STUBBLE OR WHEAT?

A STORY OF MORE LIVES THAN ONE

Wm L. Smith,

September 1851.

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A STORY OF MORE LIVES THAN ONE.

By S. BAYARD DOD.

"The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present."

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

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TO MY

ALMA MATER

I OFFER THIS

SPRAY OF ROSEMARY.

The barns are full of ripened grain,
The millstones chafe and fret;
Out in the cold November rain,
The stubble is standing yet.

PREFACE.

THE use of a preface is more honored in the breach than the observance. And yet it may suffice, as an apology for reverting to a good old fashion, that the author, who would secure at the outset the good-will of his readers, should answer to them for the name that ushers his venture to their notice.

There is scarce any emblem more fitting to suggest life and the power of life than the field of lush, green wheat, full of the promise of a harvest rich and fair. There is nothing more suggestive of life with all its powers spent, and the worthless remnant left ungarnered, than to stumble, on a dreary winter's day, over the field of standing stubble, left to rot in the ground.

And you, gentle reader, shall be left to say which life bears the ripened grain and which leaves only the barren stubble.

CROW HILL,
East Orange, N. J., 1888.

STUBBLE OR WHEAT?

CHAPTER I.

THE following notice caught my eye as I read the morning paper—

A FLOATER CAUGHT.—The body of an unknown man was found in the river yesterday and brought to this city. It had evidently been in the water some days. An inquest was held, resulting in a verdict of supposed suicide, after which the body was buried in the Potter's Field. There was no clue to the identity.

It was only one among many such dreary notices that I had read in the papers often before, but it riveted my attention, and interested me to an unaccountable degree. I read the news of the day, and conned the stock list, as was my wont, but ever and anon that dreary obituary of the unknown dead stared me in the face, as if imprinted on every page. I had read it but once, and yet I could repeat every word of it—a remarkable feat of memory for me.

It was useless to try and read any more, and I sat gazing in a vacant mood at the landscape, with

its dull monotone sky, as it drifted past the windows of the morning train, in which I was riding toward the great city. I pictured the closing scenes of that sad story, before the brief and bitter finis was written.

All day long he had wandered aimlessly about the city streets, jostled by the hurrying crowds too intent on their own pursuits to give him even passing notice. A restless devil within was urging him on blindly somewhere,—"anywhere out of the world." Now and then some passer-by turned to gaze after him, touched by his strange sad face. More than once his drawn white looks had checked a beggar's plea for a pittance, and they shrank back from a misery deeper than the lack of bread, from a hunger worse than famine.

The night fell over the city and a chilling mist crept up from the river, and, as it folded him in its cold embrace, it seemed like a premonition of the end; and he was chilled to the heart.

He shivered and stopped in his walk, weak and spent, and stood in the shelter of a doorway, hidden by its shadow.

Across the street was a great building ablaze with light, and a crowd surging at the entrance. The street was full of handsome equipages, struggling before it, and the drivers shouted themselves hoarse. It was a theatre. He recalled the time when he

had made one of such audiences. He wondered what play was on the boards,—how his own life put upon the stage and acted well would affect the boxes and the pit. He had played it to the world, desperately in earnest,—and had lost. He moved on wearily. Two policemen talking in low tones at a corner, turned as he passed and eyed him suspiciously.

A wretched, lame hunchback paused under a gas-lamp and waited for him and stretched out his hand for an alms, but, at sight of his ghastly face, shrank back with a stifled cry. A tipsy reveller reeled past chanting a maudlin song—how it jarred on his numbed senses. Apart from all men—all ties sundered, all sympathies blasted—on, on he went. At last the lighted streets were behind him, and he wandered among the gloomy warehouses and along the piers, startling the wharf-rats.

The river! what a fascination it had for him. His boyhood had been passed by the river; as a school-boy he had bathed in it, fished in it, boated on it, skated over it.

Only he remembered it as always bright and sparkling, a dancing, glittering stream in the summer sunlight, or, as he drifted on it in a boat, on summer nights, it was still and cool and studded with constellations, and the great moon swam in its limpid depths.

He stood on the black, wet wharf and gazed into the sullen tide. There were no sunlit ripples or starry reflections in it now. It was black and cold as death. Somewhere it did ripple past green fields and shady woods, and laughed to nodding ferns, and bore white lilies on its bosom; but here, polluted by the great city, it swept on murmuring hoarsely to the sea. He remembered Kingsley's song and the story of the water-baby, but he could repeat only the second verse: "Dank and foul—foul and dank."

A noise behind him made him start guiltily. It was only a rat scurrying to his den.

He took a letter from his pocket and tore it in pieces and cast it on the water. He took his purse out and felt it; how lean and thin and empty; he flung it far out into the river, and listened for its faint splash, and smiled grimly when he heard it.

How his heart thumped; how his temples throbbed. He bared his head to the cool mist, and stood thinking. What a black night! The dark waters at his feet swished sullenly among the piles—the mist clung to him close and chilly. "It sticketh closer than a brother," he muttered, "closer than a brother. The night mist is my brother."

The wind rose, wailing. Listening, listening to the wail of the wind, and the mist clinging closer

and closer, he crept forward to the end of the pier . . . . and . . . .

Now the rat ran boldly out and scampered noisily to and fro. The current whispered to the night-wind and mist a dread secret; the church clock struck twelve, and a watchman a block away yawned sleepily.

Found drowned! But to somebody he is still only missing; and some one is watching and waiting for his promised return.

