find himself at the house so soon.

Peace did not show herself while he was there, and he almost forgot her in the delight of Miss Rachel at seeing and talking with him. He would not stay to supper, but he came again in a few days, and often thereafter. When he did meet Peace Vandyke, she was almost hurt to find that he seemed to have entirely recovered from his loss of her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

REVEL VANDYKE.

ELSPETH McGREGOR was over forty when she married handsome moneyless Mr. Thirlmore. It was the one weak moment of her life, and she hardened after his death into a colder, sterner woman than before. She had taken excellent care of her son so far as his health and morals, his food and clothing, his schooling and hard work, were concerned. If she was proud of him on this, his last return home from Old Orange, she did not show it.

Just so with Donald McGregor. It was when an investment was going wrong that the old merchant spoke; he was only the more silent when, as in this case, his percentage proved larger than he had hoped. But Thirlmore had never been petted. It was enough for him that he knew his own value, and he went about his work on the farm as independent of his uncle and his mother as before.

One day the former stood by him as he toiled at one of the boulders, which seemed somehow to multiply as fast as they were removed. The valedictorian of his class had laid aside his hat, coat, and vest, and, lever in hand, was toiling at his work in a way which brought out the muscles of his shapely form, as well as the perspiration upon his bronzed and determined face.

"He will be a grander mon than Tummas Chawlmers," the white-headed old Scotchman remarked to himself, with grim satisfaction, his rugged face as set as ever.

Thirlmore had come to be a stronger man than even his uncle. Of late, he put what he thought and felt into action, and left it as much uncommented upon even to himself as his hunger or thirst. That which he knew as he worked was this: "What I can do to this rock will

be done, — all I cannot do will be left undone. It will be the same of any church. A church to me will be merely a big boulder. All that happens to it will be what I can make it do and be." Believing this he changed the bearing of his lever, this way and that, until he had heaved the stone over. Then he put on his hat, coat, and vest, went into the house with his uncle, and ate a hearty supper. After which, he grappled with one of Chalmers's Astronomical Discourses, precisely as he had done with the boulder, led in a brief prayer at his uncle's gruff command, and, going to bed, fell sound asleep. Soul and body he was at one with himself, and an ox could not have slept more profoundly.

With Thirlmore, God had no existence in comparison to men; with Trent, men had no being in comparison with God; and the growing repulsion between them had driven each the farther along his own separate path. With Trent, this belief was as the very beating of his heart, — "I am in God's hands, not my own," — though, alas! if he thanked God for every blessing that befell him, he also charged God — at times almost struck at God — whenever evil came. But the dulness of Grumbles, the cookery of Aurora Ann, the sleepful bed in his little room up-stairs, were beginning to restore him to himself. So much so, that he sallied out one Saturday morning early upon the six-mile walk to Old Orange. A week before, the country through which he went would have seemed to him barren, mean, miserable. The narrow and ascending road wound its way as it could among the masses of jagged rock. Now a dozen pines grouped themselves in front, and thrust him and his highway to the left. Next, a giant of them all had thrown itself prostrate in such fashion, that he was compelled to wind around it to the right. Everywhere about him lay broken limbs from dead oaks, worm-eaten shells of fallen bark, and scattered cones of the pine, and the brown needles of the last covered the earth so deeply that his feet fell noiselessly, as upon a thick carpet. The solitude, the dense silence, was soothingly felt;

in the resinous smell there was a balm for his heart, too; and he enjoyed in the desolate region about him a sort of return to the heroic simplicity of the earlier ages.

When he reached the summit of the ridge, he halted a moment, and glanced off to the right. Yes, yonder it stood, as Grumbles had told him, — the poor little building in which Peace Vandyke taught. The pines towered closely about it, — the low roof was covered, as was the ground on all sides, with pine-needles, cones, fragments of shattered bark. He had chosen Saturday because he would be sure not to meet Peace on her way to the school, and the whole scene had the peculiar desolation of a place generally thronged, but now deserted. The old pain stirred in his heart, a deep pity for Peace came upon him, he turned to go nearer to a place so often visited by her. Then he held himself more erect, and passed steadily along his road. That had been another of his absurd weaknesses, his reverence for Peace simply as a woman. She had been more sacred to him than his own mother; it was to him almost as though she had been his wife, and had eloped with Thirlmore. "It was because I loved her," he said, "that I seemed to her the weaker of the two; but, O Christ! how can *you* treat me so?"

That same morning Peace had said at breakfast to her aunt, "What a pity I left my book at the school-house last night."

"It does n't matter," her aunt replied, "nobody will go near the place until Monday. Besides, you and I must go to Old Orange to-day, you know."

"Yes, but if it were to rain, it would be ruined, the old house leaks so," Peace added. No more was said, and the two drove into town as soon as they arose from the table.

But Revel had seen more in her sister's face than her aunt had done, and she knew the special value Peace attached to that particular volume. Since Trent and Thirlmore had graduated, Peace had given herself up to

reading with a new energy, which neither Revel nor her aunt could understand. She had exhausted her grandfather's old-fashioned library, had obtained books from Old Orange. Every moment she could save from her school and her household duties, and till late at night, she pored over her studies. For many months now she had done all this by something more than system; she had concentrated into it, and steadily, the wonderful woman-power which is devoted by her sex in general to dress, society, affection. Out of the simple country-girl had grown something more than a beautiful and vigorous woman; there was that in her which is called soul, enthusiasm, genius, in great artists. Had she put her heart into words, she would have said, "A Jenny Lind strives to sing. Yes, but my life, myself, shall be the song. I will produce, as Canova, Powers, wrought in marble, the perfection of mental beauty. Whatever I can make of myself shall be made."

Keen as were the eyes of Peace in reference to her own future and herself, she was blind in regard to her sister. If Peace was thinking hard and steadily, Revel was engaged in loving, and loving with a devotion in comparison to which the labors of Peace were as the idle fancies of the brain beside the strong and regular beating of the heart which is essential to life. Her aunt understood the silences, the concealed tears, the assumed gayety of Revel, for she had herself tasted the bitter experience. As in her own case so many years ago, there was nothing for Revel to do but to endure, be silent, — and to wait.

Therefore Revel no more planned for herself than did the robin which sang in her orchard, or the rose which bloomed in her garden. She was too much occupied with others to think about herself. Not that she did not show an energy which perplexed her aunt as much as did the deepening richness of her beauty.

"I never did understand her German mother," Miss Rachel sighed. "Peace and Revel are not one bit alike; but they are growing beyond me, both of them!"

Perhaps it was an instance of it that, as soon as Peace and her aunt had driven off, Revel started resolutely upon a walk to the school-house. She needed a walk. Her spirits rose as she went, so long had she been shut up at home. Her aunt would scold her, — but Peace, — yes, even Peace would be pleased. Of late, it was like pleasing a queen to please Peace. Revel enjoyed herself more at every step. She was not at all tired when she began at last to ascend the long slope of the ridge upon the top of which stood the school-house. Her heart grew merry as she walked. It was like Sunday, everything was so peaceful. She hummed an old hymn to herself, as she wound her way upward among the fallen trees and scattered rocks, a rosy, smiling, sweet faced country-girl, such as one sees oftener on the lawns and in the gardens of England than in America.

Another instant, and there was the rush upon her of one, two, three men. Then came a moment of utter bewilderment. Red and bearded faces were near hers. There was a sudden suffocation from breaths laden with tobacco and whiskey. A horror of thick darkness came upon her; but with frantic strength she tore from her mouth a hand which was held upon it, put all her soul into a cry, to God, not to man, and fell fainting into the hands which seized her upon every side.

When she came to herself, she was seated upon a rock by the roadside. Somebody had his arm around her. She was slowly conscious that the person had been for some time trying to make her understand something. But a deeper horror came upon her with consciousness. She shuddered, and closed her eyes more firmly. If she could, she would have refused to hear.

"It is Mr. Trent." She made that out at last.

'Miss Revel, don't you remember Mr. Trent? Mr. Trent! Mr. Trent! Please look up! They are gone! You are safe!" he was saying, when she opened her dazed eyes at last to see his pale face and eager gaze.

"Mr. Trent!" It was all she said; but there was the sudden gladness in her eyes, the instant upreaching of

the hands, as of an infant to whom a glittering object is unexpectedly shown. But there followed a flush at her impulsive delight. She closed her eyes, and drew away.

"It is all over," he said, knowing that in the moment a vast deal had begun also. "I happened to be near by. I will leave you only for a moment." But he was more excited than he had ever been as he hastened away. As he did so, she sat up, and tried to think. What had happened? Why had he left her? For she could not go into the time before her eyes had opened upon him. He filled the path in that direction, barred it up in his own person against any wish even to look beyond him.

When Trent had heard her cry he was not a hundred yards off. He had seized the fallen limb of a dead tree as he ran, and had come upon the ruffians with such fury that they had not stopped to see how many rescuers were at hand. One of them had escaped. A red-haired and ragged Irishman was too drunk to run, and had been dashed to the ground with such violence that he could not get up. Trent had got a fair blow only at the third, who now lay stunned upon the roadside. There was a glitter in the eyes of Trent, as, glancing around to make sure that the girl he had left did not see him, he picked up a large stone from the road, and stood over the man whom he had stunned. He was a powerful man, with a black beard, a scar across his forehead. Trent lifted the stone, and, aiming it with care, he dashed it down with his utmost force, and as he would have done upon a venomous snake, and with surgical precision, upon the outstretched leg of the ruffian. Trent was not himself. He laughed, his teeth shone between his lips like those of a wolf. Picking up the stone again, he went over the road to the drunken man, and lifted it, aiming at his knees; but he paused as he stood, a change came across his face, a flood of tenderness over his heart; he lowered the heavy weapon to think a moment. As he did so, there was the sound of wheels against the stones, and in a few moments Deacon Ruggles, driving down the hill, had stopped his wagon beside the young man.

In a few words the affair was explained to him, and the rugged old farmer had consented to take the two captives to Old Orange.

"I saw them all three near my barn early this morning," he said, "and set my dog on them. I'm used to loading up wood and stone," he added, as he helped his companion to tumble the men into his wagon, "but hauling villains is new to me."

Revel Vandyke could not be persuaded to get into the wagon with them. "I am strong again," she said, "if Mr. Trent will see me home."

"You tell Miss Peace from me," the old farmer said, as he gathered up his reins, "that I told her and told her she ought not to walk to school. She is the most determined woman I know. I'm afraid you ain't much better, Miss Revel."

"Please don't let this fellow get away," Trent said, in a singularly hilarious way, of the drunken man who lay still, but with eyes rolling and wide open, beside the one whose leg had been effectively broken. "It would be a pity if—"

"Do you see this whip?" demanded the Deacon, holding it out for inspection. "I poured two pounds of melted lead into the handle. So many things happen where a man is n't allowed to do more than talk, and it's wicked to swear, you know, even then, that I'd be glad of a good excuse to hit one good blow. You take care of Revel, I'll attend to these men," and he drove off.

But Revel cried out in dismay before she had gone with her companion a single step. "Your foot is covered with blood," she said, and sank down.

"Is it?" Trent asked. "It does n't matter. I had n't noticed it. I remember now that the man who escaped cut at me with his knife as he ran. It is the merest scratch. Yes, it is just above the knee. I can tie it up, when we get to the house. Come on."

The color was gone from the face of his companion, but she said little. Possibly it was to gratify her that he leaned upon her arm as they walked slowly along. There

was so much to say that neither could utter a word for some time. Nor could either explain afterward, even to themselves, how they managed to reach home. When Miss Rachel and Peace arrived from town, it was hard at first to understand matters. If the assault was so terrible an affair, why was it that Trent, and Revel too, were so strangely happy over it? After dressing the wounded knee, and insisting that her former guest should lie down, Miss Rachel hastened to the kitchen. Her nieces were busy about supper there.

"Revel?" said her aunt, almost sharply; but as she looked demandingly at her, Revel's smile died in the deep color which slowly suffused her face. Her fair head sunk a little, but she raised it again, and a brighter smile beamed in her eyes.

"Well, Aunt?" she asked; but her relative had broken into weeping, and the two were clasped in each other's arms.

Peace understood matters from the moment she entered the house. It sent a sudden pang through her which left her very pale. But she did not weep then or afterward. She was driven to and from school thenceforth in the old Jersey wagon. As to the wound, Trent was soon well of that. It was some time, however, before he thought himself strong enough to go back to Scrubstones.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MORNING'S EXPERIENCE.

AND thus Thirlmore and Peace Vandyke, Revel and Trent, adjusted themselves to each other by a law even more powerful than that which sweeps onward together the drops of the Gulf Stream, the worlds of the universe. At the end of his vacation, Trent went back

to his medical studies in the city, comforting himself for his absence by a correspondence with Revel, and coming out from the city upon a little visit whenever he could. Thirlmore returned from the farm to Old Orange for his second and last year at the Seminary.

One morning in midwinter he drove out, by appointment, to take Peace to the College Chapel, and they were speaking, as they rode into Old Orange, with regard to Trent and Revel. "He came to see her last week," Peace said, "and I hardly knew him, he seemed so much happier. As to Revel she has bloomed out like a rose. Did you ever know any one so happy? She laughs and sings like a child. I feel as if I were old enough to be her mother. Is it not strange?" continued Peace, "but I feel older than Aunt Rachel."

"It is because you are a century in advance of them; and," Thirlmore added, "if Revel blooms like a rose, you sparkle like — steel? — no, like a star. If she is charming, you are — are — there is no name for it!" the lover said, in comic despair. "It sounds odd," he went on, "but I like you, Peace, somewhat as I like Professor Rodney. Now that Dr. Stormworth is gone, the Professor is the only man left us. That is why I wanted you to hear him. I am sure you will like him. To me he is the one man alive, as you are the one woman. How do you like Dr. McMasters?" he demanded, for the Doctor had been supplying the still vacant pulpit of old Parson Vandyke occasionally.

"He reminds me," Peace said, "of what you told me about Mr. Macroy. You said he had expanded his lungs by exercise until he was a walking bellows, was n't it? and Dr. McMasters has devoted himself to the development, not of his lungs, but of his heart. What a florid old gentleman he is with his white hair and cordial ways! He is like a steady glow. It is as though he were a kind of summer incarnate. I am ashamed of myself," she added, "but I always resent and resist him, like a naughty girl."

"The warmer he is," laughed Thirlmore, "the more

you *won't* melt, I see. You would rather remain ice than give way and turn to water. Two things I cannot endure, cherubic goodness, seraphic sweetness. Because I don't believe, in either case, that the man really is cherub or seraph, — it is more or less a sham. You will like Rodney."

Peace Vandyke did like him. He by no means possessed the bodily diameter of Dr. Stormworth. In fact, he was thinner, if possible paler, his hair and eyes darker, his eyes, tones of voice, style of thought, sharper too than usual. What he said in his sermon was even terribly true, but it was almost cruel in its incisive force.

"He was as vivid as a Comanche in his feathers and war-paint," Peace said as they drove home, and after discussing the sermon.

"Yes, and as consecutive as a savage, scalping-knife in hand, after a foe. That is what I like," Thirlmore added, "it is so much better to compel than it is to persuade. Who does not like sheer force? Rodney whets a man. I shall eat a heartier dinner for having heard him." But, to a greater degree than he knew, it was the liking of his companion for the preacher which had stimulated him to make the remark.

"Why is he so worn and white?" Peace asked after a while.

"Well," Thirlmore replied, "he is the first mathematician in the country, and has published text-books, you know. They say he has discovered something new in mathematics. I don't fully understand it, nor, I believe, does he. His first volume was a great success, but the final demonstration and proof of his ideas, whatever they are, is reserved for another volume. He is hard at work upon that. They say he hardly eats or sleeps."

About two weeks after this, it became known in Old Orange that Professor Rodney was not able to leave his house.

"Thank heaven," Thirlmore said to himself, early one morning, as he passed the Professor's gate, "that he is one of the men who never give in. My old uncle is

tough and strong, but he is like one of those boulders on the farm. That is why he enjoys his farm, the big rocks are like so many of his kin ; my mother and all, there is a strong family resemblance among them. The Professor is steel instead, the refined iron from the rock. He has the essence of endurance. I want to see the glitter of his black eyes after his new book is out."

At that moment the physician was coming out of the Professor's gate and recognized him.

"I am glad to see you," he said. "The Professor must have taken a fancy to you when you were helping with the poor fellow who was shot. He was speaking about you last night. I will be back in a moment, and I want some man to be with him. Go in." When the student entered the house, he was shown into the same back room upon the first floor in which Partridge had lain so long, and he found the Professor lying upon the same bed. Thirlmore was surprised to see the member of the Faculty known among the students as Professor Tommy seated beside the sick man. Perhaps the physician was speaking sarcastically when he said that no man was in the room ; for good, kind-hearted Professor Tommy was weeping copiously. The new-comer understood it. Professor Rodney had occasionally made in his sermons what were supposed in college to be sarcastic references to Professor Tommy, and his almost invariable tears at the close of his discourses.

"I suppose," flashed across Thirlmore's mind, "that he has begged Tommy's pardon. I would n't." But his eyes were fastened upon the sick man. The family had retired for a time, exhausted by a night of watching. The room was darkened ; but, as his eyes became used to the gloom, the student saw that Professor Rodney sat pillowed up in his bed. Except that he was thinner and whiter, he seemed — and Thirlmore rejoiced to see it — as vigorous as ever. Both hands lay outside the coverlid ; his eyes were blacker, sharper than before ; his intellect was unimpaired, that was evident.

"Ah, Mr. Thirlmore," he said, catching sight of his

visitor, "I have been thinking of you, sir. Stand closer, if you please." The other did so. Professor Tommy glanced from the invalid to the young man, erect, vigorous; there was a certain likeness between the two. "Mr. Thirlmore, do I have your attention, sir?" the sick man said.

"Yes, sir." It was as if professor and student were together upon the platform of the class-room once more.

"I wish to state that my mind is clear. Unless I mistake," the Professor said in tones which had a certain severity in them, even when he spoke of himself, "I could solve any question in mathematics more rapidly than I ever could before. I have your attention, sir? Listen. There is none of your class I would rather mention it to. You may remember I have said much to you as to quantity. Very well, but I tell you now that quality is of most importance. Quantity, however vast, is nothing but counters; it is quality which conditions quantity. Do you understand, sir?"

Thirlmore bowed his head.

"I have spoken of area. Very good; but I would now remark that all question of area is insufficient, unless it takes in the other life also. Do you follow me, sir?"

The student again assented.

"Last. No man is competent, as I have taught you, to calculate accurately, until he has as perfect a conception of two-ness as he has of oneness. Very true, but that has its clearest meaning to me at this moment. You cannot — have I your attention, sir? — you cannot estimate things correctly, unless you take into your calculation another, sir, as well as yourself. You, sir," — and Thirlmore had to sustain the penetrating eyes of the speaker, — "You, sir, are but one integer. Handling, however perfectly, but one factor, your calculations" — and the old satirical acid was very evident — "are extremely limited. The other factor is God. Stay, I err, you are *not* a unit! You are, I am, but zero, sir!" It was said with a certain harshness. "Zero, sir, *zero!* — that is, apart from God. Admitting him, all other factors fol-

low, not otherwise. Remember what I tell you, if you please: this is the sum of it all, separate quality from quantity, and your result is wrong; omit eternity in your estimate as to area, and your conclusion is wrong; fasten your attention exclusively upon yourself, and leave out God and other men, and your equation is wrong, sir, false and utterly *wrong!*"

The word had often sounded through the class-room, Thirlmore had trembled before it as well as Grumbles, but it had a force now such as the Professor had not put into it before.

"Have you accompanied me, sir?" he added.

Thirlmore bowed.

"That will do, sir." Professor Rodney made the usual motion of his hand in dismissal.

The physician came in at the moment, and the student left the room and the house.

Thirlmore was detained for a time at the post-office, but he thought of the Professor as he slowly returned therefrom. "He will be up again before long," he said. "Sickness merely bends a Damascus blade like that. Dr. Stormworth, after all, was a magnificent animal, not so very much better than an ox: such men always come down with a crash. Professor Rodney is of a finer, keener metal, — he is good for many a year yet." At the moment, he saw the physician coming down street toward him. "I am glad he seems to be doing so well," he said to the other in passing.

"Sir!" the doctor said, looking at him with surprise. "I thought you knew! Professor Rodney is dead!"

Thirlmore stood for an instant looking at the other without a word. When he walked on, it was as though a fog had suddenly closed upon him. He had not gone a square when he heard a peculiar sound; and, looking up with a dazed brain, he saw a man loitering along the sidewalk toward him. In a vague way he observed that it was a larger man than himself; so much so, that, in passing, he glanced mechanically up at the other. Yes, he had heard of, but had not before seen him, — seen *it* rather; for

there was the conical head, the slobbering mouth, the vacant stare of an idiot, which had been let out of some house near by, at that early hour, to ramble about for a while. The miserable object was clad in filthy rags. As Thirlmore passed by, it made a sudden clutch at him, looked into his face with filmy gaze, and broke out into discordant laughter. The other cut savagely at him with a walking-stick he chanced to have, and something which sounded very much like an oath. Really, it was himself he cursed, and he walked on more rapidly, hearing behind him the monotonous "Goo-goo-goo" of the drivelling imbecile.

"That such a thing as that lives, and he is dead!" he thought. Thirlmore was like the heavy rock of which we read somewhere, and which is so evenly balanced that the touch of a child can make it oscillate. When he reached his room in the Seminary, he locked himself in until late that day. A reaction had set in.

But he had promised to call upon Peace Vandyke that evening, and he did so. He was more deeply moved than when Dr. Stormworth had died. Peace was not prepared for the way in which he spoke, — pouring out his heart to her as he had not done before to any one. She silently encouraged him to say all he would, but, somehow, the strong man seemed in her eyes to be almost like a country lout as he talked. It was distasteful to her, — she hardened under it, grew more and more ashamed of him. He felt it at last. Not that she did not assent to all he said. She sympathized with him, of course, but — who can explain the influence of a woman of her kind? We comprehend the power of Cleopatra over Antony, but who of us has been within the Arctic Circle? They say that the sleep into which one falls there is sweetest of all, even when there is no awakening. Not that Peace Vandyke either said or did anything in particular. She was merely a highly intellectual young woman, by no means phenomenal.

But it was a mistake to say that Thirlmore was like a balanced mass which any hand could move. In all the

world, Peace Vandyke, and she alone, had such power over him. When he thought over matters, the next day, he was sorry for the death of such a man as Professor Rodney, but mortified that he should have made such a fool of himself in connection therewith.

CHAPTER XXV.

DEACON RUGGLES.

ABOUT a month before the close of his Seminary course, Thirlmore received a letter from Gruffden, now settled as a lawyer in a city near by. He did not speak of it to Peace, but passed the following Sunday with Gruffden, returning to Old Orange on Monday. The same thing took place upon the two Sundays after. Very early in the morning, on the Wednesday after the third visit, he took a letter from the office which caused him to hasten to his room, where he locked himself in for a good long time. After that, he dressed with unusual care, then went to the livery-stable. His uncle had kept him upon so short an allowance that it was rarely he could indulge in what was to him the greatest of luxuries, a ride upon horseback. To-day, he had the best horse saddled, and in a few moments, morning as it still was, he was galloping out to the Vandykes'.

The day was cool and clear after a rain, the rider had never known sickness since he was born, and never had he been in such spirits.

"I want you to go with me," he said to Peace when she came into the parlor. "Ask your aunt to put up a little lunch for us in your school basket, and we will take a walk. Thank heaven it is your vacation. Make haste."

They had not seen each other for some time, and Peace gladly complied. Thirlmore had something to tell her,

she could see that, and that it was something of importance. In a few moments she was equipped in a rustic hat, and, basket in hand, the lovers struck off to the left from the road after they had gone a half-mile into the wilderness of scattered rocks and stunted pines. It had rained heavily the night before, and they were forced to climb from rock to rock at times to keep from getting wet where the grass was rank, or the weeds high. Neither objected to it, — Thirlmore was glad to lift the lady when need was, and Peace enjoyed the open air, the deep seclusion, the companionship of the man in whom she so heartily believed.

"What is that noise?" her lover asked as they clambered at last around the base of the rugged hill upon the top of which stood her school-house, and began to descend.

"That is the creek," Peace said. "I suppose there was a heavy storm in Deacon Ruggles's region, — Scrubstones they call it, — and there is a freshet. The old mill is lower down on our left, — we will go to the bank above and eat our lunch among the rocks. We have walked two miles."

"I wanted to get away from people," Thirlmore said, when they had reached the creek, and had seated themselves, lunch in hand, to eat and to rest, "and I have something to say."

Unconsciously to himself, Thirlmore rejoiced in his news as if it were a part of himself; he had, so far, preferred to keep it even from the woman he was to marry. But Peace was not as much interested outwardly at least as he had hoped. "Have you?" she said, indifferently. "Look at the water. I used to come down here from the school-house at noon to wash my hands, but I have never seen it as high. It must have rained very hard. See how it foams. That is the trouble with shallow people also, — they are either very full or very empty. I went with Aunt to a camp-meeting last week just to see and hear. Were you ever in a revival meeting?"

"Once." It was said sententiously, for it was at such a meeting that Thirlmore had become, as he then thought, a Christian; but he was ashamed of the remembrance under her cool way of asking.

"I had read of them," she said, "but it was worse than I had thought. The preacher began quietly, but worked himself finally into a fury of words, throwing his hands out right and left, as if he were possessed. He was to me no more than one of those howling dervishes in books of travel. The tears and the perspiration fairly poured down his cheeks at last. It was insanity."

Her lover had been full of enthusiasm for some hours; but it began to seem absurd, and he talked about other things until it was time to start for home. They went to the edge of the stream to wash their hands after eating. A hundred yards above, the road from Scrubstones, descending the hill, crossed the bed of the creek.

"That is the road to the mill," Peace explained. "Deacon Ruggles goes that way with his sacks. Did I ever tell you how he held out against my grandfather Vandyke? He voted against him when poor Grandpapa was fresh from the Seminary like yourself, — for fifty years he did not like one single sermon," — and Peace told her lover the whole story. Revel would not have done so. It was not that Peace was fond of things that were bitter, but she did like things which had an edge. Her tones were not at all satirical.