Found drowned; found with a ghastly face upturned to the sky, drifting out to sea with the strong ebb-tide, his black hair tossed by the ripples and tangled with the floating sea-weed; his eyes wide open, with a staring horror at the unutterable misery of life or the unspeakable terror of death. As they drew him wonderingly from the water, the sweeping current moaned. Was it remorsefully, for its share in the tragic ending of such a life? Or was it because it was cheated of its well-earned prey? Or did it bemoan the disclosure of the secret that would have been safe in its keeping? Or did it bewail the mingling of so fine a form with the common clay of the Potter's Field, in contrast with the stately burial in the deep-sea caverns? Who knows?—who has the key to the language of the waters,—who can translate the babble of the brook or interpret the moan of the surf?

But surely the river moaned, as they lifted its foundling from its bosom; and then it rolled on and confided its secret to the sea, under promise to keep it until the day that it should give up its dead. But it told the story to others than the sea.

Haunted by the story of the waif of the river, I left my office at an earlier hour than usual, and wandered down and along the wharves. They were closing the warehouses, and the quiet of the hour when the day's work is done was creeping over the busy docks, broken by the resonant bang of closing gates and shutters or the whistle of a belated workman. As I lingered near a float moored to one of the docks, thinking to myself what thoughts held revel in the brain of a man that could seek release from them by drowning, I saw, in a tangled bunch of sea-weed that floated in by the dock and lodged against the float, some torn pieces of paper. They were evidently not stray scraps, but in such square patches as showed, at a glance, that they belonged together.

I instinctively jumped to the conclusion that they formed a part of the sad story that had fascinated me. I reached for the mass of sea-weed with a boat-hook, and drawing it to the edge of the float, gathered the fragments of paper, and drying them gently in my handkerchief, tried to patch them together.

I soon had reason enough to feel that Providence, or the Destiny that decrees that no man shall live to himself,—that makes one life the warp and another the woof of the social fabric, and patterns the life of society out of the interwoven lives of the individuals,—had drawn me, by an irresistible magnetism, to follow up the clues that might reveal the story, which lay behind the brief notice in the *Morning Times*. The handwriting was that of Sydney Morris' wife.

My hands trembled, my teeth chattered, the evening air seemed suddenly to grow cold. This was no place nor time to learn the full bitter truth that those fragments would reveal; so, after a careful search for every scrap, I put them in my pocket and hurried home. How slowly the train crept home that night. Hastily seeking my own room, I spread out the torn scraps and, after more than an hour's work in arranging and deciphering them, I made out the following:

MY DEAR HUSBAND:—I can never con . . . . join you in putting . . . . to the life that . . . . given me. Of . . . . I have not read . . . . you left for me and I do not . . . . to read them. . . . . Suicide is the act of . . . . and I cannot afford to have my courage . . . . to meet the trials of . . . . by the reading of . . . . If my belief in God . . . . forbid my thinking . . . . an act, my love for . . . . boy would forbid. . . . . Come back to us and . . . . yet be well.

Your loving . . . . GLADYS.

There was a salt-sea smell to the still damp fragments—they were clammy. Did this damp paper chill me so, to the very marrow?

They told me only too well the whole story of the ending, in darkness and gloom, of a life that opened full of light and gladness.

I had known Sydney Morris from early boyhood, and to know him was to love him; for he had, to a large degree, what we call personal magnetism. Without effort, he drew men to him and attached them strongly. And yet, while singularly attractive to all whom he met, there was a discord in his character—not so much the unceasing warfare of the flesh against the spirit, but rather a mind at war with itself, a heart as restless as the sea, a disposition changeful as the wind. The tides of his soul seemed to have their ebb and flood oftener and more sudden than the sea. The high-tide of his mirth and jollity would suddenly be checked as by a strong west wind, leaving the depths bare, and the shining river a veritable slough of despond; and he sat in our midst, silent and depressed, before the laughter had died from our lips. He was generous, open-handed, and chivalrous; but was suspicious suddenly, that he was being imposed upon or courted only for the favors he bestowed. He was full of fun and bright in his sallies of wit, provoking bursts of hearty laughter; but would sud-

denly suspect those about him of laughing at his expense. And, while in truth, he was the soul of a party of young fellows, would fancy himself the butt of their ridicule.

He was what men call high-strung, of a tense nature, the chords of which, when touched, vibrated powerfully, whether to notes of joy or sadness. He could do nothing by halves—neither think, nor feel, nor act. The *media via* was an unknown path to him; he was immediate, decisive, uncontrolled. His hopes, his fears, his realizations and disappointments were all characterized by the same intensity. Yet he was ever at war with himself—his fears mocked his hopes, his hopes derided his fears; his convictions nettled his doubts, his doubts shook his convictions; his realizations were clouded by his disappointments, and his disappointments, these alone seemed complete.

But he was never sullen, never self-contained. If he did not find solacing companionship, it was not because he did not seek it. On the contrary, he was always striving to put himself *en rapport* with his surroundings,—to feel the sweet influences of earth and air and sky, and all things animate, whether beast or humankind. He was fond of dogs and horses, and gained quick and complete mastery over them.

He delighted in wide, ranging walks in the coun-

try, and was quick to catch all sights and sounds of beauty in nature, to respond to the soothing of a soft spring day, or have his pulses stirred by a wild, blustering night.

He was the pivot of a social gathering, and gave it the turn that suited his mood. One would say of him, after a short acquaintance, that he was born to be a leader of men, that he had the power of abounding life.

And yet there jarred through all his nature the discord of some untuned string. There was ever the uncertainty of action, due to an eccentric wheel in the very core of a delicately adjusted machine.

The source of this secret disharmony he believed to be due to heredity. He was the child of brilliant parents, who were married but not mated; the offspring of one of those matches that are made in society, one of those bargains of Vanity Fair; which we all know is a long way off from heaven, and not on the direct road.