They stood as they talked upon the rocks where the stream had worn a hole for itself, a basin thirty feet across, and into which it now rushed, turbid with the red earth, and full of the brown cones and dead needles of the piny woods through which it had come. Lower down, the torrent found an outlet, as from a boiling caldron, between jagged rocks which compressed it into a sluice, narrow, deep, and swift; and thenceforward it roared, now to the right hand, and then to the left, in wrath, against the boulders and fallen pines which obstructed it as it went.

"What is it you wanted to tell me?" Peace demanded at last.

"Only this," Thirlmore said, "that I am called to a city church, and that we must be married before I go." He had no intention of yielding to any freshet in his own veins, and spoke more composedly than he felt.

But Peace was greatly interested, and her lover grew enthusiastic again as he talked. It was a long story. Gruffden made no pretension to religion, but was a teacher in the Sunday school of a new church which had been established in the city where he lived. Persons owning lots in that part of the town had given an eligible location, had subscribed considerable sums, and a large and commodious building had been erected.

"Gruffden told me," Thirlmore explained, "that their policy was to begin boldly. He says he finds it best in his own business to assume success as certain, and go ahead on that basis. Where a man himself is sure, he says, every one else will be."

The enterprise had originated in a hall, and had thriven; but the minister who organized the church proved to be a man too plain, it was said, and too dull to carry it out in as vigorous a manner as had been desired, and he resigned. His name was Brown, and he was trying to build up another enterprise in a distant part of the same city. Gruffden had succeeded in having the valedictorian of his class invited to preach.

"I think they liked me from the first," the lover said. "They need a young and vigorous man, and I don't think I am inclined to be sickly," — and he told about the semicircular arrangement of the seats, the fine organ behind the speaker, the ease with which he had spoken, the crowds which had attended. "I did not feel as though I was in a church," he said, "and I made my sermon as short and interesting as I could. They seem to be a fine set of people, chiefly young people. They took a fancy to me, have offered me a good salary with the promise of a rise, and I intend to go."

Peace seemed to be greatly delighted, excited even. She had never seemed more so.

"It is a noble opportunity," she said, with sparkling

eyes. "I feared we should have to live in some miserable country place for a while at least. It is better than I had hoped."

"Yes, it is a grand opportunity," the other said. "Peace," he added, turning suddenly upon her, — for he had been thinking matters over very earnestly, — "I do sincerely desire to do all the good I can. You can help me more than any one."

There was a certain humility in his tones, a feeling which he did not often manifest. He had entered college with that feeling, however silent he had been. When he nursed Partridge, he had concealed much of the same feeling under an affectation of roughness. His really generous and noble heart had been more influenced than even Peace had imagined at the death of Dr. Stormworth, and of late and most of all, when Professor Rodney had been taken so suddenly.

"You will help me, Peace?"

She looked at him steadily, and with some surprise. He seemed to be almost timid, even beseeching. But she had not engaged in any such hours of devotion as had held him in his closet in view of the possible change before him.

"Help you? Certainly I will." It was said as earnestly as he could have desired, — her eyes shone, but it was not in the key of what he had thought and felt.

"It is a noble opportunity," she added, "you will have every stimulus to exertion. There is so much to learn and to teach these days that is new and interesting —"

But her companion broke from her with an exclamation. They had noticed a wagon coming down the hill upon their right, the noise it made as it rattled its way among the stones made it impossible not to hear it; but both were too much interested to observe that the driver had driven into the water.

As Thirlmore exclaimed, Peace glanced around.

"It is Deacon Ruggles!" she said, "surely he will not think of —"

But the Deacon had grown more obstinate as he grew

older. For more years than he could remember, he had crossed the creek at that point with his wagon on his way to mill. He knew that there was a freshet, but he had never halted for a freshet before, and he drove in headlong from the impulse of the descent down hill. It may be the Deacon was so old as neither to see as well as he once did, nor to have as strong a hand upon the "lines" as before. As Thirlmore and Peace afterward learned, the creek had never been as high. Moreover, one of the horses was young and skittish. All in an instant, the wagon was upset in the foaming torrent, and the old man was swept down stream toward the lovers.

"Thank God I am here! Stand back, Peace!" and Thirlmore kicked off his shoes, threw aside his coat, and was in act of leaping in, when Peace threw her arms around him from behind. "Let me go," he said fiercely, "don't you see!" — for the Deacon had been borne headlong into the basin as Thirlmore spoke. The old man could swim, but was terribly encumbered with his clothing. As he entered the pool, his gray head and terrified eyes rose above the floating froth and trash. He saw Thirlmore, and lifted his hands toward him.

"Let me go!" the student cried furiously, for Peace had wrapped herself about him like a serpent.

"Help, help!" Thirlmore saw the agony of appeal in the rugged face of the old and drowning man, as the cry sounded in his ears. With his utmost strength he tried to tear himself loose from his companion. She was behind him, and he could not get at her to do it. The water was deep at his very feet, and the rock slippery. He made a last determined effort to break away, as the old man shot by struggling and calling for help. It was impossible to do so. If he plunged in, it would be to drag her into the water. The next moment, Deacon Ruggles had been borne through the sluice. Turning and tearing himself away by sheer force from the hands which held him, Thirlmore ran down the stream, looking eagerly into the foaming current. Nothing was to be seen. He leaped from rock to rock in his stocking feet,

stumbled over the logs across his way, plunged into the brush, hurried down the stream until he reached the mill far below. He summoned help, and the stream was thoroughly searched, but the body of the drowned man was not found until night had fallen. The poor old Deacon was so battered among the logs and rocks that he was hardly to be recognized. His horses had managed to escape in some way, dragging out a part of the wagon with them, but the Deacon was dead.

Thirlmore did not think of Peace until the body had been found. He was so exasperated at her that he would not have gone even to her aunt's house had he not left his horse there. But Peace had returned home, and Miss Rachel was on the watch, and while he was in the stable saddling his horse she laid hands upon him. He was torn and bleeding from the rocks, wet and exhausted, and he was so wrathful that he did not even ask whether Peace had come home. In spite of all Miss Rachel could say, he mounted and rode through the darkness to Old Orange.

The next day, he had a letter from Peace.

"You would have been drowned as surely as you had gone in," she said in the end, "and you are more to the world and to me than a thousand men like Deacon Ruggles. It was noble in you to do as you did, but I also would do what I did if I had it to do over again. When you consider things calmly, you will see that I would have been a fool not to have saved such a life as yours, even at the expense of my own."

That was all, but it was enough. Her tones, the touch of her hand, the cool mastery of her eyes also, were in the lines. He went to see her, and, humbling herself before him, she greeted him as though he were a hero.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY ORIFLAMME.

"PARADISE itself could never have known a more perfect day than this!" It was Guernsey who said it, as he came down the steps of his hotel, one brilliant September morning, more than two years after the events last recorded. It was Sunday. He had landed the day before from an absence in Europe, and went up the street, looking, as he limped along, into every face he saw, eager as people always are, under such circumstances, to meet some one whom he knew. Evidently he was in better health. He was much taller, was broader across the shoulders, his cheeks were bronzed as well as plump, his eyes were even brighter than of old, — and he was dying to seize upon somebody to whom he could pour out a long-suppressed torrent of talk.

"It is the first Sunday I have seen for, ah, how long!" he said, "and that gives the day this last flavor and fragrance of Paradise. The streets are so clean and quiet, the air is so pure and still, the people so cleanly arrayed, it would not be out of place if Christ himself were to come walking down the pavement. So cool and invigorating is it, too, that old Grumbles even could write a hymn if he were to try. If I were to sit down to it, I could pour out a lyric as naturally as a bird sings. If Thirlmore, fresh from his vacation, does not preach well such a morning as this, he is a brute. God knows that I am no Christian, and yet I hope Thirlmore will not fail me, I have been outside of home religion so long! Whether it is a rousing or a restful sermon, so that it is the old gospel, I shall enjoy it. I wonder where his church is."

He stopped the first gentleman he met to inquire.

"Mr. Thirlmore's church? The Church of the Holy

Oriflamme? Certainly," the one questioned made reply. And he gave directions how to find it with a degree of alacrity, and even pride, which exhilarated Guernsey, sensitive as he was to everything. It proved a magnificent structure when he had reached it. On entering with the crowd, he found that Thirlmore had greater incitement to eloquence than anything he had yet imagined. A mass of well-dressed people were waiting in the vestibule to be shown to seats; but the instant the usher, with the bouquet in his button-hole, beheld Guernsey, he knew him from his appearance to be a distinguished somebody, a celebrated author most likely, and hastened to give him a seat upon the platform.

From his elevation, Guernsey had a view of the whole house. There was a small desk with a vase of flowers upon it at the front of the platform. Behind it was a semi-circular grove of plants, from between whose flowers and tropical leaves could be seen the choir laughing and talking together as they arranged themselves to sing. They seemed to be all young and happy, — the beautiful dresses, the blooming cheeks, the black beards, the gloved hands, the sparkling eyes, were in constant motion behind and amidst the foliage, while back of all the organ lifted its decorated pipes to the ceiling.

"The music ought to be sweet," Guernsey said to a lady seated on his right, — "the organ pipes look exactly like enormous sticks of candy." He did not know the lady, who colored and smiled and bit her lips, but he had to say something to somebody. The time allotted for the pew-holders to take their seats had expired, and it was as though the cordon of ushers had been overmastered along the line, such was the irruption of people down the aisles.

"I thought it was Sunday and church," Guernsey remarked to the lady, "but just look at them!"

Men and women were hurrying along, each eager to secure the best seat, to the exclusion of those behind; there was a certain selfish greed in the thronging, bustling rush, which jarred upon the visitor. He ran his eager

eyes, none the less, over the multitude. The large majority of the people were young, — a bald head, a white beard, here and there. His eyes rested at last upon a lady occupying the front seat. She was young and plump, rosy and fair, richly dressed, — and evidently enjoying the occasion. Her lips were parted, — she was looking with wonder at the in-pouring crowd.

"She is a dairy-maid fresh from her cows, not long married, and has never read a book through since she was born. Daisies and buttercups!" Guernsey's comment was not addressed to any one, was barely loud enough for the lady seated beside him to hear it, but she was looking at the one alluded to at the moment, and seemed to understand.

"What an invasion! and the women are the worst!" he continued, in a louder tone. "Look at that old lady in black silk, with the elaborate puffs of white hair on either side of her sharp face. She actually crushed that little old gentleman out of her way. See how she fans herself. She is saying, 'Thank heaven, *I* have got a good seat anyhow!' I am glad she is under the gallery in case it should break down. What a crowd! If," he added, as the great auditorium filled to its utmost, "your Samson were to pull the house down about our ears, how many would be killed?"

The lady he addressed was slight, fair, with wonderfully fine eyes and intelligent countenance. She was so seated as to be almost hidden from the audience behind an aloe plant, and she now glanced again at the face of her neighbor.

"The church seats three thousand, with camp-stools, five hundred more," she replied in a modulated whisper, for there was that in Guernsey's face and manner which made it impossible to be offended, — it was a pleasure to speak with such a person.

"For he *is* a Samson, is n't he?" Guernsey asked, with the fun of a spoiled child in his eyes.

The lady looked steadily at him, then smiled and said, "You must wait and find out for yourself. Here he is."

At this moment the preacher came upon the platform, tall, handsome, admirably proportioned, and entirely at ease. But Guernsey did not look that way. He was considering the lady instead. There was something in her beyond the perfection of her face, beyond the questioning of her large cool eyes. He was trying to make her out. "And you," he murmured at last, "might be Delilah."

The preacher had taken his seat when the visitor looked that way. The organ pealed, the chorus choir arose and began to sing.

"It is very fine indeed," Guernsey thought, "but we are all panting and perspiring too much as yet to be musical, much less devotional. So far, it is not a bit of a church. Wait awhile. The prayer will compose our minds."

The minister had held his slouched hat in his hand as he sat. When the choir had disappeared again behind the masses of verdure, he looked about him, then arose, went to the desk, opened the Bible in a leisurely way, looked over the congregation from one side to the other, and began to read. His reading was very good. Every syllable could be heard by every person present. Accent, emphasis, pause, modulation, inflection, were admirable. But Guernsey was thinking only of the reader from beginning to end. Then the minister closed the volume, and the singing burst forth, the congregation rising and joining in. The volume of sound was almost sublime; but when the lady next to Guernsey offered to share her book with him, although Guernsey gladly accepted it, he could not sing. The words and tune were familiar to him, but he thought, "It is because I have been in Europe so long, I suppose." Moreover, he confined his attention at last to the singing of his companion. It was low, and sweet, and good, but it never occurred to him to sympathize with her in anything beyond the singing itself. "I have become such a heathen," he thought.

The minister did not sing. A number of notices had been handed him, and he was reading these during the

first part of this service. After that he looked over the audience, "as though he were enjoying a fine landscape," Guernsey felt, and gave himself unconsciously up more and more to the study of the clergyman himself, and apart from the meaning and worth of what he might say.

When the singing was ended, the pastor sat still for quite a while, and then arose slowly and went to the desk, "as if," Guernsey silently commented, "he had suddenly said to himself, 'I must pray now, — that is a fact, — I had almost forgotten it!' You heathen," Guernsey remonstrated with himself, "stop criticising this man! At least go with him now to God."

He sincerely desired to do so. Ever since he could remember, he had been so racked from time to time by disease that every nerve had been trained to tensity. Capable of the most exquisite agony, he was as capable of pleasure the most exquisite. More than that, he was keenly alert always, and to everything. Men and women interested him most of all. From habit, from life-long practice too, he possessed subtlest insight as to motive, and it was as though his fibres rang with instant accord or discord in company with the inmost soul also of whomsoever he chanced to be with. The man had found no such satisfaction in men as to make him cease to hunger for God, yet he could not detach himself from the minister who now led in prayer.

"A clear and beautiful enumeration that of God's attributes," he said to himself after the opening clauses of the supplication. "Very comprehensive and accurate," he continued, when the pastor had recounted the manifold wants of man. "An admirable *résumé* of the state of the country, the aberrations of politicians and business men. Yes, and this next was a singularly sufficient analysis of personal peculiarity and demand, but when will we get to God? Bless me, and you are not going to do more than inform the Almighty!"

For, quite suddenly, in the midst of all, the minister ceased, and the choir broke forth. "I thought he would

warm up out of his nonchalant statement of matters and go to praying. Things have changed since I went over the water. Get rid of yourself, you brute," Guernsey groaned to and concerning himself, "and rid yourself of him too. This is Sunday and preaching. Shake yourself."

It required no effort to listen. The manuscript of the minister lay open before him, — he was as much at home with it and with the audience as possible. The voice and manner were colloquial, it was plain that the sermon had been carefully prepared. Every hearer was as much at home from the first with the speaker as he was with each hearer. He simply talked to them. There was as close and natural and purely a human interest in it all as in any conversation across a dining-table. Nor was rhetoric lacking, and beautiful periods. More than once there was a burst of laughter at some hit at the follies especially of religious people, and there was an approach to pathos, and then the speaker closed.

"Why not close?" the exceedingly critical hearer demanded silently of the gratified audience. "He did not aim to prove anything in particular, much less to apply anything and rivet it down upon your intellect. Surely Thirlmore knows that *he* has a conscience, but he evidently doubts whether you have. This sort of logic ends nowhere, for it aims at nothing in particular. He could go on forever. It is as if," Guernsey continued to himself, "he had said, 'O well, it is about time to stop. We will talk it all over again some day.' But he does hold them wonderfully! The man has so much human nature. What a splendid-looking fellow he is too! He is not afraid of them, and they know it. I'm glad I came to — church."

There was more singing, a brief benediction, and the audience dispersed, talking and laughing. It was very plain that they all liked it, and would come again.

"Was he Samson?" the lady by his side lingered to say as they remained together for a moment. It was asked archly, but with a certain confidence.

"No, madam, he was not," Guernsey answered, with bright eyes, glad to express an opinion. "It is not what is called the Gospel, you know. That is not the Gospel as I used to hear it. And there is nothing in it very strong or deep, logical or new, as an address on morals. But I like your preacher. He has a genuine hold upon the people. There is an unaffected human nature about him."

"I am sorry you do not rate him higher." There was a trace of mortification in the eyes and tones of the lady as she spoke, and turned away.

"Pardon me, madam," the other hastened to add. "He is *not* a Samson. But he is better, he is a Mark Antony. He speaks as a man of the people. His eloquence is —"

"Over the body of what Cæsar?" The lady in slowly departing had looked back to ask. Her eyes were in his, full, steady, demanding a reply. He was thrilled; but the choir, chatting and giggling as they went out, separated them before he could frame his thought into suitable words.

There were quite a number of gentlemen and ladies around the preacher, congratulating him. Every one seemed to be in high spirits, and the flowers, the fluttering ribbons, the merry talk, and all, made a brilliant scene upon the platform.

"Hallo, Guernsey, is that you, old fellow?" Thirlmore said, catching sight of him in the crowd, and giving him a cordial hand-shake. "Glad to see you is no word for it! Peace, here is Guernsey. You have often heard of him. Except myself, he was the smartest chap in college. Guernsey, this is my wife," and the popular preacher turned away to speak to a number of others who were crowding about him.

"It flashed upon me a moment ago that you must be his wife," Guernsey said, as he shook hands with her. "I am glad I was right." It was the lady who had sat beside him.

"Mr. Guernsey!" she exclaimed, with sincere pleas-

ure. "I might have known who it was," she said, "I have heard so much of you."

"I am, or rather was, an invalid," he replied, "but I should have come had I known —" and he bowed and laughed.

Mrs. Thirlmore was looking elsewhere as he said it. Her husband had gone down from the platform, and was speaking with the blooming lady who had occupied the front seat. She had taken the hand of the minister in her own, and was talking eagerly to him.

"O, Mr. Thirlmore," she was saying, "this is *such* a treat! We had nothing but a dull old church in the country, with a dry old preacher. Law me! I hated for Sunday to come. It was all so pokey, you know. All we had was a big fiddle and a tuning-fork, and the sermons were two hours long. I had to chew fennel and caraway to keep awake. And you *will* come to see us soon again? Preachers must n't tell stories, — be sure and come."

Guernsey soon removed his eyes from this enthusiastic lady, and transferred them to Mrs. Thirlmore.

"Happy Thirlmore, to be so worshipped!" he said. "I suppose this idolater is but one of a thousand. What is her name?"

"I believe it is a Mrs. Gruffden," the other replied, with a shade of disdain. "She has never lived in a city before, and takes, I believe, a great interest in our church. Mr. Gruffden is one of our leading men. We shall be happy to have you call, Mr. Guernsey."

CHAPTER XXVII.

GUERNSEY MAKES HIMSELF AT HOME.

THIRLMORE had married Peace Vandyke the week after his graduation from the Seminary, and Steven Trent, who had just received his diploma from the medical college, was united to Revel at the same time by Dr. McMasters. Dr. Trent had settled himself in the same city in which his cousin was pastor, and Guernsey called at his modest home the Monday after his visit to the Church of the Holy Oriflamme. The husband was not at home, but Guernsey said to the young wife, as he introduced himself, "I feel, madam, as if I had known you all my life. Am I not correct when I add that, the moment you saw me, you could not remember when you had not known me?"

Mrs. Trent blushed and laughed, and almost admitted that it was so; there was something in Guernsey, of whom her husband had told her so much, which compelled her to truth. He had often visited at their house after that, but his strong liking for Mrs. Trent and Mrs. Trent's for him really seemed to them both, and from the first, as though it had always existed.

One evening, some weeks after his first coming to the city, Guernsey was, as usual, making himself at home at the house.

"I am sorry Steven had to go out," Mrs. Trent was saying. "A large part of his practice is among the poor, and he has often to visit out-of-the-way places and tenement buildings late at night."

"It is different with Thirlmore," Guernsey said. "He tells me he rarely visits. As he cannot call upon every one in his large flock, he calls on nobody. Whoever wants to see him must apply at his house. He has no time, he says, to peddle the Gospel from door to door."

Mrs. Trent's irrelevant reply was, "And you really do think she is a beauty?" She was not speaking of Thirlmore, but of Jean, her golden-headed girl baby, which was beginning to cut its teeth by this time, and lay upon her bosom, rosy, fat, staring at Guernsey with large eyes, and without a particle of politeness. The room in which they sat was a little back parlor, which was also Steven Trent's study and the dining-room. To judge by the cradle, it was the nursery also. There was a book-case and a sewing-machine and a wardrobe; a dressing-gown hung upon the back of an arm-chair, and piles of medical magazines lay upon the window-sill. Guernsey had the air of having lived there all his life. It may have been the framing in which Mrs. Trent and her baby were enclosed, something special in them, something peculiar in him, but Guernsey had a keener enjoyment of this mother and child than of any Madonna he had seen in Europe.

"This is by the oldest Master," he had said to himself, "and he never did better work." Then, seeing no reason against it he repeated the thought aloud. By this time, Mrs. Trent had come to be only less at home with Guernsey than he with her. She accepted, like every one else, his entire frankness as part of that charm of childhood in him which had fascinated even Mrs. Thirlmore from the moment when the two had been thrown together on the platform of the Holy Oriflamme.

"Trent is out, is he? O well, I can do without Trent," he said. "I am sorry for the Thirlmores," he added. He was seated upon a low chair near Mrs. Trent, and had been puffing out his cheeks for the baby to flatten down with its dimpled palms until from laughter all three had become apparently very much of the same age.

"Because they have no child?" replied Mrs. Trent. "So am I. But I want to tell you about Steven. You asked when you first came in —"

"So am I. Sorry, very sorry!" Guernsey repeated, and blew out his cheeks again for the baby, but he was not audacious enough to look up, and there was a sudden

color in the face of the mother. The tones of such a man convey all that is left unsaid. "I admire ambition —" Guernsey began. He must have felt that he was going too far, for he yielded to the lady as she interrupted him in a quiet but decided way, saying, —

"Steven has told you about our mission church. But he sees only the least part. When he told you how he helped to organize it with a dozen members, how we worshipped in a hall over a grocery until our little chapel was built, how we had to scour the whole district for children for the Sunday school, how he was forced to bring in people from alleys, attics, cellars, how — yes, how he had to beg almost every cent with which the chapel was built, — when he told you this, he told you the least of it all. And it was not the most interesting part even, when he explained how he had to help Mr. Brown, our minister, keep in the members who despaired of success, and keep out people like poor dear Mr. Vandoren."

"Mr. Vandoren?"

"Did you never meet Mr. Vandoren in Old Orange? A pale little man with sallow face, long brown hair, sad eyes, tremulous hands, pathetic tones? No? Well, he is the best and worst man I know. He was such a trouble to us! Because he is such a saint, you see. He was in the Seminary with Mr. Thirlmore. There is not a better or more self-sacrificing man alive. He is not connected," Mrs. Trent explained, "with any denomination. He says they are all wrong, worse than the Jewish church when Christ came. But I never heard such prayers. He attended our meetings, was thoroughly instructed in Scripture, was willing to give every cent he possessed. But he has all sorts of odd notions, and Mr. Brown and Steven had great trouble about it. That was only a part of Steven's trial. Some of the rich men who induced him to go into the enterprise have failed in business. A number of our best men had to go elsewhere for work. One or two of the most energetic turned out to be bad men. And then there was —"

"All sorts of troubles about the singing," interrupted

Guernsey. "I can imagine it all! Some of the trustees took offence. The physician whom Mr. Brown did not call in left in a huff. People at whose stores Mr. Brown did not trade, — I know everything by instinct, you see. There was a tailor, for one instance. He made a suit for Trent, and was a devoted friend of your church, speaking with superhuman power at prayer-meetings, praying until the rafters rang, until — what was it? Trent never told me about him, not a word, but I know that tailor by heart. The clothes did n't fit, the cloth was shoddy, Trent had the wickedness to go elsewhere next time, and he became your husband's determined enemy. Now, honor bright, was n't it so?" he demanded.

"Yes." Guernsey was so much like a precocious child that Mrs. Trent laughed too like a child. She looked so young and fresh! There was charm inexpressible in her very motherhood. "But don't talk so loud, Mr. Guernsey, you will wake baby. Is n't she a perfect picture?" she asked. The fire, before which they sat, cast a glow upon the rounded cheeks and rose-bud lips. The baby smiled in its sleep as she spoke, and the happy tears were in the mother's eyes as she lifted her face from kissing it again and again. "O it is a long, long story," she went on. "But the chief trouble about our church was — "

"That the money gave out," Guernsey added for her. The tribulation was deeper than in regard to the church. Trent was poor, already in debt, his practice was very large; but it was mainly among people who could pay little or nothing, and the young couple ought not to have married, it had been very imprudent.

"But who can blame him?" Guernsey demanded of himself, as he looked at Mrs. Trent. For she had raised her head, and was smiling bravely.

"There is a Mr. Tom Hammersley in our church," she said, "who is a great help to our minister and to Steven. Mr. Hammersley is a hard-working man and has little money, but he has a practical way of believing as well as working, which comforts Mr. Trent. Ah, Mr.

Guernsey, you know nothing about him! He is the noblest-hearted — "

"Tom Hammersley is?"

"No," she laughed, but with tears in her eyes, "my husband."

"Not a bit of it," exclaimed Guernsey, with a demure face. "How a wife can be so deluded is astonishing! You can easily find a person superior to Trent, Steven Trent! I can lay my hand upon somebody better than he is without leaving this room."

The lady laughed and colored, and said, "You never were more mistaken. It is Steven who has made me all I am. Before Aunt Rachel died, she fairly worshipped him. She lived with us, you know."

"By the by, what has become — excuse me — of your old place near college? Where you and Mrs. Thirlmore lived, I mean?"

"The estate is not settled yet," Mrs. Trent replied. "Mr. Thirlmore has been trying for a long time to arrange matters. He and Steven have a Mr. Gruffden to advise them. You knew him in college, — he is a lawyer in the city."

"Yes, and a politician also, and a rascal. I have no doubt I saw him," Guernsey explained, "at Thirlmore's church. He is an usher there, and a trustee. Is n't it astounding what brass will do? That fellow has not been at it more than a few years, and yet he has already secured a place in the city government, and is working to get higher. O, I know Gruffden perfectly, he is bold, peremptory, unblushing. That man goes everywhere, knows everybody, has something to say in regard to everything. Thirlmore tells me that he is the most energetic teacher in his Sunday school, and the clerk at the hotel where I am says that Gruffden is as fluent in ward-rooms as he is at church-meetings. How round and red he is! Did you ever see a leech?"