His father was Clinton Morris, his mother Dorothy Cortlandt. They were both of them fine physical types, both highly educated. But they were the fruit of our modern society, choice specimens of the best society, of the selectest circle of the very best society.

They were thoroughly well-bred specimens of a society that would establish an aristocracy; and,

since there are with us no natural barriers of hereditary ancestry, with its titles and its prestige, to bar the common herd, therefore they have set up bars of conventional restraints, beyond which he who goes is lost. And over this realm of the chosen few they have set up the twin divinities, Mammon and Style.

Trained from early childhood to hear, in that subdued and emphatic tone, with falling inflection, in which the edicts of the best society are enforced, of the unhappy lot of those who had dared to brave the decrees of fashion and disregard the claims of style, and had been, by the stern and silent decree from which there is no appeal, cast out of society; they had learned, among other things, to look on marriage as one of those arrangements, which all high-bred people make, subject to conventional laws.

In accordance with this conservative view, they each looked forward to making a desirable alliance.

They had the inestimable benefit of the counsel and guidance of his mother. She was a woman of great wisdom and piety withal, shrewd, bustling and active, a leader at home and in society. She came nearer reconciling the claims of God and Mammon than most people can come, and failed not to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Under the guidance of this wise woman

and virtuous, their alliance was projected. She had an eye to the wholesome union of family purses, and family name, and blood, and position. And so they were married.

But, though trained as they had been, under the repressive influences of a society so select, that it dared not be natural for fear that it would be vulgar, yet they were human, and, at bottom, they were strong characters. So, like waters repressed, when they overflowed, as they did after marriage, the waters seethed and bubbled, and the stream of their life was a turbulent one. Not that they quarrelled; they were too well bred for that. But they slowly, elegantly, politely repelled one another; they were charged with opposite polarity. He sought relaxation at his club, she in society. When their little boy was born, for a brief season they were less widely apart; but it was only an eddy in the stream, and when their life resumed its wonted course, the waters boiled and bubbled, and they drifted farther apart.

She was quick, sensitive, poetic in her nature, delicately and nervously made. She was a fine musician, with a rich, thrilling voice, and a marvellous power of interpreting music.

He was a strong, hearty man, of phlegmatic disposition, matter-of-fact, sensible, and did not know one note from another.

They were both distinguished society people, and were more anxious to know, and to do, what was in good form than to attain any other distinction that the world could offer; and they had their reward.

But the boy,—what became of him while they played this drama of marriage *a la mode* in high-life—comedy on the outside, tragedy if the curtain be lifted?

During his early years he was remanded to the nursery, and his life opened under the benign influences of the best French nurse, faultless in her accent, and eminently qualified, from her Parisian training, to form the manners and morals of young children.

As he grew older, once a day after dinner, when the dessert was nearly finished, he was brought down to the table, prettily dressed and carefully instructed as to his speech and behavior, and he sat with his well-dressed parents for nearly fifteen minutes. They called this the children's hour.

Then he was decorously and gravely kissed good-night. His wide, dark eyes, with their deep, wistful look at his well-dressed papa and elegantly attired mamma, worried them. They were full of an inquiry which they could not answer, of questionings which they could not endure. They did not

know what to say to the child; they were at a loss how to amuse him.

Once, in a rapture of admiration at his mother's resplendent beauty, the little fellow threw his arms around her neck and kissed her good-night, with a resounding smack. His father looked up with a start of shocked surprise. His mother said, not ungently, "Sydney dear, do not do that again. It is not good form, my child." And the French maid, hurriedly snatching him out of the room, when she got him in the hall, boxed his ears soundly for his impertinence, having an eye to her own reputation.

He never repeated the disastrous experiment. But often he would stand, with his eye at the crack of the nursery door, when he heard the rustle of his mother's dress, as she passed down to dinner, and sigh, as he saw this creature, more beautiful than any one he had ever seen, and wonder why it was not "good form" to hug her and kiss her, as hard as he knew how.

Later on, when the exigencies of his education had outgrown their capacity to guide, and he was getting troublesome,—at the age when society decrees that the existence of boys shall be ignored,—he was sent to boarding-school—to a private school up the Hudson, near the old Livingston Manor, that even his associations with nature might be high-toned.

Here, on the banks of the noble river that flowed "clear and cool and undefiled," in which his life was to be ended, his life began.

The master, just turned thirty, was a man of singular educating power. He limited his school to twelve boys. Each of these boys was to him a beautiful problem, the solution of which he sought, with all the ardor of an old alchemist searching for a hid treasure in nature, and determined to find it and bring it to light.

He loved boys, to the very core of his heart. He loved them as living souls, akin to his own; and his sympathy with them was quick.

He reverenced their young natures, free from sordid taint. He discerned in each one the promise and potency of a great and noble man, and felt that he was purified and invigorated by contact with their fresh young natures.

He believed in Wordsworth's philosophy of childhood,—that "trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our home." With such a master there was the least possible friction between teacher and pupil. He did not impose his authority on them; but rather infused his spirit into them, and set himself to evoke from each one his highest powers.

He was bright, glowing with enthusiasm, always alert himself, and he made them alert. His foible

was that he had no patience with a dull boy. Unlike the gentle Elia, "he *hated* a fool." He would not endure to be balked by a dullness, with which he had no sympathy, and which he could not even pity.