"A leech? O, don't!" the lady exclaimed, with a shudder; "he is considered one of the ablest of our young lawyers."

"Very able indeed, especially," Guernsey remarked, "in the power of holding on. He holds by the force of suction, and neither church nor state, corporation of any sort nor acquaintance, can throw him off. But we wont talk about him, nor about his wife, except that she seems to be one of those country brides who never recover from their first astonishment at the wonders of the city. She is too good for him, I have no doubt."

"I have seen her," Mrs. Trent said, "and she is very young and pretty. She admires Mr. Thirlmore exceedingly."

"Nothing more natural. But," Guernsey continued, "I must tell you about Macroy. Do you know? I had the curiosity to take the train last week and go all the way to his town to hear him. He has taken orders in the Episcopal Church, and has married a rich wife."

"Steven used to tell me about him when he was at Old Orange. He was an eloquent man," Mrs. Trent said. There was not a particle of bitterness in Guernsey's laughing comments upon people. She would as soon have charged a mocking-bird with censoriousness.

"You see I have nothing in the world to do," her visitor explained. "I have volumes of poetry, novels, dramas waiting at the tips of my fingers to be written out when I can settle down to it. My trouble is that" — I am cursed by having too much money, he was about to say, but he could no more violate good taste than he could lie, — and he remarked instead, "My crime is that I am idle at present. No, not that. Some people devote themselves to mineralogy. I have a classmate who cares nothing for anything in heaven and earth but conchology, — all sorts of shells, you know. One friend of mine has given himself entirely up to bugs. All that *I* care for is men, women, children. If I were a rascal I could make a fortune as a clairvoyant, I know people so well. Despise them? No. Hate them? Never. Mrs. Trent," Guernsey said, with sudden seriousness, "this little lump of roses and butter is the child of the eternal God; it is to live as long as its

Father in heaven, and is to develop into something more and more God-like for ever and ever. I love people, I love even Macroy, even Gruffden. Yes, love them, love them!"

Mrs. Trent looked steadily into the sincere eyes of the singular man. There was a certain power in his tones, too. "Steven says he is a genius," she thought, "a genius like Coleridge, like Shakespeare, and, I suppose —" But she could not reason it out.

"They used to say in college," the other went on, "that I had insight into language, philosophy, mathematics. It is no merit; God and suffering have made me so. But books be hanged! I detest books! It is men and women who write books, and I prefer going to the fountain-head of things. If I have any genius, I intend giving it to the understanding every Tom and Mary I meet. Because every soul of them has something lovable, and" — the speaker's levity passed into an indescribable pathos, as he slowly added — "I know, because I love." But that which saved Guernsey, then as always, was his transparent sincerity. He might seem peculiar; but you could no more doubt him, hesitate even in regard to him, than you could in regard to a bee or a flower.

"You were speaking about Mr. Macroy," his companion said, after quite a silence.

"Yes, Macroy!" Guernsey's face was bright again with boyish fun. "Poor fellow! he has more wrappings than a mummy. You have to peel off from him first his denomination; then the stone and plaster of his fine church building; next the silks of his social standing; then the portentous gown and mannerism of his clergymanhood; then the deep bow-wow-wow of his elocution. There is a man at the core of the wrappings! But, bless me, death turns our wrappings to dust, every shred and last fig-leaf; the naked man comes out at last, thank God! My dear Mrs. Trent, your husband has hardly enough wrapping, as it is, decently to clothe his soul."

The loving woman lifted a happy face to her compan-

ion; her eyes were full of tears, for Trent had endured a good deal. "I am so glad," she said, "that there are two of us who understand him."

"I wish Steven would come home," she added after a while.

"I don't," Guernsey said, "for I want to tell you about Thirlmore. He is a genuine man. Purely as a man. Poor old Grumbles is not more purely and exclusively flesh and blood, only Thirlmore has a ton or so more of human nature than Grumbles. He is a complete specimen, strongly, symmetrically, perfectly, beautifully selfish! He is as unique of his kind as Antinous. His lines are so simple that baby here could understand him. His wife understands him."

"Peace has changed, has grown, has improv—" Mrs. Trent began, but her companion arrested her with truthful eyes and warning finger.

"Developed, you intended to say. So she has. I am with her very often. What a woman she is! She has read everything, knows everything. Thirlmore is strong in a certain sense. He uses his intellect as a big lumber-man does his axe; the axe is little, but the man is big, and Mrs. Thirlmore sharpens his axe. Mrs. Trent," Guernsey added, with great seriousness, "your sister is, in certain senses, the most remarkable woman I have ever met. She belongs to a higher grade than her husband. He is big and strong, and yet he is but the granite pedestal; his wife is the marble statue poised upon it; her grain as well as gradé is superior to his."

"Aunt Rachel thought she was like her German grandfather," the other remarked.

"Professor Rodenstein? I know! Mrs. Thirlmore was delighted when she found that I was familiar with his books. Not that I have read them," Guernsey explained, "but I know his ideas. She and I talked it all over. Your grandpapa was a radical with a vengeance; he was down upon the religious sentiment in us, the only attribute by which we differ from the dogs, *die Empfindsamkeit! das Gefühl!* you should have heard us rattling the words like peas in a bladder."

"She is very beautiful," the other said.

"Some women," Guernsey added after a while, "are made beautiful by their social standing, their wealth, their millinery, and all that. Mere outside cosmetics of various kinds, you observe. I know a woman," the gentleman said with great gravity, "who is made very beautiful by her heart. She is very, very lovely, and tortures shall not wring her name from my lips. But Mrs. Thirlmore is moulded by her intellect. I admire her exceedingly, and I am deeply interested in her. Yes, Professor Rodney told me long ago about your grandfather Rodenstein. He knew him well, had read his books, admired his audacity, appreciated even his radicalism, it was so keen and vehement. And Trent tells me Professor Rodenstein's daughter was your mother! Very well; I know now where you and your sister came from. I am curious as to where you are going."

"Going?" Mrs. Trent asked.

"Not you. I know where *you* are going." Guernsey said it with happy eyes, standing before her and looking down upon her as she sat, her babe in her lap. "But I do not know about your sister. Twins! Great heavens! She is like an arrow feathered from an eagle's wing and tipped with jasmine, and in full flight from a strong bow. That is, if you can imagine an arrow which urges itself on faster and faster. Up to date, she has come swift and far. Where is she going? that is the question."

But Steven Trent came in just then. He was evidently tired out. After greeting Guernsey he stooped down to kiss his baby, but he had to kiss his wife in stooping and in rising. Guernsey enjoyed it as much as they, but he said, as he prepared to leave, "Baby and I are not glad to see you, Trent. We were anxious to hear what your wife was about to say."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MRS. THIRLMORE.

MRS. THIRLMORE was standing one winter evening looking out of the window of her parlor. It was a handsome house fronting upon a fashionable park, and had been furnished throughout according to her own taste. The large room in which she stood was supplied with heavy curtains, a grand piano, presented to her by the ladies of the Holy Oriflamme, chairs, sofas, and tables of the latest style, and a few bronzes and fine engravings. Behind opened a library, where a fire burned in an open grate. The book-cases were filled with volumes of her own selection, while the tables were heaped with the latest magazines. A broad door of glass opened beyond into a small conservatory, where were a number of plants in bloom, and an orange-tree in full fruit, the gift from the South of a warm admirer of Mr. Thirlmore who attended his church on Sunday each winter, having the advantage of the best lectures, concerts, operas, and actors through the following week.

"I wish he would come," she said. "Although," she added, "I am not a Mariana in the moated grange. Except that I am tired of everything. But it was very grand indeed at first." She walked through the parlor glancing about her. There were no children to put out of place a vase upon the mantel, a shell or a statuette upon the tables. Entering the library she unlocked the doors, took out a volume, yawned, and replaced it upon the shelf. Then she glanced over the illustrated papers lying upon a lounge, and opened and shut a magazine. "It is very interesting," she said, "if I did not know it all by heart. If somebody would write something new!"

She passed into the conservatory, and looked to the right hand and to the left. From the room below came

the sound of voices. "Patsy has some of her relations with her, I suppose," she said, "and what they cannot eat they will take away under their water-proofs. I have given up watching and fighting. If it is n't one girl, it will be another. The one that don't steal will get drunk; the one that don't lie will be impertinent; the one that is not sick all the time is too slovenly to have in the house."

Then she strolled back into the parlor, seated herself at the piano, played and sang a little, but soon turned herself from the instrument. "I wish I had an enthusiasm for music," she said, "or for painting. If one could get up a passion for modelling in clay, for instance. Yet I am not a fool," and she was vaguely conscious that she had, for a long time now, taken herself in hand instead, as the artist takes the clay, — that she had centred upon her own development the steady energy of her singular intellect. "Let us see how we have succeeded," she said, and, crossing the room, she stood looking at herself in the mirror, which reached from floor to ceiling. She was so dressed that the eye would not be diverted from herself to what she wore. So gloved, if the word may be used, from head to foot, that a gentleman at least would have been charmed with the result, while unable to explain to his mother or sister an hour after what was the cut, color, or fashion of an article worn by her.

"Well?" she demanded of her reflection in the glass. If it could have spoken it would have replied, "You can see for yourself. Your forehead is intellectual, but not too high. Had your brown hair been blacker, it would have made your pure complexion seem too pallid. Your features are possibly too sharply chiselled. Your power lies in your eyes, my dear. Some women have bright eyes. Mr. Guernsey's eyes become as bright as those of a squirrel, when he is in that mood. Your eyes are too deep to be bright. Your sister Revel has soft eyes, pleading eyes, — yours are not. There is a lack in us, my dear, but what is it?"

There was a ring at the door, and soon after Mr.

Guernsey limped in. Evidently he was as much at home with Mrs. Thirlmore as with her sister. People were certain to ask of him, "He is a rich man, is n't he?" — and the answer always was, "I had not thought of it, but I suppose he must be." But the assumption was not based upon merely the quality or the fit of his clothes. His intellectual superiority was so much a part of himself, that it was a thing taken for granted, as much as his limp, his fun, his saying what he pleased. Yet the superiority of Guernsey lay, really, back of his genius. He was fearless, because he was thoroughly sincere; and he was sincere, because he was purer than most women even. In developing and stimulating his brain, the fierce fires of his intense suffering had done that much also for the gold of the rest of his nature, had made and kept it pure. It was natural that he should seem so much like a child; and, like a child, it was all the same to Guernsey whom he was with. Old Mr. and Mrs. Grumbles or Professor Rodney, Aurora Ann or Queen Victoria, what was it to a man able to live as he did on the abundant riches of his own nature? Not that he did not heartily enjoy people, but with the glee there was also the royal impartiality of a babe, on his part, toward whomsoever he was with. Steven Trent was not far wrong when he said one day to his wife, "Guernsey's terrible pain has done for him in advance a large part of what only death will do for the rest of us."

Mrs. Thirlmore had heard much about the college genius before she married, but he would have felt at home with her just as much if they had never known of each other before. He had nothing in particular to do, and was a frequent visitor at the house of Thirlmore. There was no lack of matter to talk about. It was all one to him, — his travels in Europe, literature, politics, philosophy, science, art, current news, gossip, religion, fashion, music, — he seemed to be equally informed, equally interested, in one thing as another. He was so frank also, so entirely unprejudiced, so full of humor, so willing to listen as well as talk, that Mrs. Thirlmore was

as much more fascinated with him than old Mrs. Grumbles or Aurora Ann, as her appreciation of him was deeper and keener.

"I do n't ask for Thirlmore," he said, as he talked on this occasion, "because he don't want to see me, even if he is in and is n't busy. Besides, Thirlmore is out with me, because I don't come as often as I might to hear him preach. I go to hear Trent's preacher, plain Mr. Brown. You see," he added, with his innocent eyes, "I know all that Thirlmore has to say already. He stands and delivers it in that majestic, colloquial way of his, as if it were something wonderful. Bless you, my dear lady, I keep a dozen sentences ahead of him the whole time. From the moment he takes his text I can tell every syllable he is going to say to the end. Please don't be angry with me." He would have said it none the less, but he knew her too well not to feel entirely safe. She regarded her husband as, practically, the most successful of men; but from the hour she saw this visitor he was to her, as Guernsey was to himself, a man who looked down upon the popular preacher from a higher level. Her conceptions of things were so clear, that she never even doubted it. She sat looking at him.

And she was, in some respects, the most interesting woman in his experience. "Some women," he said, "have eyes, alas! like a snake, — generally they are like those of a seal, — but," he added to himself as he looked into hers, "your eyes I never saw before. Let me add them up. They ask, but never answer. *Item*, your eyes used to ask everybody you met. From long habit they do so still, but it is with a hopelessness of learning anything from anybody; it is that which is saddening them so. You are coming to be like the Sphynx, my dear lady; you are getting to look over the heads of people, beyond them, far away. Beware that your eyes do not become stony. *Item*, you want to know, you poor thing So did Eve. You tried books, did you? They have merely quickened thirst. Books can satisfy the

mind — a little. Thirlmore must satisfy her heart. Can he?"

Mrs. Thirlmore was saying something all this time, but her visitor was so much more interested in her than in what she was saying that, under the aspect of attention, he continued murmuring to himself, — "You wanted to be a De Staël, did you? — a Madame Dudevant, even? First the hunger of the heart; then the hunger, deadlier yet, of the intellect; last, and driest, deadliest of all, the hunger of the soul. *Item* and *summa*, your eyes are pleading for food for your soul."

But the lady was saying, — "Mr. Thirlmore has had a singular history, as you know. He grew up on an out-of-the-way farm in Vermont, under an opinionated old Scotch uncle and a disappointed and coarse-grained mother. They made him work very hard, he tells me. He is an only child. They did not pet him, and he had no associate of his own age; his mother was really the only woman he knew; and he became a sturdy, self-reliant boy. Then he went to college."

At this moment an enormous old dog walked gravely into the room, and looked at Guernsey; then he drew nearer, with an interrogatory wag of his tail; but he did not seem to be on friendly terms with the lady.

"Your master is down town, Brute," she said sharply. "Go out, sir!" And as the dog turned and marched gravely out, she said, "Mr. Thirlmore has a passion for animals. He says he is as sure they have souls as anybody. This is an old animal that he used to have on his farm. I detest dogs as much as I do cats," and she arose and shut the door.

"I saw Thirlmore when he came to Old Orange. I remember everything perfectly, — too well, — it is a defect of mine," Guernsey said; "and he was — you must forgive me — the roughest person I had ever seen."

"Was he? Then," the lady continued, "I was right in thinking that he improved wonderfully in Old Orange. Even within my own knowledge I never saw such a change in any person. No, it was not change; it was

development. He was growing rapidly as it was, when circumstances suddenly confirmed his blind hopes in regard to himself. Then we were married."

"And you have influenced him more than any one else. He would have been a vigorous man in any case, but," Guernsey said, "you have given direction to his life." The speaker looked at her with sudden, arrested attention for a moment as he said it.

"Yes," she said calmly; "and then," she proceeded, "he took charge of the Oriflamme Church. He influences it, and —"

"It influences him, and powerfully," her visitor said for her. "Because the mutual effect is of the same sort. I understand it all. The salary —"

"I am happy to say he is not dependent upon the church," the other interrupted. "His uncle is said to be rich."

"Is he not Trent's uncle also?" Guernsey asked, because he already knew. "Never mind; I understand," he added.

He had heard enough of Donald McGregor to need no explanation. The old Scotchman had spent a Sabbath in the city soon after the settlement of his nephews, hearing Thirlmore in the morning. He made no comment to or upon him during his brief stay; but when he got home he said to Elspeth, after supper, "Church and a', he is as much of a Tummas Chawlmers as a mon can get to be in this country." And he went to his room and read over the will bequeathing him everything.

"It has accumulated until it is an awfu' sight of money," he said to himself; "but a mon like that can do a wonderful deal of good. Placed as he is, too." There was no more hesitation; before the next night the will had been duly dated, signed, attested by witnesses.

"His uncle," Mrs. Thirlmore now said, "has not given him anything beyond his education. But he will. The people know it, and I am glad they do. It makes Mr. Thirlmore independent of them."

"I understand it, and the influence of the church on

him, too," Guernsey said. "Yes, the fine building, the crowd, the music, the newspaper mention, the congratulations after sermon, the salutations along the street, the appeals to him to lecture! Why," the other laughed, "Thirlmore lifts the Oriflamme Church to his lips every Sunday as if it were a hogshead of brandy, — drains it dry. Of course it stimulates him! I think his association with Trent has influenced him too," Guernsey added.

"Do you?" There was a certain disdain upon the lips of the lady in asking it.

"Yes," said Guernsey, "they are utterly unlike, and they have mutually repelled each other farther apart; each has confirmed the other in his own way. You think so, do you not?"

"Mr. Trent," was the answer, "is a good man, but, to my taste, he is too emotional. Mr. Thirlmore is a practical man instead, — a vigorous man. See," the wife continued, "how the multitude flock to hear him." But she was asking eagerly the opinion of the other, with her eyes on his as she said it.

So much so that Guernsey answered, "Vigorous? O, yes; of his kind, very much so. Thirlmore is a definite species of man. I never saw a more perfect specimen of the species. Your husband loves and relies supremely upon himself. Trent loves and relies supremely and utterly upon God!"

It was not the first time that Guernsey had said things sharp, swift, not to be taken back. Like any other self-evident truth, now, as on other occasions of the kind, his axiom stirred the lady. Queens of her kind love any trumpet blast shrill and clear.

"Mr. Thirlmore agrees with me," she said, "that the Oriflamme is merely a gathering of people like a legislature, a congress, — only that it is the preacher who has to draw them together, to hold them together. My poor old Grandfather Vandyke had what you call a church. A church! They deliberately starved him. Fifty years of slow starvation! From my earliest childhood did not

I know of the miserable privations, to say nothing of the meannesses, the whining nonsense? The only thing that relieved the deadly dulness was the bitter squabbling. I think I know!"

The lady was excited, but not warmed. Guernsey grew more interested in her, not in what she was saying. "Your intensity," he thought, "is not ardor, but extreme cold burns like fire. Icicles sparkle as well as cinders from a furnace. I am glad to know you."

All that he said was, "You told him, then, that a church is nothing more than a factory, an insurance company, a steamship? And that he is a sensible man so far as he runs it like a sea-captain, bank president, whatever it is?"

"How did you know?" she demanded. "Yes, I did. No, I did not, for I told him that it was harder to manage a church when nobody except the singers or the sexton were paid to come, and where all sorts of sentimentalities were mixed up with it all."

"Thirlmore must be adroit then, as well as strong. And," Guernsey added, "it took some time with you both to see things in a sensible light? Yes, and —"

But Mr. Gruffden came in at this moment, globular and red, full of bustle, and, as he always was, in a copious perspiration. "Good evening, Mrs. Thirlmore," he said, refusing to take a seat. "Glad to see you Mr. Guernsey, but Mrs. Gruffden is at the door in the carriage, and crazy to get to the theatre in good time. You know you promised to go, Mrs. Thirlmore."

Guernsey declined to accompany them, with something in his face which caused Gruffden, the shrewdest of men in his way, to ask, "What are you up to now, Mr. Guernsey?"

But the other only laughed and limped away, saying to himself as he went, "I don't know what play you are going to see, but I'll bet my life I am about constructing one in reality which will show a finer plot. I do not mean anything that I intend to write. I am about seeing, but not on paper, an epic, — yes, and it will be an

idyl, a tragedy, a comedy, and, best of all, a history. Fiction? Bah! Give me people as they are! They make their own inevitable *dénouement!*"

His face was so bright as he went, that people turned to look at him, saying, "I wish I knew who you are!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

GUERNSEY TURNS BURGLAR.

ONE morning about a month after Guernsey's visit to Mrs. Thirlmore, Steven Trent begged his wife not to expect him back until the evening, and hastened to his office from the breakfast-table. He had lain wide awake the night through, but as still as though he were dead for fear of waking his wife, who was tired enough after nursing her Jean and caring for her household all day. And yet, as he lay, his agonies were as those of the dying instead. Under his cheerful aspect at the table his wife read him like an open book; but she had inherited from her aunt, at least, the Sunday raiment of her gladness of aspect when sorely tried, and the wife seemed as happy as a woman can be. Not that she slept sweetly, as her husband imagined, but that she had a stronger nature than her aunt, and loved her husband with an affection which Miss Rachel was not capable of giving even to God.

When Trent reached his office, he locked himself in. People came during the day, and knocked and knocked and went away. He was aware of them only as he would have been of the rain beating upon the roof. So far, he had not failed to do what he could for any who applied, but he had to-day such desperate need of help himself that he could attend to nothing else. At times, he walked up and down his little office, telling to unseen

ears the story of his necessities. Then he would sit down to see what was said to him in reply in Scripture. The hours passed by, the day was darkening toward its close, but he had not observed it.

But now there came another knocking. It ceased and then was renewed more vigorously than any yet. Then it ceased and he had almost forgotten it, when there was a sound at one of his windows. Some one had climbed a fence, had gone to the rear of the building, and, as Trent looked up mechanically, the sash was lifted from without, and he saw the face of Guernsey beaming upon him. It was so bright and eager that, but for a spice of malicious satisfaction in it, the countenance was as that of an angel coming to his help.

"You blessed old hermit!" Guernsey exclaimed, and scrambled in uninvited. "As if," he added, as he took a seat, panting and wiping his forehead, "you could keep *me* out! Professor Rodney never succeeded at that. He used to pick out bits of his confounded mathematics which were harder to get into than a bank vault. What good did it do? Bless you, I always saw the combination at a glance, and," with a gleeful laugh, "in I went. It was the same, you know, with the languages, with natural science, with metaphysics, and all of the Old Orange conundrums. I can't be kept out! If I cared to do it, I believe I could crawl even into Thirlmore's heart. No, I could n't, I doubt if God can do that! But I could attempt anything to-day. Something has happened. I heard of it by mail, and am so happy that I had to get at you. Did you know that I inherited an awful lot of money? But halloo, what is the matter?"

The room was dark, and, coming in suddenly out of the glare of the sunset, Guernsey had not at first seen his friend distinctly, especially as he was so full of his tidings. Trent was listening to him with a smile, but Guernsey saw that he seemed to be exhausted as from illness, or a severe struggle. His hair was disordered, his face was pallid, he had that in his eyes as if he were far away from his visitor.

"My dear fellow," Guernsey said, "what is it?" He had forgotten everything else, and was eager to know. Now, as always, he had what would have been astounding impertinence in even a child, but there was that in the man which made his question seem natural. To Trent it would have been like resenting a beeeze because it was cool, or a burst of sunshine when he had preferred seclusion. But it took Guernsey some time to induce the other to explain.

"You have a great trouble," he said at last. "Generally you have to wait. I was talking about a combination lock, but there is a kind of lock which is so set inside a bank safe that it opens the door from within when the hour for which it is set has come. Whoever storms at things outside, there is no getting in half a second before the moment arrives. If you will wait your difficulty, trouble, whatever it is, will unlock itself from within when the time comes. In this case *I* can't wait, I have got too much on hand. Tell me everything. I will find out. Nothing prevents my getting in, and you know it," and Guernsey settled himself in his chair to listen.

Steven Trent was not a weak man, but he was tired. He would have opened himself to no other, but there was a certain womanly something in Guernsey's sympathy which he could not resist.

"I have not told Revel," he said, almost as if to himself. "She can do nothing. Why should I distress her?"

"As if you could hide anything from her!" the other ejaculated. "Tell us about it, Trent. Although," Guernsey added, with a shadow beginning to darken his gladness, "I am afraid I can guess what it is already."

And so Trent told him the whole story. It seemed impossible to stop when he had once begun. Trent had been unable to keep out of debt in Old Orange, and at the medical college. Under pressure of circumstances, he had pledged himself beyond his means toward his mission church, but he had been the leading layman in

reference thereto, and how could he help it? He had earned more than enough in his practice, but to collect it was impossible. In his emergency he had applied to his uncle.

"Well?" Guernsey asked, and with such interest that Trent looked at him curious to understand, and began, "He wrote back —"

"A rough refusal," Guernsey completed the sentence for him. "Of course he did!" with glee. "He is a character in a drama I have on hand, and I knew he was that sort of man. Glad of it!"

But apart from that, and from the moment when Trent began, Guernsey's face had grown more and more troubled. It clouded even to tears as, in the passion of his distress, the husband told of the privation in his household. "Revel is an angel of God," he said; "for she does more than is in a mortal to hide her anxiety. But we — we are soon to have another baby, and our trouble is beginning to tell upon her. She knows only a small part. Of course we ought not to have married when we did, but it happened in this way." And Trent explained how he had been deceived into purchasing a partnership with a physician of long standing, who had swindled him in the end. "I was assured that my income would be sufficient, and she yielded at last," he said; "but now I cannot even collect —"

"Of course she did! Why, man," Guernsey said, with a return of his glee, "you have acted according to your ardent nature; but even God will not change the inevitable results. Have you forgotten your mathematics? Pray? Yes, but pray that God will make you the kind of man who produces success as cause produces effect everywhere else." But Guernsey's face fell again as he spoke. He was singularly disconcerted.

"I came to tell you something," he mourned, "and I thought it was the grandest thing going. Cause and effect? What do we know of such things? My good news turns out to be mathematically the worst thing possible." And Guernsey had sunk down in his chair, and was actually crying.

Trent did not observe it. He was thinking of a debt which he owed to a friend who was, and had long been, in painful need of the money. His indebtedness was like the belt of spikes worn by an anchorite; but this special spike rankled in his lacerated flesh worst of all. "If an infinite God could have heard my years of supplication, and helped me to pay at least that," he thought. "And yet what is there but the bitterness and blackness of utter despair in going from God?"

And then he saw how grieved Guernsey was. "Dear friend," he said, "don't, please don't! It will all be right. You know only a little part of my trouble; but I do not despair. Listen. I believe in God, and—"

But Trent could say no more. Guernsey's terrible pain might come on. There was that which was infinitely more trying to the young doctor than his debts. These were already a disgrace to him, threatening to stop his practice and ruin him as a man. And, then, the present privation and coming agony of Revel! But while these things were closing in upon him to crush him to death, there was something which was worse than death. God had forsaken him! He walked up and down. Guernsey had disappeared, for the moment, with all the world beside. He stopped, and looked steadily as at some one who confronted him in the darkening room.

"Why do you stand here," he was demanding, although with sealed lips, "and hear and yet refuse to help me? If you were a marble god, could you have been more cold, silent, motionless? What do you *do* to help me—"

Guernsey had lifted his head, and was looking into the face of his friend. There was a flash across it of fierce despair. The lips curled in almost disgust; and the uninvited intruder, unlocking and then closing the door softly behind him, stole silently out.

"I have known people who were poisoned by the very smell of strawberries," Guernsey said, as he limped sorrowfully away. "And Heaven sees, I suppose, that

money would have deadly venom in it for Trent, poor fellow. Moreover, it is better, like a lizard or an eagle, not to know God at all than, like Trent and the devils, to know and not submit. But, ah me! how unfortunate it is about my money!"

If Guernsey could have known how unfortunate it was, he would have been as desperate as Steven Trent. For *he* was desperate! His load of debt was so great, it had weighed upon him so long, he had struggled so painfully, that, as his friend left the office, the unhappy man fell upon his knees again, and sank until he lay prostrate upon the floor. It was as when one can do no more, and simply surrenders at death.

We know not what angels sweep down to lift us when we pass out of our own hands in dying; but the exhausted man was aware, after a while, that his wife was seated on the floor beside him, and had taken his head upon her lap. She had stolen in through the door, which he had forgotten to lock after Guernsey; and she was whispering to her husband between her kisses, while the tears dropped upon his face. But she had no money; she hardly had a suggestion. The utmost she had was her woman's faith in God, but it was enough for both.

"Did you see Mr. Guernsey?" Mrs. Trent asked her husband the next morning at breakfast. "He was here yesterday in search of you. It was not convenient for me to see him, but he *would* come in! He was as happy as a school-boy. All his money was gone, he told me; and he read me parts of a long letter from some agent of his, telling about defalcations, bad investments, and I do not know what. He assured me that he had never been happier in his life. When he was rich, he could not settle himself down to work. Now he was going to write, he said, with a vengeance. Did you ever know such a man! He charms you like a child, like a beautiful woman, like — I do not know what," Mrs. Trent added, with a laugh, trying to interest her husband.

"Here is a note, — a man from the hotel gave it to me before breakfast," Trent said; and he read: —

"Good by, Trent, dear old fellow, for I am gone! I must see about business; but that is not all. You and your guardian angel of a wife know about the books I wanted to write. Well, I am poor now, and am gone away to write like a thunder-storm; and, better than that, I have a drama to superintend. There are four men of us, and two women, who are playing our part in it night and day. I am nearly sure as to my books, but of my play I am perfectly so, for at last it is God who is composing it! Good by!

"GUERNSEY."

"Genius is to madness near allied," Trent quoted, as he folded the note. "What do you think, Revel?"

"I think I understand Mr. Guernsey," she replied, as she reached her hand for the missive. "Yes, I am almost certain I do." And she kissed her baby in order to hide her face from her husband.

CHAPTER XXX.

VANDOREN.

WITHIN a month after the departure of Guernsey, Steven Trent had a long and joyous letter from him. "Yes, the money is all gone," he wrote in conclusion. "Stupidity lost some, rascality stole the rest; but my own negligence would have tempted a Shakespeare to be a fool and a St. John to be a scoundrel. Anyhow, it is gone. All that is left me is a little island off the Carolina coast, a house not much larger than a hen-coop, the negro mammy who let me fall when I was a baby and hurt my spine, a ream or so of foolscap, a bottle of ink, and a box of pens." And then the writer gave a catalogue of the books he intended to publish. "I have got a trunk full of manuscripts," he wrote, —

"all sorts of odds and ends, which I struck off, some of them, in the white heat of my pain. I think they have the intensity thereof."

But Trent was too much absorbed in his own matters to think much more about it until he received, some time after, a volume of his friend's poetry. He read it aloud to his wife as she nursed her new baby.

"Surely this is poetry!" he said, as he read it; "or is it because it is Guernsey himself, and we love him so much?"

But the author's friends were not left long in doubt. Very soon, and by almost unanimous acclamation, the press hailed in Guernsey the appearance at last of a poet of the grade of Shelley and Coleridge. It was not a question to be discussed, but a certainty to be rejoiced in. Gold is gold; people know a diamond when they see it: the originality was merely the peculiar yellow of the gold, the tint of the diamond; as to the nature and value of the poetry no one was in suspense. The volume became the literary sensation of the day.

In its wake came a novel by the same author. It had not a feature in common with the poems, but was intensely realistic, — its tragedy as natural as tears, and its humor as spontaneous as the laughter of a child. The volume made a greater success than its predecessor. In a little while its men and women had become living members, so to speak, of a thousand households. Then, as time rolled on, came a play.

"A leading actor has been to see me," Guernsey wrote, "and he tells me that, with some changes, he can make a success of it upon the stage. He promises tremendous pecuniary results, but I do not know. My best drama, epic, idyl, is not finished yet. The actors are unconsciously acting it out every day, and I am watching the unfolding of the plot from behind the curtains of my little box in the grand theatre of the world. For, now I think of it, I should have said it was an opera, — opera comic and tragic. You will know of it in due time, old fellow. My love to little Guernsey, the new baby. Tell Mrs. Revel, please, not to drop him."

Mention has been made of Vandoren as a student of the Seminary, as well as an ardent but crotchety friend of Steven Trent in his effort to build up the mission church. He had been a printer before going to Old Orange, and had given up his trade to prepare for the ministry. No man in the Seminary had devoted himself to the study of church history as he had done, and this study had inspired him with disgust for the members, even while it deepened his faith in the Head of the Church. In despair of men, whatever their nation or era, he had concentrated himself later upon the study of the Bible, going to the deepest depths of the original Hebrew and Greek. The result of this was the vehement adoption of certain views which prevented his ministry, or membership, in any church. He had gone back, therefore, to his type-setting. So intensely, however, had he given himself to his religious opinions, that he had small time or temper for work. Moreover, the largest part of his printing was of books setting forth his peculiar ideas, for which the sale was very small. Whenever he went to church it was to hear Mr. Brown, Dr. Trent's pastor. As a rule he spent his Sundays at home.

It so happened during the week in which Guernsey's drama was brought out in the leading theatre of the city, that Vandoren's spirit was so stirred within him that he could not abide at home; and Sunday morning found him at the church of the Holy Oriflamme. Once only had he entered its doors; and then it was to recoil with such loathing, that nothing but a settled purpose would have admitted of his coming again. He stole in with the earliest arrivals, took a front seat in the gallery, and settled himself to make a full, thorough, and final examination, as a judge upon his bench, of the whole case.

The building soon became crowded, galleries, aisles, and all, to its utmost capacity. As Vandoren observed the multitudes of men streaming in, especially of young men, bright-faced, intelligent, full of energy, capable of

being so easily influenced for good or evil, themselves to be so powerful a force on others, his soul flamed within him. But the chorus choir broke forth into song from out their verdurous grove. To the reading of the Scripture Vandoren listened with reverent interest; to the prayer which followed he soon ceased to hearken, giving himself up instead to his own fervent supplications. After the singing which ensued, and to which he yielded scant attention, came the sermon. Not long before, Thirlmore had preached a series upon "Sacred Stupidity," in which he had smitten at whatever he disliked, and there was a great deal of it, among Christians. It had been, Mr. Gruffden declared often and enthusiastically, "a hit at the saints straight from the shoulder," and had added wonderfully to the popularity of the preacher. In order to balance things, and to prove that he was not afraid of any class, Thirlmore was now engaged upon a series on "The Scoundrelisms of the Day."

"It is not as good as the other series," Mr. Gruffden had hastened to say in general conversation. "Then Thirlmore struck with his right fist, and this is a sort of back-hander at outsiders with his left, you see. Besides, bless me, we do not pretend to be saints, do we?"

Bending forward over the edge of the gallery, Vandoren weighed every word as it was deliberately laid down like law from the desk. Almost from the outset Thirlmore's eye was arrested by the face, pale, thin, intense, of the enthusiast in front of him. It was impossible for any one not to distinguish Vandoren from the florid, fashionable, careless hearers which crowded him behind and upon either side. Nor was it because he was dressed in seedy black; for he was very poor, any one could see that in the worn face, as well as clothing. The long, lank hair fell away from his high, narrow temples; the scantily bearded cheek and chin were as tense as the eyes which never stirred from the preacher; there was such an outer expression of the inner force of the man, that it silently compelled the recognition of Thirlmore, as of many others.

From the day when Thirlmore was first thrown with his cousin from the South, he had, as has been before remarked, an impulse to assert himself against him. While at Old Orange this feeling had grown with his growth. In fact every man he met was, in his imagination, a rival who sought to outdo him, until his spirit of self-assertion had become the nature of the man. With other ministers, of whatsoever denomination, he had as little to do as possible. Very rarely, indeed, did he attend any service in which he was not to be the only actor. He now knew who Vandoren was, and, in the moment of seeing him, he recognized in him an intruder among the multitude who were there merely to accept, to admire, and to applaud whatever he might do or say. This keen-eyed, sad-visaged spy in the camp was an enemy! Instantly, by the unconscious habit of his life, he hastened to assert himself against him. Vandoren would have been shocked in any case; but the preacher took pleasure in adding to his manuscript as he went along things which could not fail to horrify as well as astonish. And, as usual, it lay in the tone, the manner, the innuendo, the significant gesture and pause for approval, as much as in anything else. Somehow Vandoren got the impression that the rascalities delineated were, in the opinion of the preacher, mere mistakes, — the irrepressible overflowings of an exuberant nature, which was good, as a rule. The worst men were only bad boys, whom a little spanking would convert into heroes. There was the briefest allusion in the end to the need of help from God; and when the vast congregation broke up, laughing, talking, delighted with themselves and the speaker, Vandoren, disgusted beyond hope of accomplishing what he had proposed when he came, determined to go home without speaking to Thirlmore.

But he stood for a moment looking down upon the dispersing people. A cluster of admiring friends were congratulating the preacher upon the platform, while others lingered below waiting for an opportunity to do so. Near Vandoren there chanced to be waiting a

stately old lady, handsomely dressed. She held the arm of a younger and more plainly clad woman, and in a few moments Vandoren heard her say to her friend, "There she is. That lady with the blue in her bonnet; that is Mrs. Gruffden!"

There was such peculiar meaning in her manner that the pietist glanced in the direction indicated. The lady was large and fair, with a rosy and innocent face. It may have been something in her dress, in her bearing, but she reminded Vandoren of pictures he had seen of hay-making maidens and Arcadian shepherdesses. She was very beautiful in her rural way, but Vandoren did not endure to look further, did not care to speak to Thirlmore as he had intended, and went back to his humble home over his printing-office, to his Bible and his knees.

CHAPTER XXXI.

NATHAN AND DAVID.

THE Monday evening after the visit of Vandoren to the Holy Oriflamme, Thirlmore chanced, which was not often the case, to be alone with his wife in their library. The lady was standing beside the table, in perfect and elastic health. Her husband, lounging in an easy-chair, was in dressing-gown and slippers. He had just eaten a hearty dinner, a cigar was between his teeth, his big dog, Brute, lay beside him upon the floor; and it was plain that Thirlmore weighed a good many more pounds than he had done the year before. Possibly he was somewhat the coarser for it, but he seemed to be in excellent humor.

"Why can't you sit down, Peace?" he demanded. "You have had your drive, have dropped in upon your milliner, have visited the art stores. Yes, and you have

written to Guernsey, and have had a reply from that great author whom you so adore. What wretched balderdash he does write! I could n't understand a word of it."

"I did not expect you to like him," the lady replied.

"And," Thirlmore continued indolently, "you have read your rapturous essay upon Guernsey before — what do you call your club? the latter-day Amazons? the New Women? What is it? Why can you not sit down a little? Why not sheathe for a moment your eternal sharpness? Why not vouchsafe me your company?"

"There are two of you." It was said with perfect quietness.

Thirlmore laid his hand upon the head of his dog. "I have no child," he replied.

His wife's face was from him. She lifted her head. Her erect carriage was part of her singular charm, and she reared herself unconsciously as he spoke. Evidently there was much behind it all, but Thirlmore's mood had clouded.

"Brute, old dog!" he said. The animal had become gray of color as well as infirm. With some difficulty it sat up, laid its nose in its master's hand, slowly switching its bushy tail as it looked into his eyes with that absolute devotion which Thirlmore enjoyed most of all things on earth, and which he found in its perfection only in Brute, to whom he now said, "What do you think I want those people to come crowding about me for, after I have done preaching, — shaking hands, going into ecstasies? I am tired of it, and I wish I had you to make a dash at them. Heh, old fellow! I 'll get the sexton to turn you in with the benediction. Imagine the people scampering!" But he did not laugh.

"Your cordial human nature does most of it," his wife said. And added quickly, "But, yes. I know, it is an affair of mantle and buskin. The Greek actors wore masks, you remember, with the proper expression painted on the pasteboard, and so constructed as to reverberate what they said."

"Did they? The bother is, I get disgusted," the other replied, — "get tired out. Too much pudding turns one's stomach, you know."

"Mr. Thirlmore," his wife said, apparently not listening to him, "you must read more, go upon another vacation, do something. After all, the masses like those old notions. People grow weary of hearing what wonderful capacities they have, how highly God respects them, how astonishingly Christ loves them. They have become so tired of your slaps at the old-fashioned saints that they cease to laugh at them, you know. And those people are apt to whirl about in a moment. You must hit upon something new, you must be bolder, must startle them."

"Do you think so?" — and her husband stretched out his legs with a yawn. At that moment came a ring at the door, and with it the exclamation from Thirlmore, "Confound whoever it is, man, woman, or child!"

A servant entered to say that Mr. Vandoren was in the parlor. It seemed impossible but that the visitor would hear the master of the house as he exclaimed, "Vandoren? Vandoren? O yes, I knew him in the Seminary, — a crazy cobbler, or something of the sort. Don't go, Peace; he is a character. Pull the doors open, Patsy. Pull them open."

As the maid drew back the sliding double-doors which separated the library from the parlor, Thirlmore got up slowly and put on his laid-aside cordiality of manner.

"Why, Vandoren! glad to see you," he said, shaking hands. "What can I do for you? Sit down, sit down," he added, after introducing his wife.

Mrs. Thirlmore preferred to stand. She had heard of Vandoren, very much as a lady of the days of Nero had heard of Paul, and she placed herself by the parlor chimney-piece between her husband and his visitor. This under-sized, pale-faced, hollow-chested, lank-haired man was in such contrast to the large-limbed, self-satisfied, and prosperous preacher as to interest her: he was so strong a contrast to her husband. Thirlmore was not at all interested. He fed daily upon the infe-

riority of other men, but this shabby, shrinking individual was hardly a mouthful to him.

"And what are you up to these days?" he demanded, after the first salutations. "I have n't seen you since we left the Seminary."

"I was at your church yesterday," Vandoren replied. His thin and nervous hand still tingled from the large, warm grasp of the other. The strong vitality and complacent self-assurance of Thirlmore struck him at first almost like a physical blow.

But Thirlmore's reply steadied him. "Ah, I wonder I did not see you!" For Vandoren knew that the preacher had seen him. Moreover, Thirlmore knew, the instant he spoke, that the other was aware he had not told the truth. Vandoren closed his eyes for a moment.

"You have started a new denomination, or something of the sort, have n't you?" But Vandoren hardly heard the question. He had glanced around the handsomely-furnished apartments, his eye returned to the owner, and he murmured to himself, "Nebuchadnezzar."

"What does this fool want?" Thirlmore was meditating, when Vandoren repeated, "I was at your church yesterday. It is a large building, and it was crowded as usual. I saw many young women there. They are to be wives and mothers, and they are as wax in your hands. And there were multitudes of men, young men, who are taking shape for life from you. In a little while they will be as marble, bronze, adamant, eternally what you make them. I estimate your power. Let me tell the whole truth, — I envy your amazing opportunity. You have much that is noble in you, sir, much that is as grand as King Saul about you —"

"Thank you. You don't object to smoking do you? No? Well, allow me to light another cigar." For Thirlmore, however carelessly he spoke, had a vague apprehension of what might be coming.

"There was something I wanted to say to your husband, if you please," — Vandoren turned with deference to the lady.

"Do not let my being here prevent you," she said.

Mrs. Thirlmore evidently had no intention of leaving the room, and Vandoren looked at her for the first time, looked at her slowly, steadily. Her face, her bearing, confirmed the impression made upon him by her tones. He moved so as to embrace her in what he was to say.

"Mr. Thirlmore," he began, "the matter has been like a fire in my bones — "

"Ah! but, excuse me, won't you have a cigar? I should have asked you before." Thirlmore threw one leg over the arm of his chair as he said it, settling himself more comfortably.

"Mr. Thirlmore," — the tones of the eccentric visitor became gentler, — "I am here upon very serious business. Words cannot tell how I have suffered."

"Have you?" Mrs. Thirlmore asked; "then you ought to go to a doctor, you know." She did not smile, and Vandoren again looked at her. She was a polished woman, and she was charmingly dressed. He had never seen a more beautiful face. Vandoren had spent the night before in prayer. He had prayed especially for power to discern the spirit of the man to whom his errand was. That which had come to Guernsey through severe pain was his also, — who can say? — through what intense longing and effort. He looked at her, but he shrank from deciding.

"Will you kindly allow me," he urged, "to say freely what I wish to say? I can do it in a few words. Then I will go and trouble you no more."

"Certainly. Say what you please."

It was not in the words the lady used, it was her aspect, her manner! Vandoren rose. The pallor of his face became almost as of marble, — his eyes burned.

"I have a message to you from the Lord," he said. "God has put you, sir, where another man ought to stand — "

"God don't understand his business, you mean? Go on, O, go on!" Thirlmore said.

"For wise purposes," Vandoren did not heed the in-

terruption, "even as Saul was once among the prophets. You stand there Sunday after Sunday to preach the Gospel. What is the fact? Listen. God knows, I know, all men know. And you know." Vandoren stood erect. There was in him that intense sincerity which, when it suffuses a man, holds the attention of people as iron when magnetized holds iron. He spoke rapidly. "Standing in the centre of a great city, hearkened to by multitudes, your sermons read by thousands more, listen!" and he went on swiftly. "You study the newspapers, and not the Word of God. You give yourself to an understanding of the time, neglecting the claims of eternity. Your eyes are fastened, not upon God, but upon man. You have reference merely to what will make men acceptable to men; the Maker and Judge of men you forget. You seek to secure wealth, reputation, success over rivals, not the salvation of souls. You depend upon your shallow brain, and forget the infinite wisdom of God. You draw upon your own weak and wicked heart, and never cry out to God, 'With Thee is the fountain of life,' — 'All my springs are in Thee.' As one mails a letter by using a stamp, you tack on the name and head of Christ to a message purely your own, which has nothing in it of Christ. Woe to you — "

"I think it *is* about time to whoa," Thirlmore said.

"It is a good thing with this kind," Mrs. Thirlmore remarked, and as if their visitor were a species of vermin, "that as soon as any two of them organize themselves into a society, that instant they begin to squabble. What did you say his name is? Vandoren? Then his religion is Vandorenism, I suppose, and he is the only Vandorenite living." But she did not arrest the attention even of the man; there seemed to be a yearning affection on his part toward the popular preacher; it spoke in his eyes, his gestures, his whole aspect.

The pallid speaker paused awhile, and looked at Thirlmore smoking unconcernedly. "Your business," he added, in a voice which was becoming a wail, "was to make the people put their trust in God; you have made

them to doubt. You were sent to bid them obey; you have taught them disobedience, defiance. You have exaggerated the petty incidents of the hour, and have belittled the moral order, the awful law of the Almighty, universal and eternal, which underlies everything. Like a paid fool —"

"Hollo!" interjected Thirlmore.

"You jingle in the ears of men whatever is new, and keep silent about the terrible past, the tremendous future. Your sermon!" and Professor Rodenstein could not have put such scorn into the words. "Sermon! It is a something your people enjoy and forget, as if it were a pickle or a banana. You have fallen from God, and your sincerest self strikes through all you say, and converts men into duplicates of yourself. Repent!" thundered Vandoren. "Fast, humble yourself, pray. Back! Get back to your forsaken God!" He stamped his foot, with his face aflame.

Mrs. Thirlmore laughed aloud. Brute rose upon his fore-legs and barked, but the deep bark was nobler than the laugh.

"Go on, Mr. Vandoren, be so good as to go on!" Mrs. Thirlmore was greatly amused. "Please proceed, sir."

"Woe unto you!" — and Vandoren addressed himself to the husband, but did not take his eyes from the contemptuous face of the wife. "Woe unto you! for you daily promise and never even propose to perform. Woe unto you! for habitually you say what you know to be false, in the pulpit and out of it. Woe unto you! rushing deeper into debt, and not even caring to pay; full of pathos in the pulpit, and attending no funeral among even your own people when you can escape it; abundant in praise of benevolence to the poor, yet never giving nor going in person; eloquent as to love for men, yet holding yourself aloof from everybody except your adorers; urging to lofty companionships, yet finding your intimates among ungodly and wicked men. Woe unto you, Peter! for you deny Christ. Woe unto you,

Pilate! for you crucify Christ. Worse, woe unto you, Herod! for your bowing before Christ is in contemptuous mockery! You make Christ merely a king of farce!"

The outstretched finger of the man quivered in the air with the intensity of his feelings; his pallid face had become luminous, his eyes fastened upon and held those of the lady, scornful as she seemed.

"Woe unto you, Antichrist!" — there was the agony and outcry of pain, not anger, in the words, — "for you as God sit in the temple of God, showing yourself that you are God."

The popular preacher had dropped his cigar unnoticed upon the floor, it was his own conscience which spoke the words.

"Woe unto you, Judas!" wailed the accuser, "for you sell your Lord, — not once, it is become your trade."

Had her sister been there, she would have been struck with the sudden change in Mrs. Thirlmore. She looked like a foreign woman just arrived from a strange land; she was her grandfather, the German socialist, in every lineament of her face. She laughed aloud, — it was harsh to hear her.

Vandoren turned one pitying look upon her husband, then grasped her eyes afresh in his. "There was none," he began.

"Brute," she said softly, snapping her forefinger and thumb at the dog. The animal was sitting up beside its master, its eyes upon the visitor; but it did not regard the gesture of its mistress.

"There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom" — and Vandoren said it steadily, his flaming eyes full in hers — "whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. Thus saith the Lord, The dogs shall eat Jezebel." And then, with sudden halt of manner, "No, not that! prevent that, O Christ!"

"Brute! Brute!" The lady clapped her jewelled hands. "At him, boy! at him!"

But the animal only looked up at his master and whined, while their visitor slowly left the room, and, a moment after, the front door closed behind him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TOM HAMMERSLEY.

A FEW days after Guernsey had first arrived in the city from Europe, he had dropped in at Trent's office, and found him in conversation with a broad-shouldered man, whom he had introduced to Guernsey as Mr. Tom Hammersley.

"I have heard so much of you from Trent, and Mrs. Trent too," Guernsey said, looking into the brown, broad, sensible countenance of the man, "that I am glad to know you."

"You two," Trent remarked, looking from Guernsey to the other, "make up the universe, between you. Guernsey here" — and Trent laid his hand gently upon the shoulder of his friend — "represents pure intellect; Hammersley" — with a vigorous grasp upon the sturdy arm of the other — "is the incarnation of practical sense. How are the works coming on now, Mr. Hammersley?"

"They are doing well enough, Doctor," the man replied, with an ox-like steadiness of manner. "Call round and see us."

"That machinist," Trent explained to Guernsey when they were alone, "is the pillar of our mission enterprise. His wife is a miserable creature; and he had been an industrious fellow till I first knew him, with nothing to show for it but trouble on trouble. His partners swindled him; thieves stole his patents; he had been burned out once or twice. I was called in to physic him

when he was in process of deliberately drinking himself to death. Something I said about all things having been made by Christ and for Christ struck him very much, — that Christ was the supreme Machinist, you know. One thing led to another; he became a Christian; but even in church matters he is a kind of trip-hammer in boots. All he knows about religion is that Christ is the Foreman, in the grandest sense, of the shop, — a foreman who has worked himself up until he is owner; and his faith in Christ works as if by belt and shafting. I want you to know him."

All this was when Guernsey had first come back, three years before. Since then Hammersley had been doing well in his business; and one day, months after Guernsey had lost his fortune and left the city, Trent visited Hammersley at his works. The physician had struggled on, but no light had broken upon him; and he was perishing for at least the sympathy of some friend. For he could not, or rather would not, alarm Revel by talking about matters which no talk could cure. Not that he told his troubles to Mr. Hammersley. The conversation, however, was such that the machinist remarked, at last, "There's a good deal of machinery even in *my* little place," looking around with some pride. It was true; and the clatter was such that he had to add it with his lips close to the ear of his visitor. "Well, now, the way I look at it is this." And the fact that he was in his shirt-sleeves and had a face begrimed with coal-dust added to the force of his words. "Christ made the machinery, and *he* works it don't he? Well, then?"

What more could be said?

That night there was a great fire. It began in a distant part of the city, but the wind was high, and it spread rapidly. Something was the matter with the water supply, and by daybreak the fire had become a conflagration. The wind rose into a gale, and by noon the conflagration was become a catastrophe. Every engine in the city was at work; but the gale had grown into a hur-

ricane, sowing the fiery seeds far in advance of the oncoming harvest of destruction. By night the desperate toil of the firemen had slackened from exhaustion, with the fire under greater headway than before. Military companies were under arms; cables were stretched across the streets which led to the burning buildings; sentinels halted the passers-by at every turn.

The fire raged in a part of the city at a distance from the residence of Steven Trent; but he had passed many hours upon the roof of his house. From his elevation the scene was sublime. Overhead the heavens were a dome of red, through which the ascending smoke arose, at times with a slow grandeur as the wind fell, and then rushed as from the lips of cannon when the gale blew again, bearing the sparks and flaming brands far abroad. There seemed to be as many people upon the roofs as in the streets; and, like the rest, Steven Trent was busy with water and wet blankets extinguishing the sparks of fire as they fell.