He solved this equation by a short formula. Given a dull boy, how shall I educate him? he sent the boy back to his parents. He used to urge as excuse for this, "I can *educate;* but I cannot *create.*"

And so it came to pass that the lot of Sydney Morris was cast in a fair spot of earth, on the banks of a noble river, where he saw the sun go down behind the purple Kaaterskill range, amid inspiring surroundings; one of a family, rather than a school, of bright, living spirits of his own age, guided by a sympathetic leader, who seemed a boy too, only wiser. And the boy began to think the "long, long thoughts of youth." And the thoughts that arose in his mind, were on the primal questions of life. They were dim, but they were deep. A boy's thoughts, though not formed into the analytic and definitive language of the philosopher, yet will task the wisest philosopher to answer.

The questionings of childhood touch the foundations of things, and they face primal truths with a directness which we evade, as we grow older and more cautious. The child dares to think, and to ask, anything, and expects a direct and satisfying answer to his open and fearless questions.

CHAPTER II.

OUR school was an old, family mansion-house, of brick, built in Colonial style, with a portico in front, with Ionic columns painted white, with a broad, generous front door, and one of those quaint transoms of a radiant ellipse and side-lights of smaller ellipses. On either side of the porch were beds, one of purple iris, the other of lilies-of-the-valley, and on the trellises on either side were old-fashioned honeysuckle, so that, to this day, the smell of honeysuckle recalls simple equations, and the odor of lilacs will enable me to state the binomial theorem. There was a wide, cool hall, running through the centre of the house, with the rooms on either side. This style has not the grace and elegance of some other styles of architecture; but commend me to it for solid comfort and convenience. And there is the grace of hospitality in one of those wide, generous halls, which seems to throw the whole house open to you at once.

There were about eight acres around the house, and the ground sloped gently to the river, the margin of which it touched. The slope was unbroken save by the unsightly railroad, which we boys

voted an unmitigated nuisance, with a heartiness that would have delighted Ruskin.

In a little cove, at the foot of the grounds, were moored our canoes, working boats, and shells, and all the implements of our craft as oarsmen on the river.

On the north end of the lot was a spring, rising out of a deep basin, with a clear, sandy bottom; a tall boulder at the rear, covered with moss and ferns, overshadowed it, and by the side of the spring were three tall pines, which we called the triumvirs.

This spring was a favorite gathering-place for the boys. Lying on the sweet pine needles, with the wind soliloquizing through their branches, and the bubbling spring at our side, and the tinkling rivulet that carried its overflow down to the river, with a broad sweep of the river in sight,—it was a spot to dream away an idle hour, to lie and read a chosen story, or to gather in a group and talk away time. It was a spot fit for a poet, or a philosopher, or a boy. The spring bubbled up cool and copious out of its sandy bottom, with a soft cooing sound, and lifted a tiny spiral column, with a soft mazy motion, high up, and then let it fall gently to the bottom. It was a veritable elf of the water, a tiny Undine, graceful, evanescent, unexpected, like a truth seen all at once, and then eluding the sight on closer inspection.

And always, in the dryest summer, the fountain overflowed into the rivulet, and the rivulet tripped lightly down to the river, and the river rolled on to the sea,—and the sea—ah! but the sea has no bounds, and goes no one knows whither.

One summer afternoon we had been down on the river boating. The Master had been coaching us for a race with the rival boat-club of a school up the river. We were tired and thirsty, and turned our steps toward the spring, where we found Sydney Morris, sitting alone with a book in his lap.

After drinking our fill of the sweet, cool water, we threw ourselves on the ground and fell to talking of the elf of the fountain. We boys had named it Sand-elfin, the angel that leads out the springs from the depths of the earth to quench the thirst of men. We had each hung over the spring, at the Master's suggestion, and described the shape which the sprite took in our eyes.

Then the Master, as we lay there silent, having expended our wit at each other's expense, said:

"Well, to me, boys, Sand-elfin always takes the form of a boy; and the spring is his babyhood, and the brook is his boyhood, and the river is his manhood, and the sea is—his endless life." He was always very earnest and glowing, and his voice had a deep, sweet ring when he said such things.

The boys were all quiet after he spoke. Sydney was the first to break the silence.

"Mr. Armstrong," he said, "why does everything run to the river? It seems to me like a monster that swallows up the playful brooks, stops their laughter, spoils their fun. I would rather always be by the brookside."

"Ah, no, Sydney," answered the Master, "the rivers do not swallow up the brooks; but the brooks grow to be rivers. The world would be a poor, dry, unhealthy world if it were not for the rivers. And the water is just as pure, and just as bright, in the larger and nobler form. That, boys, is the grand point; keep the waters pure and they will always sparkle. Why, Sydney, even a boy has use for a river, to boat on, to bathe in, to skate over. No, the world can't get along without the rivers."

He rose and left us lying around the fountain, and the stream of talk trickled on.

"It is all very well for the Master to talk," said Sydney, "but, for my part, I am in no great hurry to be a man."

"Ah!" said Tom Hadley, who had been dubbed by us Shifty Tom, "none of your mooning, Sydney. A boy is a boy, and he must obey; but a man is a man."

"And can have his way," threw in Charlie Clifton.

There was a round of applause for the ready rhyme.

As we rose, at the sound of the warning bell for supper, and walked slowly up to the house, Sydney and I, arm-in-arm, loitered behind the rest, and he added:

"I cannot bear to look forward to the time when I shall have to be, what is called, my own master, to do my own thinking and settle my own plans of life. All we have to do now is to ask Mr. Armstrong what we shall read, what we shall do, what we shall think, and what he says is all right. About a good many things, I don't know what to think; I don't know what I do think or what I do believe, about some things."

"Oh, pshaw," said I, "Sir Philip," as we called him, "you dream too much, my fine gentleman. You lie nursing that old *Water-Babies* in your lap, half a day, and dream over it, till you think you have been dropped into the river, and are on the way to the sea; and sure enough you *do* get to the 'other end of nowhere.' It is no good, Syd. You ought to join our club, and go in for athletics and that kind of thing, old boy."