On the second day the wind ceased, and he could rest a little. "But Hammersley! poor Hammersley!" he said to his wife, at supper. "He had put his last cent, with all he could borrow, into his works. I doubt if he is insured, or if any insurance will avail after such destruction. Only yesterday he was showing me his draughts and models for the new invention he has in hand. I will return as soon as I can."

"Surely, you will not go out, Steven?" his wife demanded. "You are tired to death. Besides, what can you do?"

"I am going to find out," he replied, and in a few moments he was gone.

In every sense he was a stronger man than he had been; and he had an exulting sense of reserves of strength sufficient, if needed, for the conflagration of the world. Going first to his friend's house, he learned from Mrs. Hammersley, who came to the door with her hair down about her eyes, that her husband had gone to the fire when it first occurred, but had not

returned; and, breaking away from her distracted talk, he hastened away. The street cars were not running, and it was a walk of miles. As he drew nearer to the scene of destruction, it became hard work to force his way along. There were crowds of eager men and women going and coming. Now and then there would be heard the roll of drums, and a military company would compel the multitude to divide and let them through. The streets were heaped with boxes and bales, crates and hogsheads, among which children wandered lost and crying. Policemen were sitting exhausted upon cellar doors; and more than once Trent saw a fireman sleeping, worn out and unconscious of the throngs, upon a door-step or in an alley-way. The streets were deluged with water and tangled with hose; while, as he neared the fire, the short, incessant throb of the steamers at every corner told of the foe they were holding at bay, and which had crouched for the time behind the crumbling walls and in the lair of glowing basements.

A bayonet at his breast arrested his steps. He had gained at last the beach upon which the sea of fire had broken. The granite walls beside him were blistered and blackened from the dash of the subsiding surge; and behind the charred fronts and shivered windows of the stores stood the clerks, keeping guard over the chaos of goods within. The crowd was terrible, and Trent saw that it was largely made up of people who had been driven out from their places of business, and who were now pressing thither against the flames which still kept them out. He had come thither because it was the nearest accessible point to the Hammersley Works.

Hustled this way and that, he was crowded at last against a broad-shouldered man who was engaged in fierce altercation with a sentinel. It was Hammersley; though Trent could hardly believe it at first. He was in his shirt-sleeves and had lost his hat, while one side of his face seemed to have been badly burned. Worse than all, he was evidently drunk; for he was swearing, and endeavoring to tear his way through the cordon of

soldiers. Trent laid hold upon the machinist, who seemed hardly to recognize him; and it was late into the night before he could get the man beyond the crowd, into a hack, and so to his own house, not far from where Trent lived. He was asleep when they reached the door, and it was with difficulty that his friend got him out of the vehicle and into the building. Mrs. Hammersley lay weeping upon the sofa in the little parlor; and the physician knew her to be one of those limp, querulous, thoroughly worthless women, so far as wifely help goes, who give their girlhood to dress and public entertainments, and their married life to slatternly idleness.

"He is n't drunk," she explained to Trent when they had got him upon the sofa. "It 's worse than that. He has never drunk a drop since he joined the church. It is trouble. I always told him he had no luck. He has been broken up and burned out and lost everything so often, I told him over and over again he had no chance. This last time he thought he was safe. 'Law, Tom,' I told him, 'the first thing you know, down you 'll go again.' And sure enough, when the fire broke out, that man ran for his things. He has his plans and papers in his safe at the works. When he left the house, I told him it was no use. And it was n't. His place was on fire before he could get anything out; but he made a fight for it, I see. My! how his face is singed! And, law me! look here! see how his hands are burned!" And she hovered about her husband as he lay, more like a cackling hen than anything else.

Steven Trent hastened home to reassure his wife, and then returned. It was plain that Tom Hammersley was not to be left to himself. He had endured a great deal, and silently and for many years; the vigorous but uneducated man had broken down at last, and the crash in such cases is terrible. His friend took him in charge. He made Mrs. Hammersley place a supply of food on the table, a coffee-pot upon the fire, and then go upstairs to bed, while he himself lay down upon a pallet which she had spread for him upon the floor.

Toward day he woke to find Mr. Hammersley stumbling about the room. Trent had dressed his scorched face and hands the night before, but the bandages had been torn off. In a moment more the machinist would have rushed out and away,— he had become like a wild beast, and it was with difficulty that Trent induced him to have his hurts attended to. He was going out at once, he declared; the works were burning, he must save his models, his papers; but Trent held him fast, talked and soothed him until he became more quiet, — the wife still slumbering up-stairs.

At breakfast-time Mrs. Trent came over with a basket of hot food for both of them, her servant behind her leading little Jean. It was plain that the ruined machinist could not be left alone. He had fallen into a dazed condition, and consented like a child when his friend proposed to leave him in the care of Mrs. Trent, while he went into the city to look after the works, and see what could be done.

It was an affair of many days, and the faithful friend came and went continually. It was long before the heap of ashes which had been the machine-shop could be approached; before the men who had worked under its owner were got away from their own calamities to assist; before the safe could be disinterred, red-hot, and before it could be cooled sufficiently to be opened. There was a noble spirit of charity abroad, but there was also the crush and confusion, the almost wolfish eagerness, which belong to times when every man is looking out for himself. Besides, Trent delayed matters until the machinist could endure the strain. Mrs. Hammersley was worse than useless; but the physician and his wife cared for and kept her husband company, until one day the former drove up to the door in a wagon with the contents of the great safe, and Tom Hammersley found himself in quiet possession of everything.

"And I have seen a man who will let you have all the machinery you want, and another man who will trust you for the rent of a place to put it in," Trent told him;

"and yet another who can advance you a little money on your character and your invention. I have run about among the creditors you told me of, and you need have no uneasiness about them, I assure you. So that it will be all right at last, won't it?"

Tom Hammersley's face was still raw from its burns, the cunning had not returned as yet to his bandaged hands; his mind may have been still suffering from the shock he had endured, for the tears were trickling down his cheeks.

"I had gone crazy," he said; "and if I had got out then, I should have drunk myself to death, sure! What you did is my idea of religion. It *works* well, you see!"

The burly machinist had recovered more than his former vigor of body and mind when, some months after, he remarked to his friend, "You know that the Owner intends after a while to give us all a good start again for eternity by burning the world up. Strikes me a blaze now and then under our boilers is first-rate to rouse us up occasionally before that happens. Anyhow, that big fire has done you and me a sight of good, now has n't it?"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HOLY ORIFLAMME AGAIN.

WINTER had rolled round again, and it was a bright and more than ordinary day for the church of the Holy Oriflamme. Thirlmore and his wife had been in Europe when the fire took place, and this was the first Sunday after their return. The church and parsonage had escaped the flames, and both had been thoroughly renovated during their absence. Guernsey had arrived in the city the night before from his long sojourn in the South, and he was struck with the

new appearance of things, as he crowded his way in with the throngs which filled and overflowed the church. The work had been suggested by Mr. Gruffden, who had risen to lofty heights in the city government, and was already considered rich, and the improvements had been under his personal supervision.

Seated near the door the now celebrated author whistled softly as he looked about. "Pews, walls, gallery, organ-pipes," he murmured to himself, as his eye hastened from one part to another; "ceiling, everything! Red, yellow, green, gold, purple, scarlet, yes, and blue, crimson, pink! The only thing absent is black and white. Very correct; for the church is a parable. The very ushers seem younger and ruddier than before, and how smiling they are. They have more greenery upon the platform, and it looks also as if it had just emerged from a revivifying shower. What a crowd! and it too has a certain newness of expectation upon it. I wonder if the decree went out that everybody should wear new clothes for the occasion. And, bless me, it is like an army of crickets after a rain!"

He referred to the chorus choir, which was singing with a certain sharpness, as well as force, as though freshly whetted therefor.

"And now, my friend," Guernsey continued as Thirlmore rose to preach, "with such a temple it won't do for you to be a wooden god. Speak up! If I were a Juggernaut like you, I would ride over my worshippers now and then at least; if I could not crack their heads for them, I would try to break their hearts. Ah me!" he added, with a pang, "why does it *have* to be something instead of God? Virgin Mary, priest, crucifix, wafer, church, popular preacher, pope, — *something* is eternally crawling between the soul and its Maker! Is not Christ mediator enough? O Thirlmore, Thirlmore, if you but knew your opportunity!"

Just then, in the act of announcing his text, the popular preacher paused, deliberately unbuttoned the overcoat which he had till then worn, drew it off, and tossed

it carelessly upon the chair from which he had risen. It slid to the floor, and lay almost beneath his feet, but he glanced at it and let it lie.

"Ah, my friend, my friend!" Guernsey added, "if now you could but cast aside yourself like that, and let it lie under your feet —"

But it was plain that nothing of the kind occurred to Thirlmore. His trip had done him good where he was well before. He was ruddy and vigorous, and not in the least fluttered, as he stood upon the platform looking coolly around. The splendid building, the swarming crowd, the unanimous homage, were simply his due, — he took it all as he would have taken a glass of water. He made eloquent allusion in the course of his discourse to the fire which had raged while he was away, to the decorations of the building, to his experiences in Europe, to the exceeding liberality of his people. Mention was made, in the close, of the magnificent heaven to which all present were hastening, to the Being who was rejoicing over them.

"The text, doctrine, and application of all which," Guernsey murmured, as the minister sat down, "is — Thirlmore!" And, sure enough, the chorus choir broke out by way of finish into a hymn, the burden of which was a rejoicing at the return of their pastor. Before pronouncing the benediction, Thirlmore made, paper in hand, a financial statement. The amounts were large, and the minister said a good deal as to the exceeding prosperity of the church. The congregation gathered with satisfaction that it was the most prosperous, and the most conspicuous, church in the land, quite possibly in the world.

"And now, 'Hail Columbia!'" Guernsey said, after benediction, for the organ burst forth with irrepressible enthusiasm, and the choir complied with the suggestion in another triumphant song. The singing was very fine, and the audience slowly dispersed in excellent spirits.

Guernsey kept his seat until the building was almost empty, then he limped slowly down the aisle toward

the platform. There were crowds of friends about Thirlmore, shaking hands, laughing, talking; but Guernsey observed that Mrs. Thirlmore stood on one side, speaking with but one or two. She seemed almost neglected. The new-comer was watching for her face. As he drew nearer it turned slowly toward him, looking with a searching gaze over the groups which remained.

"Colder, harder," Guernsey said, as her face came more into view, "but just beautiful. Yes," he added, as it turned full upon him, "in an artistic, marble sense, it is perfect. — Bless me!"

For at that instant Mrs. Thirlmore's eyes caught sight of him. She suddenly reached out her hands, which almost trembled with eagerness, her eyes brightened, her whole aspect changed. "I am so glad to see you," she said, as he went toward her, with a sudden moisture in her eyes, an impulsive something in her tones. It was the first struggle of a heart within her toward birth, — a certain electric flash of affection, never felt before and only for the instant; it came and went, leaving her quieter, colder than before. But the heart of Guernsey had gone out to her in that instant, and he talked eagerly and volubly, like a boy out of school.

"And you did like my books?" he said, after a while. "I knew you would. *I* liked them wonderfully. All the time I wrote I laughed and cried. Oh, I knew people would like them. You see I read them as I wrote them to my mammy."

"Your what?" Mrs. Thirlmore asked. Her own face was almost as bright as that of the other. Somehow Guernsey, although larger, stronger, was more of a child than ever. She had never seen him look half as well. Was it the smooth, pure face, the eloquent eye, the audacity of manner? "Anybody would recognize him as a genius on sight," the lady thought. "Who is your — mammy?" she asked again.

"My black mammy, my old nurse. She dropped me when I was a baby, and has spoiled me ever since. O, yes, she keeps house for me on my little island. I wrote

all day, and I read to her at night what I had written. You see I made a mark on the manuscript where she fell asleep, and began to cut out just there. When she liked it she always said, 'It 's mighty good, honey, is dar any more?' And you *did* like them, did you, — my foolish books?"

Mrs. Thirlmore looked at him. "Please do not ask me," she said.

He had not supposed that she possessed so much feeling, although Mr. Gruffden, who stood near by, talking to somebody else, but listening to them, did not fail to observe it. And then Guernsey asked eagerly after Trent and his wife. "They wrote that they had named their new baby after me," he said; "but I want to see little Jean, with her aureole of golden hair. She is not in the least like either parent, and I had to tell them so. Is she well? What a darling she is!"

But Mrs. Thirlmore could tell him very little about the Trents. "We are just back from Europe, you know," she said. "Besides, Mr. Thirlmore and Mr. Trent are both so very busy, and we live so far apart, and my sister is so occupied with her children, too," — and the conversation glided off to Europe.

The two stood talking together some time, as Guernsey asked her a hundred questions in regard to this place and that where he had himself been, making his comments as they went over the wide field. "But I see that everybody has gone," he said at last.

Mrs. Thirlmore moved to a back door. "This is the vestry," she remarked, as they descended to the basement. "It is our Sunday-school room, but I am sorry to say our school has never been very large. I always wait here for Mr. Thirlmore. He will be out in a moment, and will be pleased to see you."

The door of the vestry stood ajar, and it was evident that a conference of some kind was going on inside.

"It is all very grand, gentlemen," they could not help hearing, and Guernsey recognized the peremptory voice of Mr. Gruffden, "very grand, but we are tremendously

in debt. God knows we were enough so before. Now, it is frightful. The pastor's salary and the choir and the flowers cost money. The church, you know, never was paid for. And those people! they crowd every seat, we have to bring in camp-stools, and what do they contribute? Almost nothing, sir, nothing! A few of us have to bear the burden. I was thinking of it all the time the preaching was going on. This church is nothing but a big mug of what seems to be beer, but there is not a teaspoonful of beer in it, — froth, sir, froth! Of course we keep these matters to ourselves, but the first thing you know the auctioneer's hammer will — "

Guernsey would hear no more. "I must get my dinner and go and see Dr. Trent," he said; and, promising to call very soon, he limped away. Mrs. Thirlmore followed him with her eyes, listening to his halting tread along the corrider outside until she could hear it no more. Then her face changed, she seemed suddenly older than before, and she waited for her husband no longer.

"Please don't say anything more about Thirlmore," Steven Trent said at last to Guernsey that afternoon, as they sat with Mrs. Trent in the little back parlor.

"No, please don't," she urged; "if you could put *that* into a poem how popular it would be!" She held up her last baby, little Guernsey, as she spoke, and the small ally kicked and crowed his best, but the other would not be cajoled.

"I talk about Thirlmore," he said, "because I have something to say. But it is quite simple. He believes in himself, and has no further goal. The trouble is, that your sister, madam, despises herself because she believes only in something that she intends to be. One *must* have a God of some sort; she has not found hers yet, Thirlmore has. So he is happy, she is not. It is not wholly about them I am interested. As I wrote you, I am at the acting out of a play, a poem, — an opera, we will say, — heaven knows that the characters are strong enough. I am curious," he added, as he took his hat to go, "to see what the great Composer intends shall be the end of it all."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LITTLE JEAN.

IT so chanced that, within a month after this, Mr. Gruffden, lawyer, politician, and speculator in general, having business in the Lobby at Washington, was going thither on the cars accompanied by a friend. The friendship must have been of a purely political or legal sort, for Mr. Gruffden's companion was a red-nosed, loud-voiced, and unusually profane individual. Seated immediately behind the two was an old gentleman, with his hat drawn down over his eyes, who listened somewhat carelessly to the conversation of the others. In a voice whose very tones were immoral, Mr. Gruffden's friend gave his views in reference to certain members of Congress, as also of measures pending before them. At almost every stopping-place, he stepped out of the car, accompanied, when he returned, by a stronger smell of spirits, his face and his oaths yet more lurid. But the grizzled old passenger behind had done business with many a customer of the kind, often with profit; and he paid no heed to him until, in some turn of the talk, the man exclaimed, "Yes, and that is what I like in Thirlmore, that parson of yours. By ——, sir, he is the only preacher I ever hear."

"He is a splendid fellow," Mr. Gruffden remarked. "I don't think he is very profound, but he knows what's going on upon the surface, General."

"He draws, sir, draws," the other said. "Why, look at it. One must go somewhere of evenings, but you get through it all, sir, get through it all. Negro minstrels, high tragedy, low comedy, spectacular drama, opera bouffe, — one sees it over and over again until, by ——, sir, your stomach turns, sir. Very well, Sunday comes. What is a man to do? Go to church as church used

to be, — generally is, even now? No sir, not, by ——, if I know it! But one runs into Thirlmore's, sees the crowd, hears the singing, gets a splendid sermon, goes home, goes to bed, goes to sleep, knowing, by ——, that you are a good man. You get votes by being seen in church, too. How much do you pay your man?"

Mr. Gruffden named a large amount, but his friend exclaimed with disgust, "That all! I 'll be ——, sir, if I was in his place, if I did n't strike for higher pay or leave. If that man were to go on the stage, go into politics, say, he could make ten times as much. But I 'm glad he don't. It 's a —— curious thing, but one *has* to have something of that sort on Sundays,— at least now and then, you know. I don't grudge you the price I pay for my pew; it is dog cheap, sir."

Mr. Gruffden spoke warmly in praise of his pastor. The passenger in the rear had not stirred, but he listened to every word. From what was said, he gathered that Mr. Thirlmore was none of the old-fashioned sort, that he never whimpered, did not bore his people with any nonsense, was afraid of nobody, was as wide awake as anybody, a royal good fellow, and more to that effect.

"You are right, sir," replied the one who was addressed as General, "and if you need any money call upon me. I know Thirlmore almost as well as you, he 's been at my place often. He 's the man for my money, I 'll be —— if he is n't!"

At this juncture, the train halted at the Old Orange Station, and the old gentleman got out. He had been elected a trustee of the College, and was to attend a meeting of the Board that afternoon. In fact, Donald McGregor, for it was none other, had changed in the last two or three years. It may be that he had become more thoroughly disgusted with the world and all that it bestows, or that his conferences of late with the Missionary Board, of which he was also a member, had turned his mind to religion. Doubtless, as he grew older, he went back more and more to the impressions of his earliest years in Scotland. Whatever the cause, he was more in-

tense and inflexible in his old-fashioned theology than ever before, — it had been the mould into which his business, as well as his character, had been cast. By no means devotional, or given to emotion, he regarded looseness in doctrine precisely as he did wildness and unthrift in the management of money. For many a day now, he had been hearing strange things in regard to his favorite nephew. He had even reprimanded him, and sternly, when Thirlmore visited the farm. His nephew had said nothing in reply, but merely despised the obsolete old Scotchman, and asserted his superiority by a bolder course upon his return to his charge. During the afternoon, Donald McGregor heard all that was to be said at the Board of Trustees, and had his yes or no in readiness if any matter was to be voted upon, but he was glad when there was a temporary adjournment. The Board met in the noble Library of the College, toward which McGregor had himself contributed, and when the Trustees separated the old Scotchman strolled aside into an alcove to turn affairs over in his mind, for he was sorely troubled.

Now, it so happened that a certain daring trustee had nominated Thirlmore for an honorary degree before the uncle came in, but the nomination had been tabled for the present. Donald McGregor knew nothing of this, or he would have understood the mention of his nephew's name in the alcove, separated from that in which he sat by a wall merely of books. It was Dr. McMasters who was remonstrating with the rural clergyman who had made the nomination.

"You will pardon me, sir, but I am astonished at you," the venerable divine was saying; "Mr. Thirlmore is, as you say, a graduate of our College; he is a popular preacher, an able man if you will, but he is not the man — "

"Allow me, Dr. Mc Masters," Donald Mc Gregor heard the other say, "to explain myself by a matter which I cannot mention before the Board. I know, as well as you, that Mr. Thirlmore is not preaching what

you and I know as the Gospel. He however has no system of thought whatever in opposition to it — "

"You are right, sir," Dr. McMasters said, with sarcastic meaning; "he is *not* a thinker, he knows nothing of theory, hypothesis, system upon any subject, — a mere popular speaker."

"Precisely, and I deplore it as much as yourself. So much so," the other went on, "that when I was in the city, a year ago, I called upon him and remonstrated with him. We were together in the Seminary, although he was intimate with no one. He received me cordially, and I said everything, even prayed with him. Sir, that man told me that he loved the Gospel as much as any one, but he was forced to hold the crowd he had gathered. If he were to preach as I wished, he should scatter his congregation from him. His plan was to impart the truth as they could bear it. He almost wept while we — "

"No, sir!" Dr. McMasters spoke so loudly that it would have been impossible for Donald McGregor not to hear. "A Christian temporize for the sake of popularity? Never, sir, never! You were one of my pupils, and I tell you again I am amazed at you, sir!" And the theologian gave in detail his reasons for regarding the pastor of the Holy Oriflamme as the leading instance of an influence which was more destructive to the cause than all outer assault. The noble old divine spoke long and eloquently. "Mr. Thirlmore, sir, has had letters from me and others, he has been labored with," he added, "in every way, and it but confirms him in his own course. He is a sorrow to every Christian soul, a shame and a scandal, sir, to Old Orange!"

"I had hoped that a degree would conciliate him, would bring him back," the other suggested; but the suggestion was rejected with energy, and the conversation ended at the sound of a bell calling the Board together once more.

When Dr. McMasters took his seat at the table, his

portly form seemed to be in a tremble, his ruddy face glowed redder in contrast with his white hair. To the Scotchman, the distinguished divine was the representative of all to which he held most firmly in religion, and of the morality fundamental to society. He understood why it was that the voice of the venerable man faltered and broke when, opening the meeting with prayer, he prayed so fervently that the church might be defended against foes from within. In due order of business, the nomination of Thirlmore came up, members refraining from glancing at his uncle as they made out their ballots. There was not one in Thirlmore's favor; even the person who had nominated him preferring not to vote.

When Donald McGregor stepped at noon, the day after, from the train, he seemed to be at once an older and younger man than he had been for some time. His hair was white, his face wrinkled, his shoulders bowed, but his aspect had a new determination in every line. Moreover, he had been idle for some time; now he had business on hand. While apparently buried upon his farm, interested only in his sheep, his cattle, his laborers, he kept as sharp an eye as ever upon his manifold investments. Real estate, government bonds, mortgages, bank stock, — whatever it was, not a penny made during his half-century of hard work but was sacred to him: was he not its creator? He realized, however, that his chief investments were his two nephews, and, while holding himself apart from them, he kept himself informed concerning them both. He would still hold himself aloof, but would learn more if he could, for he had come to the city in which his nephews lived resolved to examine affairs for himself, and thoroughly.

The old man had long had the address of his relatives, and, wrapped in his gray cloak, he trudged stoutly along in his steady fashion through the snowy streets, until he entered the park upon which Thirlmore's house fronted. A handsome sleigh was standing at the door, and he crossed so as to pass slowly between it and the house.

There was no one in it, except a lady muffled in her furs. She seemed to be a blooming beauty, as he glanced at her in passing; and Thirlmore came out and got in, and the coachman drove off. As the old man repassed the house, he saw that a lady had parted the curtains from within, and stood with her face against the pane. Then the lady in the sleigh was not Mrs. Thirlmore? This was she, for she had made brief visits at the farm. The fine, cold face struck him vividly, as he looked at her from under his shaggy eyebrows and overhanging hat. He had only known her as a bright, highly educated woman, of a type to which he was not accustomed, — with whom he would have been at a loss for a topic in common had he gone in to make a call. That he had no intention of doing, however, so he passed on.

As he turned the next corner there came limping along a gentleman with such a child's face under his felt hat, that the Scotchman looked at him a second time.

"Good morning, sir," the gentleman said, with a kind of boyish audacity, and with bright and merry eyes. The other made no reply, but he walked more slowly, and, looking back a moment after, saw him ring at Thirlmore's door and enter. By this time the old man was tired, and went to his hotel.

Early the next morning he was out again, but in a different part of the city. He had been looking at the numbers upon the doors as he passed, but at last he seemed to have forgotten to do so, and walked slowly on as if buried in thought. He was in a strange mood. All night he had been dreaming of he knew not what, except that he had broken remembrances of heath and mountain, of loch and burn, and sheep grazing among brown rocks. Could it have been of Scotland and his childhood? It was nonsense, whatever it was!

As he thought this he lifted his eyes and stopped. A little girl was standing upon a door-step, a saucer of crumbs in her hand. A flock of sparrows, which had been frightened away by a passing sleigh, was wheeling about in the air, undecided whether to alight again, and

with her head thrown back she was watching it. Her face was fair and rosy, the golden locks falling away from it on either side as she laughed and held out her hands, a spoon in one, the saucer in the other. You see such children often, but the Scotchman stood gazing at her as if in a dream. No one could have imagined how deeply the rugged old man was moved, for he was saying to himself, "Jean, Jean!"

But the child had become conscious of the stranger, and had dropped its hands and was looking at him demurely, its head inclined to one side, but with fearless eyes.

"What is your name?" the Scotchman said to her gently.

"*His* name is Guernsey, but my name is Jean," she said, "on'y my pa calls me itty Puss."

"Jean? Jean what?" he asked.

"O my! tan't oo yead?" she demanded, with wondering eyes; and, stepping to one side, she put a finger upon the door-plate. "T-," she spelt, "r-e-n-t, Trent, Dokker Trent. 'At 's my pa. But she aint a dokker, she 's on'y my ma. *His* name is Guernsey. Won't oo p'ease ying?" she begged; "de door 's shut to, an' my hands all full, — p'ease, sir."

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN BABYLON.

WHEN Donald McGregor left Scotland, a big boy, his sister Jean was but a little child; yet for her sake chiefly, as has been said, he toiled hard and long. We understand such things no more than we do the existence of gems among the rocks, but Jean had been the one diamond in the quartz of the Scotchman's

rugged nature. He could not get over her marriage to her Southern lover, nor could he transfer his affections to her only son when he came into his care. He had been bitterly disappointed in Thirlmore. It was as though the Thomas Chalmers of his making had turned out to be a heathen instead; and just when he was most disgusted with everything, he had suddenly come upon this little child. The last thing he saw in his Scotch home on the day when he started, a rough lad, for America, had been his sister Jean standing upon the threshold of the old cottage, bidding him good-by with baby hands, — and here was Jean herself welcoming him home again after a lifetime of labor and defeat.