"Oh, no," he answered; "it never hurts a fellow to think."

"That depends," said I, "on how he does his thinking;—what he thinks about. You think a

blamed sight too much about yourself, old fel;—what you are, and what you are not, and what you will be, and what you won't be, and a lot of stuff like that. You're too much stuck on yourself. I'll tell you what don't hurt a fellow. It don't hurt him to have a good time. It don't hurt to go it while you're young. Now you don't go it for a cent. You stand still all the time."

His only answer was a half-sigh and a sombre smile and shake of the head. We ended by a race to the house, and he beat me, clean and clear. He was a lithe, beautiful runner. But he turned as he entered the house, and said: "The race is not always to the swift."

Ours was a singularly constituted school. We had our hours apportioned off, as most schools have, for study, for recitation, and for recreation. But the Master seemed almost more anxious in regard to our recreation than in regard to our studies. His theory was that you must first bring *out* a boy, and then you can commence to bring him *up*. "All study," he would say, "is only an unhealthy clogging of the mind, unless you have set the mind at work to assimilate what you give it." Our reading was, therefore, a matter of prime importance, in his view, and was regulated by him on a principle wholly his own. He gave us few solid books to read, maintaining that, in youth, the im-

agination must first be cultivated, the faculty that held the rod of divination, without which all men are dull and their learning sodden. "Without imagination," he would say, "your reading will make leaf-mould, but you won't have living germs sprouting in the soil." Our school library held "The Arabian Nights," Cooper, Irving, Scott, Thackeray, Kingsley, some of Bulwer and Dickens, plenty of ballads and a generous stock of poetry, some tales of travel and adventure. He would talk, with genuine enthusiasm, with us over our favorite books, anxious that we should enjoy them, and should discover their beauty and power, and fully appreciate them. For himself there were two well-worn books that seemed running fountains of sweet water to him; they were "The Round About Papers" and John Brown's "Spare Hours." He used to call Thackeray the disinfectant for foul literary vaporings, and say that John Brown was the antidote for mental spleen. He was averse to quantity of reading, and said the best names in literature were authority for his theory, that young minds were nurtured best by a narrow scope of reading; by a few good books, well read.

Once a week, on Friday evenings, he read aloud to us, usually some poem, and pointed out its beauties of thought and diction, and drew from us crude but genuine opinions on the passage. The

influence about us was eminently wholesome, genuine, real, with no sham of any kind; and it had its influence, more or less, on every boy in the school.

We attended church in the neighboring village, and we often wished the Master was the preacher. The minister was a good man and withal an earnest, but he was hemmed in by a law which had been laid down for him by superior authority, and he was afraid to think for himself. He was a fair and honest representative of a system, and a good system, but he was not a living entity, he was a part of the system, and he was never genuinely and freely himself. He was a very worthy man, but a very narrow one; true as steel to the forms of religion, but not very full of its power; and he neither understood nor sympathized with the Master. On Sunday evenings the Master read to us some sermon, and afterward there was a free talk, for all who cared to join in the discussion that arose.

With what power he would thunder out some of the mighty Edwards' sweeping sentences or soar with Chalmers. These two were his favorites. But he read besides from every class and school. The broadest of the English broad school, and the closest adherents to a rigid orthodoxy, found equal favor with him, provided only that they were earnest and sincere prophets of the light that had shone

on them from a living contact of their hearts with living truth.

He was very broad, but he was keenly alive to truth, and sincere in his search for it, and generous in his recognition of it from any source. This Sunday-evening service was always a stirring one, and under Mrs. Armstrong's tuition, the boys had learned to sing some hymns very sweetly, in parts, and we enjoyed the whole service thoroughly.

In all our intercourse at school I gathered little information about Sydney Morris' home-life. Though the boys talked but little of their home, yet from time to time, through long companionship, here and there, stray hints and allusions would give us some insight into each other's home-life; but a thick veil hid his. And whenever he did mention his home, or his father and mother, it was with restraint and in a brief, passing way. Having no brothers or sisters it was perhaps natural that we should know less of his family life, than where a circle of young people, of about our own age, formed a family group, whose scenes and incidents would touch life on the same plane as ours.

But more than one of the boys noticed this reticence, and, boy-like, they jumped with eagerness to the conclusion that there was a hidden mystery, a dark secret at home, which he sought to hide, under the cover of his silence.

But now and then, in moments of closer confidence, he had spoken to me of his mother, of her refinement and elegance and beauty, with a glow of admiration, so genuine, that I was more at fault than ever to account for his ordinary reticence. And yet, when some of the boys would describe in detail some scene of their home-life, that made them long for vacation days, I would catch a look of surprise in Sydney's face, that told me that his home-life was not like that of other boys.

One day he was called out of school in the middle of the morning session. He rose with a flushed face, and with hurried steps left the room. A few minutes later I saw him walking on the lawn with a tall, graceful lady whom I recognized at once as his mother, by his likeness to her.

And the Master was walking a little behind, in conversation with Mr. Morris. She was evidently pleased with Sydney. He had grown to be a fine, graceful, elegant-looking fellow, with wavy black hair; large, dark, penetrating eyes; a mobile mouth, with deep, receding corners; a rather narrow, pale face, but with a deep, defined color; well formed and strong, though light of limb and graceful in his bearing. He was full of easy, mobile grace as he walked or ran. He was a very handsome and distinguished-looking young fellow, with a high-bred

air, small hands and well-shaped feet, a springy tread and an almost haughty bearing.

She talked with him in a bright, animated way, leaning on his arm, and was evidently pleased with his fine appearance; but her look, as it rested on him, was more of pride than of affection, I fancied.