"She is the verra image of her mother," the old man said, and over and over again to Mrs. Trent after he had gone in and had made himself known.

"So Steven has told me," the mother replied, "for Jean is not at all like us, everybody notices that. And she seems to recognize you, — how strange it is!" For the little girl had clung to Donald from the first, had insisted upon getting into his lap the moment he sat down, — was sitting there at the instant perfectly content. It was the first time since he had parted from the Jean of so many years ago, that he had taken a child upon his knee. The old man was bewildered, — he was back again in Scotland, and in his boyhood. This must be Jean! not a shade of the hair, not a glance of the eye, but was the same; the smile, the prattle, the artless freedom of the child, as she pulled his hair that he might stoop down and kiss her, was the same. Since he had kissed his baby sister in parting, his lips had not touched those of any one till now; the tears, for the first time since he was a boy, were in his eyes as he kissed her again and again.

It was not until the child had gone unwillingly to bed that he asked about Thirlmore. Trent had given him a cordial greeting, as had Revel, but the Scotchman cared nothing, comparatively, for them. Now that Jean was found again, even the case of the popular

preacher became almost nothing to him, but he questioned Trent closely.

"Of course I do not like his ways," Steven said, at last, "but he is a noble man,—has grand qualities. You must hear him and judge for yourself."

The old Scotchman turned the conversation, said nothing in regard to what he had heard, accepted their invitation to make their house his home, and on the next day, which was Sunday, sallied out without a word for the Church of the Holy Oriflamme. We all know what Scotch prejudice is. Where lesser matters are concerned, earth has emblems by which it may be illustrated; where religion is in question, there is none, and Donald, it is but fair to state, was disgusted already almost beyond possibility of cure. He had been there once before at the beginning of Thirlmore's ministry. None the less was he astonished at the splendor of the church when he had entered it, at the vast audience, at the gorgeous organ, the flowers, the singing. In a certain sense he was proud, too, of the preacher who stood, the centre of it all, upon the platform, proud of his fine appearance, of his cool bearing, of his voice so full and resonant, as he laid down the law to the attentive crowd.

But Thirlmore labored under certain disadvantages then, as always. It was not merely that he had to say things which were striking, they had to be new things,—things which were more striking, if possible, than anything said before. The newspapers and the theatres supplied excitements so varied and pungent during the week, that the demand upon the preacher was really terrible.

"He is allowed unlimited liberty," Guernsey had said to Mrs. Thirlmore only the day before, "in all directions except one. The whole world is open to him so long as he does n't go backward. Those people take a sermon precisely as old topers take whiskey, and Thirlmore must put in more alcohol, more cayenne, every time. Now there is a limit even to vitriol, as there is to honey, and Thirlmore cannot create new sensations."

"And then," Mrs. Thirlmore said, "actors are never long in one place, and he has had the same audience now for years."

"Worse than that, actors," Guernsey added, "have Shakespeare to fall back upon, and old-fashioned preachers have the Bible, but Thirlmore has to draw upon his brain. Moreover, the old style of divine took his theme from what he saw among his people during the week, their sins, their sorrows; but Thirlmore never visits. The obsolete parson preached about an inexhaustible Son of God, while Thirlmore has only — forgive me — himself to talk about. Besides," — for Guernsey knew he could say what he pleased to the lady, — "the antediluvian divine held himself in connection with the infinite Spirit of Truth as of Life, the oil was from inexhaustible stores, but with the pastor of the Oriflamme the flame is as of a lighted rag which — you *will* allow me to say what I think?"

"Certainly," the lady said, — no fact could be too vigorously stated for her.

"Which swims in merely a saucer of lard. Pardon me, Thirlmore is a splendid fellow, madam, but his intellect is not infinite."

It was this which made it so hard for the popular preacher that day; he was exhausted, was spent from the severe strain. Why particularize? The lack of doctrine, the absence of anything resembling solemnity, not to say unction, the side-thrusts at things he considered sacred, — all these so astonished the old Scotchman that his anger was something to come afterward. Once or twice Thirlmore awoke a peal of laughter, and the Tummas Chawlmers of Donald McGregor's hopes stood before him transformed almost literally into an angel of darkness, Lucifer, Belial!

But he had nothing to say upon the subject on his return to Trent's house, then, nor at any time thereafter. A notice had been given by Thirlmore of a festival in aid of the church upon the Wednesday night following. The truth is, behind the vast crowd, the singing, the

eloquence, an enormous and ever-increasing debt and yearly deficit lay hid, and desperate efforts were being made to raise money. Mrs. Thirlmore had gone to work as she had never done before, and the other ladies had flocked to her help, bringing their husbands, brothers, lovers, friends with them. When the Scotchman wedged his way in at the appointed hour, he found the edifice converted into a fairy palace, so far as flowers, lights, music, and diversified entertainments could accomplish it. Keeping himself aloof from the minister or his wife, Donald McGregor made a thorough investigation of the whole. Had he been engaged in regard to a bankrupt house he could not have been more vigilant. There were tables for the sale of fancy articles, refreshment-rooms, galleries of mock paintings, tableaux. He thrust his way among the laughing multitudes, up-stairs and down, in and out, round and round. A lady stood where the pulpit had been, and sang "Comin' through the rye." She was the leading singer of their choir, as of the city, but the thrill which she sent through one of her hearers as she smiled and gesticulated was not what she had counted upon. "And this," he said to himself, "this is the kirk!" He shuddered with horror.

A well-appointed theatrical representation was going on down-stairs when he fled thither, and he arrived in time to see another lady personate the Scotch fish-wife, and not with song and cry alone; there was a marvellous display of red stockings as the performer put her arms akimbo in the refrain, and danced with as much *abandon* as any purchaser of her wares could have desired. At every step Donald McGregor was solicited by girls, young and old, to buy chances in cakes, arm-chairs, buggies, pianos; but it was not until he saw a child led forward blindfolded upon the platform, and busy drawing lots from a well-shaken hat, that he realized that he was in what he looked upon as a lottery establishment.

"A gambling-hell!" he muttered, and pressed his way

nearer the platform. Thirlmore was there, a saucer of ice-cream in his hand, laughing and talking. The blooming lady he had seen in the sleigh was laughing near by, and on one side, but apart from them, stood Mrs. Thirlmore. The Scotchman was old, had been excited too long and too deeply of late; his mind even may have given way for the moment. "You, sir?" he said in such accents that there was a sudden hush of the talk and laughter. Thirlmore heard him, saw the stern and grizzled face, recognized his uncle, and all that was involved in it. But he was a brave man.

"My old uncle," he explained, with entire coolness, to those around. "Won't you come up, sir?" he said, going to the edge of the platform, and extending a hand. "I am glad to see you."

"Do ye approve of a' this?" the grim old Scot asked in a loud voice, not stirring a step. For over an hour had he wandered hither and thither. He had been angry when he came, but his wrath had accumulated at every step. No such things had been dreamed of when he was a boy in Scotland, in the old Scotch church he had attended while in business; certainly nothing of the kind was ever known to exist in the region of his farm. He had forced his way into the throng which was pressing around the platform. Each one of the laughing group had been anxious to know whether he or she had drawn a prize. By this time there was deep silence.

"I say," he persisted, raising his dogged demand so that none could choose but hear, "do ye favor a' this deeviltry in the house o' the Lord. Speak out!"

Everybody looked at him, none failing to understand his stern intent. With his plain clothing, rugged brow, white hair, he looked like an Elijah in the court of Ahab. On the instant there flashed through the mind of Thirlmore the unspeakable results. Had they been ten times as great, it would have been the same to him.

"Approve of all this?" he repeated, with provoking deliberation, aware that everything would be in the

papers the next morning. "Certainly I do. Come up, sir, and have some ice-cream."

The crowd had drawn aside from the old man, he turned and walked away without a glance or a word, and in another minute had left Babylon behind him, and was on his way to Steven Trent's house.

"It is an old-fashioned uncle of mine," the minister to the Holy Oriflamme remarked, with almost a drawl, as he resumed his ice-cream. "He is a queer old soul."

Mrs. Thirlmore had long ago outgrown her husband, but even she glanced at him with admiration.

"It is the most effective tableau of the evening," she said to Mr. Guernsey who was with her; "impromptu ones always are. They both did it very well."

"And that old gentleman was his uncle?" Guernsey asked, eagerly.

"Yes, and he is very rich." But it took all of her nerve to say it, looking full in the eyes of her companion as she did so.

"I know it! I know all!" Guernsey exclaimed. "Why, this is part of my best poem, drama, opera! O God," he added, with a species of serious glee, quite forgetful of the lady, "what an Author you are!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SENSATION.

WITHIN a week after the festival, Steven Trent found it difficult, on opening his paper at breakfast one morning, to suppress an exclamation. Excusing himself to his wife and uncle for a moment, he took the journal with him into the parlor, and came back after a while with a grave face.

"Revel, my dear," he said, "here is bad news for us.

Uncle, I am afraid a disaster has occurred to us all. Your sister is safe," he added, seeing how pale his wife had become. "Please let the nurse take the children away," and he looked anxiously at his uncle while it was being done.

"Ye need not fear me, mon," the old Scot remarked, and with perfect coolness he handed his coffee-cup to Mrs. Trent to be refilled. "Out wi' it," he said, and with some acerbity, as his nephew still hesitated.

"I have no doubt it is greatly exaggerated," Dr. Trent prefaced, — "such things always are."

"Read it!" the Scotchman repeated, while Mrs. Trent nerved herself to hear the worst.

Dr. Trent slowly unfolded the paper, and read aloud the staring head-lines.

"TERRIBLE ACCIDENT!

DEATH OF OUR MOST POPULAR PASTOR!

REV. DR. THIRLMORE HURLED BENEATH AN ENGINE!

GROUND TO POWDER UNDER ITS WHEELS!

Mrs. Thirlmore narrowly escapes.

Full Particulars."

Mrs. Trent had been at some pains to obtain Finnan haddock for breakfast, and it was well she had done so, for Donald McGregor continued to eat as if he were deaf. It was by no means because he did not feel; by the habit of a life-time, the more he was pressed, precisely that much the more did he refuse to yield; the greater the natural inclination to cry out, just so much the more determined was his silence. The Scotchman felt far more now than most men would have done; but just so much the firmer was his hold upon himself, for upon no man had he ever laid so deadly a grasp as he habitually laid upon himself. But Mrs. Trent was different, and had hastened weeping from the room. When she returned, she had her bonnet on, and all three were at Thirl-

more's door as soon as possible. The street before the house was blocked by a great crowd, and it was only after a determined effort that they were able, at last, to obtain admittance.

To their relief, they found that, as Dr. Trent had supposed, the accident had been greatly exaggerated. Thirlmore, far from being a corpse, had refused to lie down, and was seated in an easy-chair in his back parlor. His shoulder had been bandaged by a surgeon nearest the scene of the accident, and who had brought the injured man and his wife back to the city in his carriage. Mrs. Thirlmore had changed her dress, and, except for a certain pallor, seemed to be, if possible, a little more self-possessed than usual. Revel embraced and kissed her with tears of joy, but she only laughed at her.

"It was the merest nothing after all," she explained to the friends who were crowding around. "Mr. Thirlmore was driving a young horse, when the train happened to come along. The foolish creature ran away, the wheel of the buggy struck against a telegraph-post. As it did so, I leaped out into a hedge upon my side, and Mr. Thirlmore was thrown out upon his side. He was dashed against the end of a cross-tie, and his shoulder put out. The train passed us, and that is the whole story. I am not at all hurt, he will be over it in a week, and it is impossible to make a romance of it."

"It is a pity to disappoint public expectation," her husband was saying, at the same moment, to those who were nearest him; "but I will do my best to be hurt in a more tragical way next time."

There was really nothing to do, the house was crowded with persons coming and going, and, after lingering an hour or two, Dr. Trent, his wife and uncle, returned home.

"It seemed strange to me," Steven said to his wife when they were alone together that night; "but Thirlmore appeared to pride himself upon being the most unconcerned person in the house. A man should be

brave, should be uncomplaining, but — I never could understand Thirlmore."

"Up to a certain point you could. Remember," Mrs. Trent said, "what he was when you were boys together, what he was when you were at Old Orange together, what he was up to the time he — Steven," she added, "I do not want to say it, I *cannot* understand — "

"Cannot understand *her*," her husband suggested, and the subject was dropped.

A few days after this, Dr. Trent invited his uncle to go with him on a visit to Thirlmore, but the other gruffly refused. "It is at an hour," his nephew persisted, "when few, if any, people will be with him," — and the Scotchman, glancing sharply at the other, saw something in his manner which made him change his mind and accompany him.

Dr. Trent was right, there was no one with Thirlmore when they were shown into his room but his dog Brute. The injured man was pale; he had been lying down, but when they entered he was sitting up, a newspaper in one hand and the other upon the head of his dog, which was resting its nose upon his knee. As always, Thirlmore hastened to throw up intrenchments — so to speak — against them from the instant they were announced, held himself ready to withdraw yet more deeply into himself the nearer they should attempt to approach him. It was as if he knew how the hearts of his relatives yearned toward him. He had been aware, since childhood, of the sincere affection felt for him of his cousin, but now he was thinking about his uncle. The grizzled old Scot sat beside him silent as the dog, and, for the instant, loving his favorite nephew with an utter devotion in comparison to which that of Dr. Trent or Brute was as nothing. The uncle felt himself to be rapidly becoming infirm, and the stalwart man lounging in his easy-chair by his side had been, although he had not really loved him before, the hope and pride of his life. He had loved his sister Jean, but she left him. For all his short-comings, this nephew of his was a

man, a grander man in many respects, than he had ever dared to hope. True, the Scotchman detested the lack of dogma in the Tummas Chawlmers he had raised up; but there was not a photograph of his popular nephew which he had not gloried to see in the shop windows as, during the last few days, he wandered about the city. His shaggy eyebrows fell over his keen gray eyes as they sought for, and lingered over, the perpetual bulletins in the papers concerning the pastor of the Holy Oriflamme. Dr. Trent was, suddenly, less than nothing to the old man in comparison. He had taken little Jean to his heart, but that was because he had lost his nephew; even now rosy little Jean would become to him hardly more than a primrose in his button-hole, and be crushed out of sight, could he have had his nephew back again in the arms of his sudden strong affection.

And Thirlmore had known the old man too long not to know that his uncle felt now as he had never felt before toward him. Grim as the old Scotchman seemed, Thirlmore knew that the heart of this David was now walking up and down its rocky chamber, crying, "O Absalom, Absalom, my son!" Therefore it was that Thirlmore asserted himself, now more than ever, against him. The more so, that there was something in the silence of his visitors, something in the air to-day, against which he had to exert himself as never before in the case of any one. He had been more shaken by his accident than he cared to confess.

"It was a near thing," he said at last. "You see, my horse dashed down a road which ran along beside the railway, the train thundering at his heels. As a rule, I rather like to have a horse run away with me; it is as much fun to me as it is to the horse. But, in this case, I could not keep the brute in the road. The rails were almost on a level with us, and he would sheer off in that direction. In a flash, I was lying with my head within six inches of the rails. I did not strike on my head, and was a good deal wider awake than I am this moment. Before I could stir, the engine was upon me. My face

was turned that way, and I thought I was gone. There was a roar, and the wheels touched my hair as they went. I felt myself drawn toward them by the suction, saw the red cinders falling from the furnace —" The strong man turned white, his eyes were moist. There was a sudden, a deep and blessed silence.

"Dear cousin," and Steven laid his hand upon that of Thirlmore. The rigid lips of the white-headed Scotchman relaxed, his hands trembled, he looked at his nephew as a mother might have done; his heart had already turned its tide, and it now rolled toward him like the sea.

"Do you not see in this," Steven said, in a low voice, "the hand of God? Will you not —"

A great change impended in the popular pastor's face, his eyes were cast down, his voice was as that of his boyhood. "I frankly confess —" he began.

But the door, which had been ajar, opened, and, with a soft step, Mrs. Thirlmore came in.

There would seem nothing but what was natural and pleasant in Mrs. Thirlmore's coming in. She was charming to look upon, much more intelligent, and therefore with more of the beauty which intellect can alone give, than one often meets. And she was glad to see her visitors. She was happy to say that her husband would soon be out again, and she talked in a modest, delightful way of a thousand things. But her coming in changed not her husband's mood only, it affected Dr. Trent like winter. And Donald McGregor arose to go.

"I am glad Mr. Thirlmore indulges in no hysterics," she said laughingly, as she shook hands with them. "Whatever he is, he is not a woman," she said.

As she spoke, Dr. Trent, being a medical man, was saying to himself of her, — and not for the first time, — "Yes, your influence upon him is indeed that of a woman; that which, for good or bad, every woman exercises over every man. From the womb, you mould and make him what he is. It is the same afterward. By a myriad

imperceptible touches, unconsciously even to yourself, whatever this man is you have made him to be, though his church and himself have somehow helped you too."

And Thirlmore was saying, with his old drawl, "Do tell everybody that the papers lied as usual. It is such a nuisance to have people crowding in to see me. Good-by. I 'm all right again."

"Mrs. Thirlmore," Dr. Trent paused in the door-way to ask, "have you seen Guernsey of late?" He was conscious in doing so of a species of medical instinct. As if she were a patient in his hands he anticipated the effect of his question. The mention of the fascinating author was not irrelevant.

"What of him?" Mrs. Thirlmore said.

Had Dr. Trent understood himself, or her, he would have confessed what a dastardly thing it was for him to do. For her life she could not help it, the color in her cheeks, the light in her eyes, the change in her tone! But the visitors had little more to say and they soon departed. Dr. Trent had ceased to think about Thirlmore as they walked homeward; at best, he was dazed, perplexed, and he knew not at what. The Scotchman cared nothing for Mrs. Thirlmore, or for Dr. Trent just then. It was as though the hand of Thirlmore had slipped from his as he was in the act of grasping it, for really the first time in the lives of the two. It was the rarest of things for him to do, but that evening he complained of being cold. Little Jean climbed as usual into his lap, but he appeared hardly to know it, and went early to bed. The next day, however, he seemed the same man as ever.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TEMPTATION.

"DO you believe in angels?" Guernsey asked of Dr. Trent, rather abruptly, one day.

"Certainly, although I am satisfied they are not the winged men we see in pictures. There are no muscles for the working of wings, like —"

"Trent," Guernsey interrupted, "you are yourself an angel of mercy to many a poor, sick fellow in the city, even though you get as little pay as the angel did who brought the cake and the cruse of water to Elijah lying under the juniper-tree. What could an angel flashing down from God do more than your wife has done for you? We shall wonder hereafter that we were such confounded fools."

"So we shall," and the other said it ruefully, for Donald McGregor had insisted on taking little Jean with him when he went to his farm; and since Mrs. Trent could not be separated from her, he carried the mother and the other child with him also, and Dr. Trent's house was very empty. The old Scotchman made a pretence of wishing his sister Elspeth to see the Jean of old repeated again in the fair-haired girl, but the father and mother knew better. Donald had let the other Jean slip through his fingers, to this one he would hold while life should last. Like her grandmother before her, Jean was the only person, his once favorite nephew excepted, he had ever loved, and the rough and forlorn old man growled like a bear at any attempt to rob him of his one treasure.

Since Mrs. Trent and the children were away, Guernsey had no choice but to spend so much more of his time with Mrs. Thirlmore. When not asleep, the restless man yearned to be in some one's company beside that

which he found in his books, issuing rapidly one after another, and becoming daily more and more popular.

"I begin a book with one character," he told Mrs. Thirlmore one evening, "and he or she persists in bringing all sorts of friends and associates with them into the pages. I am nothing but their secretary, and they keep me writing like a slave what they say and do. They are more alive to me than any people I meet along the streets. Why do you not write?"

"I have tried," Mrs. Thirlmore said, exceedingly desirous to please him, — "have tried hard. Not to write only; I have had lessons from the best masters in drawing, painting, modeling in clay. It is not for lack of will, certainly not for want of persistence, but I cannot. I can write ethereal sonnets, sublimated essays, but the moment I try to originate, describe, or even to be interested in any human being, I am as vacant-headed as an idiot. Mr. Guernsey," she said, almost with pathos, "I care nothing for anybody."

"That is," Guernsey asked, "for nobody but yourself? You have concentrated yourself for years — have you not? — upon yourself?" The question was certainly audacious enough, but the instant Guernsey came near Mrs. Thirlmore it was as though he had passed into an atmosphere so cold and clear that he became cold and accurate and energetic too, as never before. "With Mrs. Trent I am all heart," he explained it to himself, "but with this brilliant, vigorous, miserable woman I am all brain."

"I told you," he now said to her, "what a Jean over again your husband's uncle has found in my little pet. Very well, you are your German grandfather risen from the dead, and his peculiarities are intensified in you. He acquired them slowly by reading and reflection; they are in your blood and marrow. Body as well as soul you have gone on from where he left off. Moreover, you are a woman; what was undigested, even brutal, in him, has in you been refined into an essence. You have no more faith in God than you have in man," he added, with his eyes upon her.

"Not an atom," she assented as a matter of course. "I used when a child to play with the Christ as one does with a doll, but I no more believed in him even then than a girl really does in her doll. And if I have no belief in men now, how can I believe in them as existing after death? I do not possess the faculty of faith. Not only there never was such a person as God or Christ, but I am satisfied there has never been a man or woman who really believed there was. But you are the first to whom I have told this."

She was sitting as she spoke upon a sofa near the fire. And Guernsey was leaning against the mantel and looking down upon her. He wondered at her as he gazed. Her dress seemed to fit her as accurately in its colors as in its cut and disposition, and her control over herself was as perfect as the garb she wore. She had never been sick that she could remember, and her health was as vigorous as an excellent constitution, unceasing exercise in the open air, and variety of entertainment could make it. Had she not been so well, she would have been more happy. Long ago she had wearied of her husband. He was a large man in every sense, but she knew him so utterly that she had tired of him as one does of a last year's almanac.

"Her intellect is simply appetite," Guernsey thought, as he looked into her hungry eyes; "it has eaten up everything in reach long ago, now it is consuming itself." But he could say nothing, it would be like talking of colors to one stone-blind.

"I am so glad you came," she said; "with all the rest I am playing a part, and with you I can be myself. When I first came to the city I was as pleased with the Holy Oriflamme as — as — "

"Mrs. Gruffden?" Guernsey suggested.

"As a baby," the lady continued; but it puzzled Guernsey to see the angry color which flushed her face at the name. "Now," she added, "the church is to me nothing but a tawdry theatre with noonday shining into all its wretched shams. Mr. Guernsey," she said

bitterly, "you have no idea *what* a sham the Holy Oriflamme is! As to Mr. Thirlmore—"

"My dear lady," Guernsey ventured.

"I *must* talk," she said as appealingly as a child. "Please listen. You know what a god he is to those people? Well, he is n't a god,—I suppose I ought to know if any one does,—he is nothing at all but a wearisome iteration. I could endure that, but he is a coarse and thoroughly selfish man. He despises the people. Except for his dog Brute, he cares for nothing in the world but himself. We kept a Devon cow once, and every morning he would get up early to feed it. I have seen him standing by that animal, holding out handfuls of grass, talking gently to it as if it were a baby, stroking its nose. I believe that creature loved him, but he has never loved me even as much as that."

"Pardon me, he admires you exceedingly," the other began. "He told me—"

"That was when you first came. Besides, he says a vast deal he does not mean, and admiration is not love. Not that I care," she added in the same breath.

"This woman is made of porcelain," her companion reflected as he looked at the smooth, fair, beautiful coldness of her face. Yet, even as he looked, the eyes which had met his so fearlessly fell, and the childless woman sat in sadness before him. She was in a more desperate strait than Guernsey had any idea of. Moreover, Thirlmore, little as he had shown it to others, was dismayed at the visit of Donald McGregor, and at what he might lose by it. He had not had the shadow of a doubt that he was the Thomas Chalmers his uncle had wished him to be,—that he was more than that. The great Scotch preacher had been well enough in his obsolete era; but he, Thirlmore, was the apostle of another and grander epoch; in comparison with himself, Chalmers was, as he considered, an old woman. Absolutely sure of his own powers he had been contemptuously confident in regard to his uncle. And now? Too well did he know how inflexible the Scotchman was in his absurd crotchets

not to fear the consequences. It was the severest shock of his life. He had a vague consciousness that it had been his wife's influence which had caused him slowly and imperceptibly to abandon the paths in which his uncle would have had him walk. Not that he did not despise the babyish nonsense in which the old man believed; but there was no nonsense in his uncle's money, and he was in terrible need of money, — a need in comparison to which that of Steven Trent even was as nothing. Therefore he had been almost brutal toward his wife; it was she who had lost him the money, if it was lost. There had long been a growing repulsion between them, and he had said things to her of late, in his deliberate way, which no woman ever forgives.

Mrs. Thirlmore sat upon the sofa silently, her hands lying clasped in her lap. With Guernsey she felt more at home, at ease, than she had ever done with any one, even her own sister. No boy among his playmates could have been more frank than he with her. Intellectually cold and clear herself, she found exquisite enjoyment in the genius which combined childlike simplicity with all the fun of a child. It was not only that this brilliant poet, this divine creator of characters which lived and breathed, knew everything and feared nothing. She walked with him in the realm of truth and light; it was a paradise to her, a paradise in which there could be no devil, since there was no God. In her, at last, her German grandfather's hope had been fulfilled: the religious sentiment was extinct. As she lifted her eyes to Guernsey, her sole feeling was that of Thirlmore's big dog Brute toward his master.

An unspeakable pity fell upon her visitor; he turned to the table and took up a volume, still looking at her. "Listen," he said, "I want to read something to you." And he began, —

> "I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
> Wherein at ease for aye to dwell;
> I said, 'O soul, make merry and carouse,
> Dear soul, for all is well.'"

The lady knew the poem, she listened to it languidly at first, but with deepening interest as Guernsey put the soul of meaning into every line, as he read of the glorious palace of art, its lawns and landscapes, its fountains, statues, pictures, apartments, adapted to every varying mood of the craving intellect. He read of the bells which rang out the changing seasons of the soul; of the banquets of music and flowers and wine; of the throne upon which it sat in sublime superiority. The voice of the reader rose exultant as he uttered the triumph of the intellect:—

> "I take possession of man's mind and deed,
> I care not what the sects may brawl.
> I sit as God, holding no form of creed,
> But contemplating all."