As for him, his eyes, as they turned to her, had the look of a hungry dog that sits by his master's table, perchance if a crumb may fall from his master's hand. It made me sick at heart to see him look so; I could have thrown my arms round his neck and kissed him.

At recess we came out, and Sydney came over and picked out three or four of his intimates, to introduce them.

We were all hearty in our admiration of his beautiful mother, and she was gentle and gracious to us; but we were ill at ease and glad to hear the bell summoning us back to school; and we felt, though we could not have told, why Sydney's home-life was not like ours. His father we did not see nearer than across the lawn. All the marked qualities of Sydney's face came to him from his mother; from his father he had inherited his well-knit frame and the deep red color in his cheeks; all else was from his mother.

Their visit had been to tell him that they were off to Europe, by the next steamer, for a two years'

stay, and to arrange for his care in the vacations, during their absence. His guardian was to be Alexander McKenzie, his father's head clerk and man of business, a shrewd, kindly, canny Scot, with a fund of good-humor and keen wit and common-sense, and no nonsense about him at all.

By the next return train they left for the city, and Sydney came back to the school-room. We boys furtively looked for the traces of tears in his eyes; but there were none. He was very quiet and distraught all the afternoon. He made sad havoc with the history lesson, and had his equations in a state of hopeless dissolution. But the Master took no note of this. There was no other sign of pain at the parting.

But his eyes were full of that wan, famished look, and I put my arm round his neck, as we left the school-room; but I did not dare to tell him what was in my heart.

But I felt so sorry for him. I knew how my mother and sisters would have hung round me and told me all the small, but fond, history of home during my absence; how Tom the pony was, and the sayings and doings of all the dear home circle, from father down to Rob Roy the collie.

They were but small and inconsiderable trifles; but they were the chronicle of home-life, and as such they were dear, so dear to me.

For Sydney there was evidently no such budget.

His mother brought him two large boxes of the finest French confections. But they smelt of the shop; they had none of that aromatic, home savor that tingles in the nostrils and brightens the eyes and tickles the salivary glands of the expectant group of boys, as they stand around while the lid is lifted from one of those boxes of home-made ginger-snaps (with haply a black cake, small but in proportion delicious), and cold, rosy-cheeked apples, laughing at you; and English walnuts coated with sugar (my sister did these to perfection), and fine home-made taffy, of the texture that mother called "chewy."

Sydney's mother was kind, gentle, gracious, and beautiful; but she did not know how to be motherly.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT a month after this, and thereafter with the sure regularity of the returning day, on the last Saturday of each month, Alexander McKenzie came up, systematically, as he did everything, to discharge his duty, and settle in person the accounts of Sydney Morris, and to keep an eye on the lad.

He was a true Scotchman, in bone and brawn, and faith and bonnie humor. He was a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, and a champion of the philosophy which her famous men have taught, and a champion, moreover, of all that was Scotch. He was leal as a thistle to the motto of his native land, but his heart was as soft as the down inside the thistle's bristling scape. In his view, England had been saved from premature decay by her union with Scotland, which had leavened the whole lump, had spiced her literature, and salted her theology with the true doctrines of grace.

The Scotch philosophers were the only men who could see through a "subjec'," as he called it. "And faith, mon, if they canna see through it, they'll keek round it, and tell you the honest truth ony way."

He was strong and outspoken in his preference for Princeton among our American colleges, with her grand old Scottish chief at her head.

"I would far rather plant a young shrub," he would say, "in what a quizzical mon would be inclined to call the 'sterile sands' of Princeton, than in the soft leaf-mould of Harvard. The mon would ne'er ha' been in Princeton or he would ken better than to let his tongue rin ayant the facts. It is good stiff clay soil round Princeton, and a rocky hill of granite behind her. It is a soil that'll tak' all the manure ye'll gi'e it; and it'll reward your toil in warkin' it by growin' for you a stiff, sturdy oak that'll stand agen ony wind o' doctrine.

"And as for Harvard, they've dug out the good old clay that was there, and they've piled in a lot of soft leaf-mould, largely imported from Oxford, and they'll grow you naught but shaky saplings."

The Scotch philosophers, he held, were like the Scottish chiefs. The lowland English were little better than their vassals; they accumulated stock only to have it swept into the larders of their more hardy neighbors.

R., S., H., M., he would roll out, like a cabalistic exorcism, with a burr to the R., and a long, deep, resonant hum on the M. Then he would explain to us boys, who thought him great fun, that the

mystic runes stood for Reid, Stuart, Hamilton, and McCosh.

"Ye'll have an opportunity to consult the others, along with St. Paul and Augustine, in the *Civitas Dei*. I'd advise ye to have a few words with McCosh, on this side o' the river."

We boys pronounced the old fellow immense; his eyes brimmed, and the corners of his mouth twitched as he met us, and, in the expressive phrase of Tom Hadley, "He made things hum."

His rich Scotch burr gave a flavor to his speech, at once of wisdom and of wit.

He and the Master had many a tilt, to the keen delight of the boys. They were both strong, clear, honest thinkers, very wide apart; but with a sincere respect and regard for one another.

There was plenty of spice in their contest, but not a drop of bitterness. Eager to gain and press an advantage to the utmost, neither asking nor giving quarter, yet they were fair and just to one another; for both of them were men that could respect the other side of a truth.

The Scotchman was always ready, always on tap; and, when you drew him out, he flowed like his native ale, clear and beady.

One of their favorite battle-grounds was on the college question; the Master maintaining the claims of Harvard to a broader and more

generous culture than Princeton could or would give.

"Broad," answered McKenzie, "broad, do you say? If I read the Scriptures aright, the broad way is not the choice road, especially for the young. And generous do you call the culture—aye, too generous by half. For I understand that if a young man, supposed by his parents to be a *student* at Harvard, be gone for three weeks on the tour of his base-ball club, and three weeks with his football club, and a month or more on the glee-club tour, and he browsing the while around the hotels of the land, if he come back, after his riotous livin', and cram in six weeks what he would by rights ha' been slowly and surely digestin' for six months, wi' generous readin' alang the lines o' his study to wash it down, and then wi' glib tongue and wi' ready pen he can sputter out in the morn what he has crammed ower-night. What'll they say to him? 'Well done, gude and faithful servant,' and off he goes wi' your diploma. That makes fish o' one and fowl o' anither. I tell you, mon, what quickly comes, is quickly gane."

"But," answered the Master, "by their fruit we can judge them, my dear Mr. McKenzie. Can you claim a higher scholarship for the graduates of Princeton than the graduates of Harvard? Are there more Princeton men among 'the immortals' than Harvard?"

"Aye, by a long odds more," broke in McKenzie, "if you refer to the divine immortals, and not to the French imitation."

"Of that, my friend," said Mr. Armstrong quietly, "it would perhaps be best to leave the decision to Him who gives the 'crown that fadeth not away.' I mean, of course, among the names which men will not let die; do not Harvard men outnumber Princeton men, among those whom the world has chosen as representative men?"

"Aye, Mr. Armstrong," said the honest old Scotchman, "I'll grant it. You're older than we are, and you were, in days gone by, keen for having your men trained thorough the year; but, in these days, ye'll no' keep the lead of Princeton and Yale. You don't pull a steady stroke, and spurtin' ne'er won a lang race. Ye've fell to thinkin' that the young lads can be their own drivers, lang afore they're fit to handle the reins; and you'll lose the place ye've held till now, as sure as my name is McKenzie."

"Well, neither you nor I can have the prophet's vision to see to the end of that course, Mr. McKenzie," retorted the Master. "But I gather faith in the future of Harvard, as I look on her stride of the past. A seat of learning with such an alumnate, and such an endowment for work, and such a corps of Professors, can hardly sink into permanent stag-

nation, nor lose the prestige which her sons have won. Time only can tell us whether the counsels which guide her now err in excess of freedom. But I believe you have overstated the laxity of their restraints over the students."

"But you'll admit that they're a bit too free in their discipline," urged Mr. McKenzie, now thoroughly wrought up, "and their religion would suit a Hindoo, perhaps, better than a Christian."

"Hold, hold, Mr. McKenzie," broke in the Master, "I'll admit nothing of the kind. You could hardly say that, if you knew or had read any of the clear, strong, manly Christian writing of the chaplain of Harvard, a man whom your Princeton heroes admire and respect. Nor could any fair-minded man suggest that the proposed arrangement at Harvard of chaplains of different Christian denominations would prove an attractive annex to a Hindoo temple. Ah! no, my friend, Harvard is a long way off from the denial of Christianity, however she may hesitate to urge on her students a particular form of Christian belief."

"No," threw in McKenzie with twinkling eyes, "she's no ways 'particular' as to form or onything else where religion is concerned. Mon, if you don't tak' on wi' some *form* of Christianity, you leave your religion without form and void. I don't see what the unsubstantial thing is then, but just such

stuff as dreams are made of. Mon, if you've got a belief, you must formulate it, just as you must formulate your knowledge on ony subjec', if you've got any orderly and well-considered knowledge."

"It is one thing," answered the Master, "to formulate your own belief, and another to impose your form of belief on others."

"Why, mon," broke in the irrepressible Scotchman, "when I think of Harvard, I'm minded of a tale aboot an officer of the Queen's navy that was sendit to some South Sea Island to report on the manners and morals of the natives. He summed up his information in an excellent short report: 'They have no manners, and as for their morals——'"

"Hold there, Mr. McKenzie," said the Master warmly. "No college can boast of a finer-grained gentleman than your Harvard-bred man."

"Give me my chance," laughed McKenzie, "to wind up my reel and to elucidate my meaning. I had only displayed my figure of speech and was ready to fit my meaning on to it. Can't ye tak' a parable, mon? Ye've got the thing entirely by the tail-end o' it. As I was discoorsin' when you brak' the thread in twain. They've manners to be sure, and morals mayhap; but they've no discipline, nor ower muckle religion. Why, mon, they've proposed to make religion an elective, and to put

ower agen the worship of God a choice of mathematics, or some knotty grind of metaphysics. Hoot, mon, they don't know what the word religion means. When will the heart of man, be he young or old, elect religion when he has ony other selection open to him? Will they make honesty elective, and offer them the choice between sobriety and archæology? The thing has no fitness in itself. It is the dream of a cold, unfeeling, and anti-Christian culture."

"But, my dear man," said the Master, earnestly, "you wilfully blind yourself to the idea that underlies such a scheme. The theory upon which it rests is this, that men cannot be driven to moral and religious convictions, of any worth. They must be drawn to them by an appreciation of their beauty and power. Compulsion to religious exercises puts the whole thing in a false light before them. And, in order that they may freely choose for themselves the better way, it has been suggested that they shall be led to such choice, by offering them the alternative of attendance on some religious exercise, or in lieu of that, on some other exercise that will be a substitute in point of *time occupied*, but in no other way."

"The ground is false ground, I tell you; false ground," said McKenzie warmly. "No institution, that proposes to guide youth in the first windings

of the devious paths of life, should fear to declare that the first duty of a gude mon is to fear God and love his nee'bor; and to say plainly, 'We purpose to teach you to do *that* first of all.'