It was not Aurora Ann who listened as he read. Mrs. Thirlmore's eyes were fastened upon the face, which grew luminous with the deep intention of the poem. She accepted the eyes, which ever and anon met and poured into hers the undeniable truth of what was read.

> "And so she throve and prospered—"

Guernsey described of the soul which had tried to make a paradise for itself of things merely material and intellectual. His voice grew terrible:—

> "And so she throve and prospered: so three years
> She prospered: on the fourth she fell,
> Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
> Struck through with pangs of hell."

The man read as if inspired. He spared her not a line of the agony of despair which followed when the soul had come to know the emptiness of all it had loved so well,—had come to taste the starvation pangs of an appetite which can be satisfied with God alone:—

> "She howled aloud, 'I am on fire within,
> There comes no murmur of reply.
> What is it that will take away my sin,
> And save me, lest I die?'"

Guernsey almost regretted that he had ventured upon it when he closed the book. The woman sat pale and trembling before him, for her own soul had uttered every word as if in advance of him as he read. The man of genius knew this; but there was so much in addition to this of which he did not conceive!

"She has nothing left her," he thought, as he looked upon her, sitting with downcast eyes, — "no husband, no heaven, no God. She has not even herself left. She is more weary of herself than of all else. And yet," Guernsey meditated, "she is so beautiful, so highly educated, so young! Was there ever a woman with such possibilities of power, loveliness, joy? Her sister is a rose which has bloomed; she is a bud held back by the winter into which she has frozen herself, but a bud which may yet bloom into, ah! what splendor! A flower? She is an angel which has lost its way. What a blessed task it would be —"

The poor woman glanced up at the man who stood as silent before her as a spirit. He was so silent, so steady, he understood her without any words on her part; and his face was beautiful with the deepest, tenderest sympathy for her. She had been so long under restraint, had been so utterly without help! A moment more and she had broken down, — was weeping, weeping convulsively, and as if the tears suppressed during a lifetime were gushing forth.

Unconsciously — so little did he know of himself or of her — he laid his hand upon the head bowed before him. It was the first time a human heart had touched her. She was not rock, only ice; and it was the sun which had smitten her at last. Here was all she knew of Deity; and she fell upon her knees, and looked up at Guernsey through her tears, as believers look up at God. Her hands unconsciously clasped themselves in each other, like those of a child in prayer. Her lips did not move; but she was praying to him, — the first time in her life she ever had really and truly prayed.

Professor Rodney had said that Guernsey was the greatest genius he had known, — meaning by that the intellect of his favorite student. Grumbles did not deny it, but it was his opinion, as we have said before, that Guernsey had even more genius of the heart than of the head. Whether or no victory over opium as well as over pain had wrought in him something which only death can do for others, certain it is that the genius of the man lay in his soul. Now Mrs. Thirlmore's visitor had his weaknesses, errors, perversities; but beneath them his soul had been made loyal to law, which is God. In its purity lay its power. It was not that he was not as profoundly touched as a man of his sensibilities can be with the pitiful agony of the woman, nor that there was not a part of himself which abandoned itself to her on the instant. To its centre his soul too trembled before the shock; but, as with Joseph in Egypt, there came on the instant another person betwixt him and the woman. Unspeakably affecting as that fair, forlorn, desperate face was, the countenance of Christ came between. "How can I do this great wickedness," he exclaimed, unconscious that he spoke, "and sin against God?"

He was all in a tremble; the tears were in his eyes; but he was to her as glorious as an angel as he took her head between his hands, kissed her upon the brow as a brother might have done, and was gone.

As she sat upon the sofa, after his departure, her husband sauntered into the parlor from the library with Brute at his heels. The folding-doors had been partly open, — in all likelihood he had heard what had passed. In her misery she did not care. And yet she was not as wretched as she had been. If she were superior to her husband, it was not as Guernsey was superior to her, — that was a superiority, she felt, of kind as well as degree. It was as though an inhabitant of the world in which she had once believed had stooped to her and vanished, — it was as if she had a glimpse of God himself.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

REST.

WITHIN a month after Mrs. Trent and her children accompanied Donald McGregor to his home, her husband had a letter from her announcing the death of his Aunt Elspeth. For many years, the woman had been growing sterner, more silent. From her infancy almost, she had been trained to work, hard and ceaseless work, until she had come to begin her daily duties at dawn, and persist steadily in them until dark, with the mechanical precision and persistence of a machine. Her life among the rocks of the farm had been a solitary one, for Donald and herself had been associated together so long, each already knew all that the other thought and felt so perfectly, that there was little to communicate, and days would pass with scarce a word between the brother and sister.

"I am sure," Revel wrote to her husband, "that she knew and was as much displeased at her son's course as Uncle. They both look upon it, I think, with a deeper and more silent horror than if he had killed some one. 'Judas sold his Lord,' Uncle said one night when he was reading at prayers about the traitor, 'but he did na set up as an apostle of apostasy,' — and that is the only allusion which has been made to Mr. Thirlmore in my hearing. And yet, strange to say," Mrs. Trent continued, "I believe that both of them have, none the less, a grim pride in the sturdy, defiant, unyielding way in which Mr. Thirlmore pursues his course, without reference to them or to any one else. Aunt Elspeth was kind, but nothing more, to the children and myself. Last Wednesday night, she kissed little Jean when I was taking her out of the room to put her to bed. She had never done so before. She did not come out of her room

next morning. I suppose it was the first time since they have lived here together that she was not up before any one else. I was in the breakfast room with Jean and little Guernsey, when Uncle came back from her room. 'She is gone!' it was all he said. At first I could not understand, but his face was so terrible to see, that I ran to her room and found her lying in her bed, stern and white and cold in death. Evidently she had died without a struggle. Come up with Mr. Thirlmore immediately. Uncle will hardly allow Jean out of his sight. He is so — so tearless, and — I cannot express it, — rigid, unyielding, that I feel as if he might break suddenly."

When Dr. Trent hurried to Thirlmore's house, he found that he also had received a line from Mrs. Trent, and was in the act of going to the depot; and it struck the physician how much his cousin was like his mother. As Trent knew, Thirlmore had been in trouble before the news came, but he was not a man to be consoled even then. He listened, but said almost nothing in reply, as the two walked rapidly together to the cars. They had not been intimate when boys, and they had developed in opposite directions since. It was some time since they had met, and even Trent was not prepared for the degree to which the other seemed to have retreated into himself from any sympathy. The physician tried to understand it as they rode along in the train, side by side, yet, in reality, so far apart.

"It is not," he reasoned with himself, "that he is suffering so much. I never knew a man who seemed so incapable of great suffering. Certainly he has no depth or intensity of either thought or feeling, and yet he seems to have retired into himself. I cannot understand it."

But Trent did understand, only he was unwilling to acknowledge it to himself. Guernsey had expressed the truth when he said one day of Thirlmore, "The other Napoleon may have wrapped himself in the solitude of his own originality; but this Emperor simply

wraps himself up in himself. I was in Washington last week," Guernsey went on to say, "and was present when an Indian chief and his party had a talk with the President. The red rascal was a superb animal to look at, and had feathered and painted himself up to the highest degree. When his turn came to speak, he drew himself up, and he *was* a splendid specimen, and, looking straight over the head of the President, he said, 'Me big Injun!' That is Thirlmore. He is not a learned man, nobody regards him as a particularly talented man; he is simply a big, strong, healthy fellow, who believes supremely in himself. Do you observe, he never assents to anything? he feels that for him to assent is for him to surrender. It is wonderful," Guernsey had philosophized, "what force lies in thorough conviction. A man believes in money so steadily that his making money is matter of course. Paul had such faith in Christ that few who heard, or even read him, could help believing in Christ too. Thirlmore has confidence in himself, so unhesitating and absolute, that he constrains other people to believe in him also, — that he himself has no occasion to believe in God any more than he has to believe in man. And I tell you what," Guernsey added, "to a certain degree that man is right. You cannot help admiring him, and I am glad, my fine fellow, that *you* have grown out of your femininity into a heartier dependence upon yourself, as well as upon others and upon God." Trent thought of it now.

When the cousins reached the farm, everything had been already arranged for the funeral, and the dead woman was committed to the grave the day after their arrival, in a silent fashion, so far as the relatives were concerned, which was a continuance of all that had gone before. As far as any one could know, Donald McGregor and Thirlmore had no private conversation whatever with each other. Before and after the funeral, the popular minister seemed to find his only companionship among the dumb creatures upon the place. He was in the stable with the horses and oxen, in the meadow

among the cows, or on the barren slopes with the sheep about him all the time. Even at the grave, Trent noticed that Thirlmore stopped to stroke the noses of the horses which drew the carriage, as he turned, when the service was ended, to get into it again. The man was not conscious of it, it was his nature.

At the suggestion of his wife, Trent consented to her remaining upon the farm for another month.

"Uncle says he cannot part with Jean," Revel wrote to her husband after he had returned home, "she seems to be the last thing left him. Not that he pets her, I do not think he has ever kissed her of his own motion since the first hour he saw her. He has never made her a present even of a doll, or a bit of candy, and yet — is it not strange? — Jean loves him as much as he does her. She climbs into his lap when he sits down, as a matter of course, runs after him almost every time he leaves the house, insists upon sitting by him at table. And he is such a rough old man too, it is very singular! I do not think," Mrs. Trent continued, "that he cares anything for you or me, and he seems hardly to know that little Guernsey is on the place, yet he will listen to the prattle of Jean for hours, his hand upon her head. I am almost afraid of him, she is not. Yesterday she was gone with him all the morning to where the sheep are grazing, and when they came home, — would you believe it, Steven? — she had made Uncle McGregor take her upon his back. I chanced to look out of the window, and the little darling was on his broad shoulder, her golden hair flying to the breeze, her arm around his white head, the other hand full of flowers; and she was talking and laughing as if she had been accustomed to him her life long. He is so lonely, please allow us to stay a little longer."

There never was a lovelier woman than Mrs. Trent; but, being a woman, she could not refrain from a postscript, and therefore she now added across the page: "One thing more I *must* tell you about our Jean. You know the picture you gave her last Christmas, — chromo,

lithograph, which is it? — of the head of Christ, as large as life. I did not like her to have such a present, why did you do it? Jean likes it, as you know, and made me put it into her trunk when we came. She found it yesterday when I was getting something out, and — do you know? — she insisted upon pasting it upon the wall over her bed as it was at home. Uncle objected to it violently at first, — it savors of Popery, — but Jean began to cry and he consented. He spoils our darling, for there is the picture over her bed, and Uncle pretends not to see it when he takes her up to go to sleep. Again good-by, dear."

Trent let them stay, but at the end of the month he came to the farm to take his wife and children home. Donald McGregor had become, suddenly, an older man since his sister's death, although his mind was as clear as his body was strong. He seemed to be astonished that his nephew had even thought of taking Jean away. But Dr. Trent could be as firm as he, and explained how impossible it was for him to be separated from his family. Then the Scotchman urged him to abandon the city, and make his home upon the farm. But the other would not do it. He had secured a good practice in the city, and could not think of such a thing. Mrs. Trent should bring Jean as often as she could, they would always be glad to see him at their house in town, but they could do no more than that.

It was pitiful to see the way in which Jean clung to the old man the morning when they were to return to their home. She climbed into his arms, and as from within a fortress of rock, positively, and for the first time in her life, refused to obey and go with her father and mother.

"I won't yeave my yuncle," she said, both hands clenched, the one on his coat and the other in his grizzled beard. "*Bad* papa to make me yeave, *bad* mamma!" And the conscience of the parents hurt them so much that they stayed another day. The same battle had to be fought the next morning. There was nothing to do, however, but to compel Jean to go, and they departed.

But Jean, with that wisdom above all knowledge which we call love, quieted herself at last in a sure expectation. Every morning early she was in wait at the window, or upon the door-step, and in less than a week after their return Mrs. Trent heard her joyful outcry, and the child came in from the street bringing Donald McGregor in triumph with her. She was all he had, and he could not live without her.

So he came and went between the farm and the city, sometimes taking the mother and the other child with him on a long visit. When the next winter came, he took up his abode with the Trents. Now and then he would visit New York and other cities in which his business had lain. Occasionally he would go out in pleasant weather to look after his farm, never remaining away for more than a week. When in the city, he would loiter around the places of merchandise, interest himself in the commercial papers at the reading-rooms, going regularly to their mission church with the family on Sundays, becoming interested even in Tom Hammersley and his now prosperous Works. On afternoons, when the weather was suitable, he would take Jean out to ride or walk with him, but he never asked any one else to go. Thirlmore's name was never mentioned by him, nor did he allude to his property. He had never been liberal with money, but Dr. and Mrs. Trent wondered that he gave so little to their struggling church, that he dressed so plainly, denying himself rigidly everything beyond what was necessary. He spent nothing even upon Jean, and seemed to grow almost miserly as the days rolled by.

When the spring came again, he was become an old, old man, going out less and less, the singular affection between Jean and himself constantly growing stronger. When he could not leave his room, Jean made it her playground, she and her dolls and little wagons, cradle, and tea-sets taking undisputed possession of every table and corner. One afternoon, when midsummer had arrived, Mrs. Trent chanced to come into the room. Jean's picture-papers, flowers, dolls, books, were scattered about,

and she herself was lying asleep in the Scotchman's arms. It was a beautiful sight. The old man was leaning back in his arm-chair, asleep also, the yellow tresses of the child mingled with his white beard, an arm thrown over her as she lay cuddled up to him, her lips parted, her breathing deep and regular, her cheeks rosy with health. Something in the peaceful aspect of the old merchant struck Mrs. Trent, and she drew nearer. Suddenly she sprang forward with a cry, laid her hand upon the child to lift her away, and then refrained for the moment at least and called her husband. He hastened to her side, but even then he also was unwilling to separate the two who had loved each other so well, they were sleeping together so sweetly. But the older of them was to awake no more in this world.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE HOLY ORIFLAMME FOR THE LAST TIME.

UPON the third Monday after the burial of his uncle, Thirlmore attained the most brilliant triumph of his life. He had long been considered the most conspicuous minister of the city. At whatever hotel a stranger sojourned, he would learn upon asking at the office of a Sunday morning that Thirlmore was the preacher he ought by all means to hear, and residents of whatever denomination, or none at all, invariably took their visitors to hear him as one of the leading attractions of the city. For many winters, he had lectured far and wide with great applause and large profits, and his photograph was a principal feature in the windows of the book-stores. It was an unusual thing if his sermon of the day before did not appear in some one of the papers on Monday. Whenever an anniversary took place,

or a public dinner was given to distinguished people from abroad, he was sure to hold a prominent position, and whenever he passed along the streets he left a heaving wave as of a steamship behind him in the numbers of people who turned to look after, and to call the attention of others to him. He had grown accustomed to hearing, as he went into a book-store or stopped to glance in at a window, the whisper, "That is Thirlmore," on the right hand or the left, and to wearing an aspect of utter unconsciousness thereat.

On the Monday alluded to, he was to make an address at the presentation of a set of colors to the crack regiment of the city. A good deal of the wealth and social position of the community was enrolled in its ranks, and the Church of the Holy Oriflamme was besieged for seats long before the hour of opening. At last the regiment arrived, gorgeous in its new uniform, and marched in preceded by its band of music. It was a splendid spectacle. The galleries were packed with many of the most beautiful women in the city, and all that the florists could do to decorate the platform, organ, columns, ceiling, had been done. Upon either side the speaker's desk were displayed the new flags, while a large banner canopied the whole. On the left and on the right of Thirlmore were clustered the officials of the city government, Gruffden the most conspicuous, as he was the most restless of them all. In contrast with the black broadcloth which these wore, the officers of the regiment shone forth in scarlet and gold.

It was a grand success. The organ pealed, the band made the building to reverberate with the rattle of kettle-drums, the lights flashed upon bayonet and drawn sword, the word of command lifted the ranks as one man for prayer, and seated them afterward in long lines to listen. As to Thirlmore, the event justified his election to the duty, which he had taken as matter of course. Now, as ever, the man asserted himself against the occasion, as a billow lifts itself the higher, and dashes its crest of foam so much the more defiantly, against a strong wind.

A goodly part of the effect of the address was owing to the frame-work of circumstance, — that could not be denied. There was nothing original in it, nothing deep, new, or of any particular value. But the orator was of noble appearance, his voice was strong and sustained, and he evidently attached such estimate both to himself and to every sentence he deliberately uttered, that the audience fell instinctively into his key, and accepted things at his estimate; more especially as the building, audience, decorations, music, standing of the regiment, and all, were accepted as parts of the oration.

Whether serpents have power to attract and fascinate birds or not, there is a power in that which we most abhor to draw and fasten our attention, and Vandoren had, and as against his own protest, been swept into the crowd which thronged the back seats. Squeezed into an ignominious corner, he looked only at Thirlmore. The occasion, with all its glare and glitter, was nothing to him whatever. As the money for which the traitor had sold himself, and the rope with which he had hung himself, were forgotten by Peter and John in comparison with Judas himself and his crime, so Vandoren was oblivious to everything there except the popular preacher.

"Iscariot?" Vandoren demanded of himself. "Yes, and Rehoboam which caused Israel to sin. Ahab. Solomon given over to his heathen wives and idols! Belshazzar with all his lords! And Nebuchadnezzar, — yes, Nebuchadnezzar!"

It was a little strange. Thirlmore had just taken his seat as Vandoren muttered this to himself, and, handkerchief in hand, was saying to himself while the band played, "There is not in the world a finer sight than this, and I believe it is pretty much of it my doing."

Though he did not say so, not even the monarch of the Babylon which *he* had built could have been more thoroughly satisfied with himself. It was not a matter to be discussed, like his personal appearance, it was a thing of course.

The orator accepted the congratulations tendered him

while the audience were dispersing, as a visitor accepts his hat from a servant when a banquet is ended. He stayed behind, for there was to be a meeting of the trustees of the church. Something had got into Gruffden of late. He had become shy of his pastor, reticent in company when Thirlmore was mentioned, cross and even violent to the clerks in his office; people did not know what to make of him. To Thirlmore it was as when his old uncle had turned against him. He cared for it, of course, since loss was threatened, but with the assault came self-assertion also; with the wind the wave began to arise, the harder the wind, so much the higher the billow would be.

When the trustees came together about their table in the vestry, down-stairs, they were already informed as to the finances of the church, but not in regard to the way Mr. Gruffden looked at them of late. By dint of natural ability, and of supernatural energy in asserting that ability, Mr. Gruffden had made astonishing progress. In politics no man was more known or feared. He assumed that evidence, judge, jury, was upon his side when he had a case in court, and when an election impended he was equally confident as to voters. His position was already high, and everybody knew it to be but a stepping-stone to something a good deal higher. Like a flag, he was always in the van, and to see his red face and prosperous appearance was to be inspired with a certainty of victory; the more so, as he could rally more rapidly after defeat than any one else. Of personal sensitiveness he knew nothing. Loss of money he could comprehend, but he no more felt mortification after defeat, than he did apprehension before it came.

No man had been as enthusiastic and confident in reference to the Holy Oriflamme as he. The expenses were very heavy, but the result was assured. It was he who had obtained Thirlmore to become its pastor, and he advertised his minister if possible more than he did himself. But some change had smitten him. People whispered to each other and laughed in these latter

days when his name came up. They had an odd way of glancing at Mrs. Gruffden when they saw her. The minister saw what impended when Mr. Gruffden arose to address the Board of Trustees. He was more than angry, for the first time in his life he was awkward, but he floundered so much the more violently on that account. There were reasons for what he had to say which he could not even hint at, and he had to put the force belonging to them into lesser causes. But his speech was to the point. The church, he remarked, had cost enormously in the first place. Not only did the debt remain unpaid, but the income had been insufficient to meet the interest on the mortgages when the current expenses were met, and they were far worse off now than when the enterprise had been started. A few had put their hands into their purse, but they would do so no more. Every expedient had been resorted to in vain. Things could be concealed no longer. He, Mr. Gruffden, had allowed his own affairs to go to the devil while he rushed about in behalf of the church, and he saw at last that it was of no use. The only thing to do was to let matters take their course.

There was an ominous silence, and, since no one else had anything to say, the pastor arose and suggested all that could be said as to a continuance of the experiment. He was very cool, and what he said was even eloquent, but it was of the same sort as his eloquence upon the platform up-stairs, — it sounded well, but substance was lacking. Now absence of substance did not matter where only a sermon was concerned. People were not called on to do or to be anything in consequence of what they had then heard; they went away delighted, and that was the end of it. Now something had to be done! "By Jove, *done!*" as Mr. Gruffden said.

What could be the matter with Gruffden? However he tried to conceal it, it was evident that he was exasperated at the minister. He was confused when he rose to reply to Thirlmore, fumbled with the guard of his watch, picked up and threw down the pen-holders lying

upon the table, looked in every direction but at him, and spoke at last more pointedly, because more angrily, than before. He did not care for doctrine himself, not a snap, he said; but Mr. Thirlmore had driven off all the old and substantial people who did. People had swarmed in, but how much did they contribute to the funds? "Bah! how much? Ask the treasurer! The fact is," and by this time Mr. Gruffden had managed to fall into his tone as a lawyer, and there was none shrewder, "Mr. Thirlmore is *not* a pastor. No one denies that he is an orator, but look at it. Other churches rooted themselves in the hearts of the children trained in Sunday school and Bible class. Had Mr. Thirlmore seen to that?" Mr. Gruffden asked. "I can name scores of churches," he said, "in town, which have intrenched themselves in the hearts and homes of the poor, of the aged, of the afflicted. Is our church thus intrenched? No, sir! There are dozens of pastors I can mention who have linked men to them as by hooks of steel, because" — and by this time Mr. Gruffden had himself fairly before his jury — "those pastors have gone after them into cellars of poverty, into dens of infamy, and have rescued them, — rescued them, gentlemen, from intemperance, licentiousness. Grateful wives fill those pews, men otherwise in jail or in dishonored graves hang upon the gospel there preached, youths ransomed from the grasp of scepticism and worldliness gather strength to stand under such ministrations. And how is it, gentlemen, with us? Alas! you know too well. Great heavens! we have been isolated and cut off from our own denomination," — and Mr. Gruffden was affected almost to tears at the thought. "Good people shake their heads over us. We have estranged from us the supplications and — yes, gentlemen — the *wealth* of the best men! For years we have had displays of eloquence, poesy, brilliant oratory. Who denies the talent of our pastor? But —"

When Mr. Gruffden sat down at last, all present felt that matters had reached a crisis.

"The Holy Oriflamme is," Guernsey had remarked, and more than once, to Trent, "but an enormous bubble. Apart from the weekly breath of its pastor it is nothing, big and brilliant as it seems, but the frailest of films." But now Thirlmore and the trustees, Gruffden excepted, came with energy to the rescue. Guernsey must have been mistaken. Strong resolutions were adopted, a statement was carefully prepared and widely circulated, in which the most sanguine assurances were given, and a special committee was set to work to do whatever else might be needed. Multitudes of people hastened, by letter or in person, calling upon him, waiting behind for the purpose after service on Sundays, or along the streets, to assure the popular preacher that he should be sustained.

"Who cares for Gruffden?" Thirlmore remarked in general. "The Church never has been as packed or as prosperous as it has been since Gruffden's scare. It was a magnificent advertisement for us, that is all!"

CHAPTER XL.

REVOLUTION.

SOME time before his death, Donald McGregor placed his will in the hands of the firm in New York which had managed his law business when he was a merchant in that city. They had drawn it up for him, and when he ceased to live upon his farm it was the more necessary that it should be left in their hands for safe keeping. Except to them the old Scotchman had never spoken a word upon the subject to any one, and Trent and Thirlmore were utterly ignorant of its provisions when they were summoned, the week after the military address of the latter, to attend the opening of the will in New York.

It chanced that they journeyed together in the same train, and time was when Dr. Trent would have sought out his cousin and enjoyed his company, but he did not do so now. It was not because he did not have as sincere an affection for him. There was no man who knew and valued the nobler qualities of the minister of the Holy Oriflamme as Trent did ; his very soul went out to him with cordial desire, but he did not put it into words. The once ardent and impulsive youth had kept his fire unquenched, and the more intense that he now held both the smoke and the flame thereof within bounds. He still made the passionate outcries of the Psalmist his own, but he had learned that, like David, he must rule wisely and fight valiantly also, and the physician had become a stronger man in consequence. None stood higher in his profession than he, and men agreed that what Dr. Trent said or did was but a small part of what he was capable of being when the time came.

When the nephews arrived at the office of the legal firm in New York, the senior partner was himself awaiting them. He was a little, dried-up old man, whose emaciated body seemed altogether too feeble for the fine head, with a nose like the beak of an eagle, which it had to support. The lawyer had reached distinction in political life also ; but he had known Donald McGregor so long, the property disposed of in his will was so great, that he had chosen to be himself the one who should read the will to the heirs. He seemed to be as cold as polished, and Thirlmore and Trent felt as though they had to do with a distinguished surgeon rather than lawyer ; but they also felt strengthened by the very aspect of the lawyer for what was to come.

" My old client was a determined, a very determined man," the lawyer said, after all three were comfortably seated within an inner and handsomely furnished apartment. Eulogy exhausted itself in the words, which had the effect of an epigram also, coming from lips so thin and finely-cut, and Dr. Trent noticed that the hand which held the bulky will was as fair as that of a lady, and

even frailer. Wine was upon the table, and, after offering it to the others in vain, the surgeon of the hour took a glass himself, opened the will, and began to read.

The nephews had known their uncle too well not to be somewhat prepared for what followed. Yet not altogether. They knew that he was rich, but they had no idea of how very rich he was. The farm in Vermont was bequeathed to Thirlmore, because, as the document stated, it had once belonged to the father of that nephew and because he had been born upon it. Beyond that there was no mention whatever of him. A goodly amount of bank-stock was bequeathed to Mrs. Trent, but it was stated that this had been done at the special request of "my sister Elspeth, who regarded her as an excellent Christian woman."

The remainder was willed to Dr. Steven Trent, in trust for his daughter Jean, whose relationship to the testator was fully defined. The lawyer who read the document was mentioned as the person with whom Dr. Trent was to advise, and three old merchants of New York were associated with Jean's father in a subordinate sense, but Steven himself was chief executor, at a certain percentage of compensation upon the amount bequeathed. On her coming of age, the property was to be turned over to Jean. If she should die before that date, it was to be equally divided between the benevolent Boards of the testator's denomination, which were duly defined. That was all.

"And now, gentlemen, you will certainly take some refreshment," the lawyer said, when he laid the document down; and he rang a little bell and rubbed his hands softly, the one over the other, as if he were washing them after an operation. To judge from his manner, it had been a serious but successful one. Thirlmore had declined to lay aside his hat when he had taken his seat, and he rose with it still in his hand, as a colored waiter came in with a silver tray and napkins.

"You will have some refreshment, sir?" the courtly old lawyer asked, as he also arose.

"Thank you, I believe not," and Thirlmore placed his hat deliberately upon his head, and walked out of the room, forgetting to do more than to bid his companions a brief good-morning.

"Your cousin is a fine-looking man," the lawyer remarked, as he sat down again. "I am told that he is an eloquent divine. He seems to be a strong man. Have a glass of wine, sir."

The lawyer pushed the papers further out of his way, took a generous bumper himself, and added: "It is a favorite study of mine, the law of descent. I do not refer to property, although that also is very interesting; it is to the descent of the ancestor himself or herself to the descendant. My old client has said in this document that he leaves such and such property to your little daughter, the very picture, he told me, of her grandmother, his favorite sister. Very well. Please observe, however, that temperament,, idiosyncrasy, what we call character, goes in other channels than those of legal writings, — in the veins, in the bones, in the fundamental formation of the soul itself. Mr. Thirlmore inherits his character, inherits, so to speak, himself through his mother from the same source as my old friend Mr. McGregor, and one peculiarity of a strong character is, as I have found, that almost its only companionship with relatives is that of contest. Allow me to fill your glass. No? Well, in regard to this trust of yours — "

It was some hours before the gentlemen separated. During the examination of papers, and consultation in reference to investments, the newly-made trustee was evidently thinking of something else.

"I see," the astute lawyer said, as they shook hands at parting, "that you are troubled in regard to your cousin. You did right in saying nothing to him before he left, he would have resented it. I do not mind telling you that I tried to induce my client to bequeath Mr. Thirlmore a larger property, but he would not. 'If the mon had any system in what he preached,' he said to me, 'if he had gone into some fause doctrine as into a regular business,

it would na be as bad. But he 's nathing but a neer-do-weel in his vary releegion, a puir shiftless body like his father before him.' He is a determined man? I asked him. 'Hoot, yes,' your old uncle said, 'his Scotch blood maks him obstinate, but it 's an obstinate spendthrift of sound doctrine that he is.'"

"My uncle," Trent replied, as the other opened the door, "was, as you remarked, a resolute man, and yet —" he paused as he thought of it, — "and yet he was as wax in the unconscious hands of little Jean."

"Very true," the lawyer hastened to assent, "and though it is none of my business I am sure it is so in some way with Mr. Thirlmore. He has been influenced, warped, I fear, from what he would have been by some subtle, let us say feminine hand. We lawyers meet instances of the kind every day. As a rule, a woman is at the bottom of everything, good or bad. I am detaining you, sir. Good morning. Allow me merely to add, that I do not know who is the Jean in the case of our friend, but I confess I should like to meet the lady, would like very much indeed to know her. Good morning."

CHAPTER XLI.

CONUNDRUM STILL.

HIS trouble had been so long and severe that Steven Trent could not realize at once the sudden relief. "It is as though manacles had fallen, not merely from ankle, wrist, and neck, but from heart and soul," he said to his wife on his return home. "It is more than that, for the sense of guilt, of cruel crime, has gone with the fetters."

"Crime?" There was something deeper than a new youth and beauty in Mrs. Trent, — gladness after long-

continued grief had given a subtle freshness as of childhood to her very accents. "Crime? Guilt?" she asked.

"Yes. Although I was doing my best, I never saw a creditor," Trent replied, "without a stinging shame as for something dishonorable I had done. But of all persons alive, it is his wife whom a husband is most ashamed to see under such circumstances. God bless you, Revel! no woman could have borne herself better than you have done, but for my life I could not shake off the feeling of crime committed against you —"

"Morbid man," the wife interrupted, and her kiss was, to him and to her, like the first given to him years ago. O the morning freshness, the inexpressible sweetness of pleasure after pain! "But I am glad of all our troubles," she said, and kissed him again and again, for she was like a school-girl.

Little Jean had been put to bed, for it was after supper; but hearing the kisses she scrambled out of her crib and came between her father and mother in her night-dress, her golden hair about her shoulders, to claim her share of love. Climbing into her father's lap, an arm around his neck, another about that of her mother, she kissed them alternately, and all three were silent. Many a rude sorrow was to shake them afterward, but life just then was brimmed with a gladness which was made up of peace and love.

"I thought of my sister," Mrs. Trent said, an hour later, "from the first. As I have told you so often, I can think of little else. For some time, now, I have tried to go to her every day. As often as I could, I have taken the children with me. But we have drifted so far apart. I do not know what to think of her, Steven," Mrs. Trent said, with a troubled brow. "She seems to care little or nothing for her husband, — at least, she is not proud of him as she used to be. You know how she despised Grandfather Vandyke and our church people. I fear —"

"That she despises the Holy Oriflamme more than she did your old church, and Thirlmore more than she

did your poor grandfather? I have no doubt of it," said Trent. "She has a contempt for everything, for herself, alas! most of all. It is because she has no faith, no faith in anything in heaven or earth."

"Yes, but," Mrs. Trent replied, "there is something more than that, — what *can* it be?" — and, with her hands clasped in each other as they lay in her lap, she sat buried in thought.

"What I fear," her husband said, "is what she may do. I should not be surprised if she left Thirlmore. And then what? She must do something. Will she write bitter books, like her grandfather, Professor Rodenstein? I should not be astonished if she were to go out lecturing upon free religion, or — God help her! — upon free love for what I know! Not that she cares for any theory or for anything. She is desperate, that is all. — Revel," he continued, getting up and beginning to pace the floor, "can we not think of something to do?"

"We have tried everything," Mrs. Trent said, her eyes still resting in the fire; "if I only understood — "

"Suppose we go to see her to-morrow? I want to have a full conversation with Thirlmore too. Because," Trent added, "if some highly-educated scoundrel came along, some talented rascal, she is such a beautiful woman, you know; — who can tell what might happen? Yes, we must go."

"Certainly, dear, gladly," — but Mrs. Trent did not lift her head as she said it. "Neither you nor I, any more than her husband, can do anything with her," she continued. "It was only Jean who could touch your old uncle, and who, who can reach her?"

"Listen," her husband said. "I want to read to you what Guernsey writes in a letter which came to-day." And he took it from his pocket. "I have been thinking of Thirlmore. He has not a parishioner who really likes him more than I do. I am a sceptic as to preachers in general, as I have often told you. They are good men, pure men, single-hearted, hard-working fellows as ever lived, but why is it that they are not manlier than they

are? 'Dog of a priest!' is what I heard Italians say whenever they saw one on the streets. You know how it is in Russia, the clergy have no social standing whatever, — police in petticoats, that is all they are. Our ministers are infinitely superior, of course; but why will people class them with the ladies? They did not mistake — if your good wife will pardon me — Luther for a woman. You cannot imagine John Knox as resembling Mary Queen of Scots. Now, with all his selfishness, Thirlmore has a certain rough grandeur about him. He brings to mind the old barons who used to lord it along the Rhine. Thirlmore is a Goth and a brute, if you say so; but — I like him. Imagine that big fellow burned to dust in the consuming fires of love to Christ, — of such love as he could not fail to feel if he could but come to see Christ. What an apostle would arise from the ashes! What a Paul out of such a Saul!"

"Yes, who can tell," Trent added, as he folded up the letter, "but that Thirlmore may do some grand work even yet? A good long stay on his wilderness of a farm may make a sort of John the Baptist of him; a serious sickness, a severe accident, might do it. Guernsey is right; when people are drawn to a man, as we all were to Thirlmore, it is a sterling something in him which draws, depend upon it."

"Is there? But it is of Peace I am thinking," Mrs. Trent said.

Guernsey was doing the same thing as he sat in his house upon the little island off the Carolina coast, to which he had gone the day he had parted from Mrs. Thirlmore. He had fled because he dared not stay. For weeks he had lain very ill, nursed by his black "mammy" as when he was a baby. He had struggled out of bed at last, thinking to tear himself out of the clinging memories which held him by writing something, — a poem, a play, anything, nothing. He wrote busily enough, but it was only to throw what he had written into the fire unread. At last he gave it up, and sat cowering, pale and worn out, over the ashes, trying —

day after day — to think out a future for the one woman he had ever loved. "Thirlmore knows as much about her," he reasoned with himself, "as if she had lived in Athens more than two thousand years ago. I am separated from her forever, but not as much so, poor fellow," — and he halted from his thinking to contemplate the absent husband, — "as you are. Athens? Yes, and she is Aspasia. But you are not Pericles, you poor Thirlmore, — at best you are only a half Hercules. Aspasia? But who can imagine an Aspasia who had known and despised the Christ?" The thought seemed to change the current in him, and he got up and limped painfully to and fro across his narrow room, which was littered with books and torn manuscripts. "You have your notions, have you, poor Aspasia, your little negations about God and hereafter? Your winter has made frost-flowers upon your window-pane, has it? You darling! a fire burning upon your hearthstone within would melt such whimsies soon enough. But what before all your angels do *you* mean," he said, stopping and looking upward with extended hands, "by allowing the devil to kindle the fire."

It did no good to pace about his room; he put on his hat and strolled hither and thither round his little island. There were not in it three hundred acres in all, and not two hundred acres of that could be given to cotton and corn, — the negroes, under the care of one of themselves as overseer, being the laziest of mortals. Guernsey was the only white person there; but he hid himself none the less among the rocks which bulwarked his property from the sea, lying and looking upon the water, or roaming here and there as the humor seized him. Another week of reflection drove him almost beside himself. One morning he got out of his sleepless bed.

"Mammy," he said to his nurse at breakfast, "I must go and talk it over with Mrs. Trent."

"Must you, honey? Bless your heart, so I would," she assented from behind his chair, as she would have done if he had proposed going to the moon.

"Never mind how badly I look," he said to Trent and his wife, after he had been with them a week, "I was talking about Thirlmore. Do you think his career is going to end? Not at all. He is young and full of strength. Your old uncle lived, made money, died; — is that the end of him? There was a Scotch Jean who lived and loved and died, but here" — and he lifted little Jean into the air as he spoke — "is another morning-haired Aurora in her place. Live forever, my queen!" he said, as he kissed her; "but you may die, too, any day, and then, presto! away flies the fortune. You were poor yesterday, you are rich to-day. By the by, did you ever think of it? Jesus is the Incarnation of God, but look out, Trent! Money is the metallization of — which is it? God or Satan? Yes, you were poor yesterday, are very rich to-day, but you may be poorer than ever to-morrow. Why, look at it. The Old Testament Church fell. Vandoren says the Christian Church is tumbling about our ears. Very soon the world will break like a bubble. Your uncle came from Scotland to America, he has gone from America to heaven, is a very Scotch angel there this moment, — and are we not all to go some day?"

"I don't understand you." Mrs. Trent said it almost gravely; she had never seen Guernsey's cheek so pallid, his eyes so brilliant; he had always chattered like a squirrel when with them. Now it was as though he had fever; under the ashes of his pallor a fire was burning fiercely.

"Not understand me?" he said. "Don't you remember how I used to talk of my great poem, idyl, drama, that was going on all the time? My poor books have never interested me half as much. You, madam, and your sister, Trent and Thirlmore, your uncle and Gruffden, were the leading characters. Do you think the play is over? God's operas never end, — there is merely a change of scene, the stage darkens and brightens, the music sinks or swells higher, that is all. Because His *dramatis personæ*, his men and women, are as eternal as Himself. Ascent is, thank God, the law of existence. Five acts and a *dénouement?* No; the drama has not

halted for six thousand years, and won't stop when the world ends."

Mrs. Trent looked at him with curious eyes. "I wish I knew," she said, "what part my sister is to play henceforth."

Guernsey had put Jean upon the floor, and had got up as she said it. He had come from his island for the purpose of putting this very question, yet he could not endure it. Besides, what could they tell him? Dr. Trent, Mrs. Trent, Thirlmore, — who understood Peace but himself? Peace was even more ignorant of herself than they. "I believe I must go," he said.

Mrs. Trent looked at him suddenly, sharply; her face flushed, she only bowed her head as she sat. When her husband came back from accompanying Guernsey to the door, he stood before her in surprise, her agitation was such. "I was afraid it was so," she said.

"O, and *he* is to be my talented scoundrel, Guernsey is to be my gifted rascal, is he?" Trent said, when his wife had explained herself. "I am glad of it. I am no more afraid of him than I am of — of — *you*, my dear. But I am sorry for him, and O how sorry I am for *her!*"

"He will leave for his home to-day," Mrs. Trent said.

She was right. An hour after, Guernsey was in the cars, and flying from that which could not be escaped.

CHAPTER XLII.

WRECK.

"I WILL never go into another church again, not as long as I live, — and *all* the old Oriflamme people say so!"

It was Mrs. Gruffden who said it to her husband one night at tea, and she said it for the hundredth time; for,

in spite of all effort, the Holy Oriflamme had ceased to exist. She was plumper, prettier than ever; the difficulty was that she was becoming too rosy, too plump. No one could have desired a handsomer house, the furniture was all that could be wished. As to jewelry, unless she had become Oriental, and hung it upon the end of her nose, place could not have been found about her for more. Her hand, if large, and somewhat red in consequence of hard work in the country before marriage, sparkled with diamonds as she lifted her coffee-cup to her lips, and, shaking her head, repeated, "No, I will never darken a church door again as long as I live."

But her husband did not seem as conscious of her ample charms as he should have been. He was dressed in the slovenly style which befits the patriot who is always before the people for office; and the entire man, to judge from his face, was pulpy, purple, apparently on the eve of copious perspiration. His head fell a little, his countenance darkened, as his wife spoke.

"All the others are so pokey! Mr. Thirlmore is the only preacher," the lady persisted, "I ever cared to hear, — the rest are not worth a row of pins; they are as cross and sour as can be, and I never will go to hear another of them, never! They all say so, — our people do. Not a soul of them goes to church anywhere."

Mrs. Gruffden was partly right; attendance upon the Holy Oriflamme had, in fact, curiously unfitted its people to be thereafter anything more than the merest spectators, whatever sanctuary they might afterward patronize for the sake of music or a transient orator.

"Thank heaven, people are getting to going to theatre Sundays too," the lady continued. "No, I never will enter a church again. Mr. Thirlmore was —"

"Hold your eternal tongue!" her husband broke out, perspiring freely.

His blooming wife looked at him with astonishment. She had gold in her ears, upon her fingers, about her wrists; a heavy chain of gold about her neck, which failed, however, to hold her at the moment to her alle-

giance. "I won't hold my tongue," she retorted, — a suspicion of brass also in accent and aspect. "Hold your tongue yourself."

They were by themselves, and the conversation did not by any means end there. But the lady did not keep her word: she did go to church, to what had been the Holy Oriflamme, but what was now — the Catholics having bought it — the Church of the Immaculate Conception. It is even said that Mrs. Gruffden is one of the most devout of the worshippers. She has added an unusually large cross to her ornaments, and is said to be very particular as to confession, Lent, and the quality of her pastry upon Fridays. Upon the spot where Thirlmore once stood and charmed her with his eloquence a priest is posted, generally with his embroidered back to her, and she can kneel now with a devotion as fervent and more unconcealed.

But her husband does not attend service there or anywhere else. Mrs. Gruffden's change of views helps him greatly at the polls; but he is careful to inform his Protestant friends that he has not entered the house. "No, sir, not since the auctioneer knocked it down. I lost, by —— ! too much money by that Oriflamme business to look that way again."

The breaking up of the Holy Oriflamme was, for a time, the talk of the town. Not a journal in the city but had its wise editorial upon the subject; an amazing diversity of lessons were deduced therefrom by papers throughout the land, and by two or three across the Atlantic. In every denomination was found some minister to make the fate of Thirlmore and his church a solemn warning to his own congregation, if not to clergymen in general. Comic pictures abounded in reference thereto in the funny periodicals. Slang phrases in connection therewith became current; and, like sparks wafted far away from a burning house, puns, jokes, scraps of doggerel, relating to the subject, glittered for a while in the jest column of many a paper a thousand miles off. Notwithstanding which the most painful thing of all was

the speed with which the Holy Oriflamme was forgotten. There was an interesting murder soon after its fall, as also a great scandal, a defalcation, and a railway horror. Then a Presidential campaign set in and swallowed up, apparently, the last memory thereof. Thirlmore's church had hung, for its brief hour, like a comet in the sky; but, like even the most portentous of comets, it was of the thinnest, most gaseous material, for when it vanished it did so instantly, utterly, leaving not a vestige behind, and sun, moon, and stars shone on as if it had never been.

Before the country knew who had been elected President, Vandoren paused very early one Sunday morning before the edifice in which Thirlmore had assembled his delighted thousands. A cross crowned its spire, and others were emblazoned upon its front. The windows were glorious now with saints and angels. Vandoren stole in at the open door. On the spot where the popular pastor had stood was an imposing altar, with picture, crucifix, and tall candles. Before it officiated priests and acolytes with swinging censers, emblazoned robes, manifold genuflections. Early as it was the edifice was packed with a vast and kneeling congregation. A bell tinkled, the Host was elevated, every head was bowed, and Vandoren turned hastily away and hurried out. "They are only Irish," he sighed. "Poor heathen, they were born in that delusion, were trained that way, have never known—God help them!—anything better. Not so with Thirlmore!" The pallid face of Vandoren darkened as he repeated to himself, "He that knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes." His haggard face grew yet darker. "The churches, all of them," he groaned, "are alike. Each and all, they are but a sisterhood of harlots! Well says the Master, 'He that hateth not his own life also, he cannot be my disciple!'" And then his countenance brightened, his eyes kindled, as he lifted them to heaven and exclaimed, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

TRANSITION.

MRS. THIRLMORE bore the downfall of the Holy Oriflamme with fortitude. A Roman Portia could not have remained colder or calmer when the crash came. Her sister had shown, as she had always done, the sincerest affection for her. As always, Trent and his wife were more, so far as she would suffer them to be so, than a brother or sister to her. They urged her now to make her home with them for a while, at least; but they agreed that she had done what was best when she went, instead, with her husband to his farm. Thirlmore took her with him very much as he took his bronze clocks, his handsome book-cases and busts, — as part of his household possessions. She knew it was so as well as he; in this, as in all things, they now understood each other. She, at least, understood him; he did not exert himself in any way in regard to her.

But she did not care. Her husband, her sister, her city friends, the city and its manifold excitements, the downfall of her husband's church, — everything was forgotten. For the first time in her life she lost sight of herself entirely. "Unless thou hate father, mother, brother, sister, wife, child, thy own life also, thou canst not be my disciple." Vandoren was right; Thirlmore had done nothing of the kind. His wife differed from him in that she did this, only it was not with reference to Him who had laid down this terribly simple rule. Christ demanded all, because he had first given himself unto death. Not so with the man she loved. He had refused to sacrifice himself for her, yet he was all the religion she knew, and she loved Guernsey as Christians too rarely love even the Son of God. She had neither faith nor

love except for the man who had for the first time awakened these within her, — awakened them within her because, of all persons she had known, he was to her most like God.

It was the worst feature of her life that she had no company upon the farm but her husband, and he preferred to her his dogs and his horses, his sheep and oxen. The old servants did the daily work, as they had done it since they came from Scotland, and as though she had no existence. The sweeping and the scrubbing, the mending and the cooking, went on pretty much as they would have done if she had never been born. The books were heaped in a lumber-room until Thirlmore should take a fancy to put up the cases, but she cared as little for them as he did. Her husband took neither paper nor magazine, nor did she miss them. He had his farm work and his animals, she had nothing but Guernsey.

Mrs. Trent came for a visit with the children, but returned to her husband in less than a week. "Peace hates the farm," she told him on her return. "It reminds her of Grandfather Vandyke's place near Old Orange. She feels as if she had been forced back to her primer, to her doll, to her foolish childhood. As to that, everything and everybody seems small and contemptible to her. She told me that she despised the past."

"And, Revel, she believes in no future," Trent added; "everything has perished to her with God."

He was mistaken. Guernsey was left to her, beside him but one thing, death. It is folly to imagine that He who formed the ear cannot hear; is it not also illogical to say that we who have created the telegraph cannot know concerning those from whom we are separated except along the wires? One afternoon Guernsey in his home far away could neither sit nor walk nor sleep, could neither write nor read nor think. "I fear," he said to himself, "that I am losing my mind. God help me! but she is almost as vividly present as if I saw her. Her very face is in the air, her eyes beseeching me, since in all the universe she has nothing else —"

That afternoon Mrs. Thirlmore, too miserable to remain quiet, was walking up and down in the room in which old Elspeth had died. "I wanted to know everything," she said to herself. "What good has it done me? All I do know is as familiar to me as the alphabet, and as interesting. From horizon to horizon is nothing but sand and rock! I will go to him," she suddenly said, "as the dying go to God!"

Nothing could apparently be easier. Thirlmore had not been in the house since early in the morning. One of the men would drive her to the railroad. She knew how to get to Guernsey, and she had more than money enough. Emptying two or three trunks, she selected the smallest, and began to pack in it this thing and that with rapid but trembling hands. "I am stronger than my husband," she thought, "and I have made him what he is, but I have been tired of him for so long! Guernsey is infinitely stronger than I am, and he is so much better too. Well, he will take me and make me what I ought to be. I shall kill myself if I stay. Who is there to whom I can go but to him? He must pity, for I know that he loves me!"

Long ago her intellect had frozen over the current of her heart into an ice which was almost rock; now her woman's heart was reasserting itself, under the summer of her love for Guernsey, but the insurgent affection was breaking up and sweeping away her very reason before it. A volume which Guernsey had given her was in the next room, and she went to get it. The apartment was the one occupied by little Jean when she had been on the farm, and had remained unused ever since, the curtains down to keep the sun from fading the carpets. The miserable woman halted upon the threshold. She could distinguish nothing in the dim light. And, yet, beyond Jean's bed, upon the other side of the room, stood a man. The bed was between, she could see his face only, but it was Guernsey! He stood there pallid, silent, awaiting her with steady and sorrowful eyes. She could trace every lineament, — he smiled, his lips were

parted to speak. It was beyond her strength, she sprang forward, and fell fainting upon the bed.

It is but one of many millions of things which we do not understand, but it was at that same instant that Guernsey, far away, was holding out his hands toward her. He was exhausted with suffering, and in a little nook among the rocks which shielded his island from the sea, he had knelt at last. His hands were extended, but with the palms outward, as if pressing some one steadily away. "Come again between us, O Christ!" he entreated. "Thy face was then turned so that I alone could see, — turn it now upon her. Win her from me unto Thyself, Thou who art strong to save!"

The face which Peace had seen was, as she knew before opening her eyes, but a picture of Christ upon the wall. Little Jean had loosely pasted it there long ago, the wind from the opened door had stirred it, the diseased mind of the woman had done the rest; but who shall say how the Christ shall do His work?

A sudden peace came to Guernsey far away. "Who knows," he said, "but she who has so perverted her husband from God may yet save him! Who knows! who knows!"

Peace remained lying exhausted across the bed of little Jean. She did not care to look at the poor picture over her head, but it was as if an evil spirit had gone out of her. "Perhaps the Christ of my childhood may come back to me," she felt rather than thought. "Lord, unto whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It was merely memory of words learned and forgotten long ago, but she added passively, "And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God. At least," she thought, "if that is not true, there is nothing else."

As she lay very still, little more conscious than when she had first fallen, and yet with the faint stirring within her as of a strange and new-born gladness too, her husband was resting after a day spent in rambling aimlessly over the farm. His old dog had toiled painfully at his heels

all day, and he had stopped more to rest Brute than for any other purpose. He had thrown himself down upon a rocky hill on the edge of his grounds, his dog beside him. His gun was in his hand, but he had seen nothing to shoot, and, as he plucked off his hat and threw it upon the scanty turf, he looked sunburned and vigorous. He had no regret for the past, and was as entirely satisfied with himself, without thinking upon the subject, as he had been with his dinner. The only change in him was that he had a heartier contempt for people, and for a wider area of people, than before. He wanted to escape from them and be left to himself, — that was all. But he did not bother himself about it or them.

The boulders, big and little, lay scattered around him, brown and bare. Over his head towered an old pine which had been dead for years. He had made a landmark of it since he was a boy, but he did not now observe that, far above and directly over him as he lay, the dead tree extended a ponderous limb, barkless and bleached. He had no more anxiety as to the future than he had regret for the past, yet, as he looked at the sun setting over the distant hills, he wondered vaguely what was to happen next. His best ox, Red Peter, had no better digestion than he, and, eloquent preacher as he was, Thirlmore troubled himself as little about things as did the ox lying at that moment in the meadow chewing his cud and gazing with grave eyes at nothing. If master and animal loved each other, it was because they were alike.

To the former minister of the Holy Oriflamme, the morrow seemed as small a matter as did the lifeless bough above. And yet that bough had been rotting for a long time; the least gust might detach it to crush him as he lay, his fine head bared to the cooling air. Brute had become so infirm that he could scarcely drag himself after his owner. He now lay panting, his filmy eye upon Thirlmore, his bushy tail stirring approvingly at every movement of his master.

"Heigh ho!" Thirlmore said at last, "confound it,

Brute, what comes next?" The question was asked with the indifference of a king who already owns and rules everything. Brute knew the future as little as his owner, but he acknowledged the question with his tail, and looked inquiringly, consentingly, at his supreme divinity. The sun sank glowing in the west. Thirlmore lay still, Red Peter himself not more undisturbed; and through the pines below arose a murmuring sound, as the sunset breeze began to blow.