"But when you set them to choose between an exercise at God's worship and a lesson in Plato, they'll soon spring to the conclusion that *you* put no difference between Plato and Christ; and they'll not be such a wide way off from the truth, either."

"It all depends on your point of view, Mr. McKenzie," retorted Mr. Armstrong. And so they would wage battle, each for the way that seemed to him the shortest and surest road to truth—far apart in their methods, though one in their aim; both good men and true, mutually respecting one another, and each holding fast that which seemed to him good.

We boys listened, and wondered which was right. Loyalty to the Master arrayed us on his side; and yet we could bear no grudge against the hearty, whole-souled Scotchman.

During these years of our school-life, Sydney grew, as all healthy boys do, in the line of study and recreation that was appointed him. He had no such force of intellect or character as would lead him to strike off in any path for himself.

He entered into our sports with zest, if not with ardor; and, in his studies was anxious, as we all

were, above all else, to win the Master's approval. And his mind opened, under the genial influences about him. He lost much of his reticence and was a natural, sincere, high-spirited boy. The only singular trait that characterized him was a disposition to regard, as comparatively worthless, anything which he did. Any distinction which he won, no matter how hard he had striven to win it, seemed to lose its value in his eyes, because *he* had succeeded in winning it. If another boy had striven and had won it, he would generously applaud and really feel that it was worth the winning. The mere fact that he could succeed seemed to belittle the success in his eyes. It was so in his studies and equally true in our sports. He was not dissatisfied nor querulous nor supercilious; but he had a cool disdain for his own attainments.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was nearing the time of the close of our school year, when joyful preparation is made by every school-boy, who loves his school and his home in just proportion, to finish up another chapter of school-life and make history at home. Examinations and reviews were in their closing stages, and there was a general scatter-brain air about things, a readiness to bear an unusual strain of work, because work was soon to end. Plans were discussed, the summer's history was forecast with the prophetic vision, cleared with a touch of the euphrasy of boyish hope.

And where would Sydney Morris go, and how would his summer vacation be spent, we boys wondered; but did not dare to ask.

There came one day a letter from Mr. McKenzie, telling him that he was to join his father and mother as guests on the yacht *Mohican*, for a cruise along the New England coast, perhaps still farther north; past the Reef of Norman's Woe, stopping at Newport and Bar Harbor. The yacht was to come up the Hudson, as wind and tide might permit, and lie off the school, and a yawl would come

ashore to fetch Sydney. A dark-blue sailor suit, with a broad-crowned, brimless cap, was sent up from New York. How we all envied him and yet with the generous envy that would not have abated one jot of his fun, but lead us to enter into his plans with zest.

We made him dress up in his sailor suit. How handsome he looked, his dark hair crowding out from under the sailor hat, his cheeks flushed and his color heightened and his eyes glowing with an almost girlish abashment, at his unwonted rig and our outspoken admiration. How we rushed into the most minute and thorough preparations for the cruise, and dwelt, with glowing delight, on all the features of his "life on the ocean wave." How we filled in (crammed would better express it) his life at sea with all kinds of stirring incidents of excitement and of danger, which, to our bold fancy, crowned every sea voyage with a halo of blended mystery and glory. We bellowed Barry Cornwall in unison, till the rafters would have rung, if the schoolroom had been supplied with those picturesque appurtenances. With mimic pantomime we enacted in dumb show scenes from the "Red Rover" and "Water Witch." Some even hinted that the weird experiences of the "Ancient Mariner" were not wholly unknown to vessels in these latitudes. And, mingled with these more romantic suggestions,

some went roistering through the ballad of the "Crew of the Nancy brig," and howled out the weird gastronomic delusion embodied in the tipsy old sailor's refrain:

> "I'm the boson tight and the midship mite,
> And the crew of the captain's gig."

The wonder and mystery and romance of the sea seemed brought into our very midst, and our talk was distinctively briny.

Mr. McKenzie came up in a day or two, and himself superintended all the details of Sydney's outfit, and entered into his anticipations of pleasure, like a boy. He was a fine old fellow, and we boys appreciated him more, every time we saw him. He gave Sydney more practical and valuable suggestions than ours. He brought them out of the stores of a closer acquaintance with the sea than that which we had gained from Cooper and Cornwall and Coleridge.

He suggested nautical dangers that had not entered into our calculations—of a kind that do not find their way into the best literature, and that were a wet blanket on our heroics.

On our horizon of the sea there had not loomed the wan spectre of sea-sickness. But Mr. McKenzie knew that he stalked grim on every deck, and

exacted unrelenting tribute from every landsman whose frail bark fretted the ocean with its keel, and the stoutest were his prey.

"But keep a brave heart, my lad. Faint heart ne'er made a stout stomach. They tell me that it's all a freak of the head—a bit too much of unconscious cerebration, that upsets the stomach. It may be the case wi' some; but to my ane thinking it's the *disapp'intment of the legs* that plays the mischief with the whole structure. Keep on your feet, my lad, till you get on your sea-legs, as the sayin' is. Keep movin' until you beat out the motion that is workin' agen you."

"But, Mr. McKenzie, what have the legs to do with the stomach, and how can their disappointment make you sea-sick?"

"Well, my lads, we're curious and wonderfu' made; we have the Scripture for that. And you're made for an equal tread and poise on your two legs, wi' your head erect; and in that you're distinguished from the serpent that crawls on his belly, and from the beasts that go on all-fours. And there's an intimate connection of all the parts that are designed to maintain this equilibrium. And ye'll note that, where a man has upset his brain with liquor, his head brings his feet into immediate trouble; and it is but plain to be seen that, if the raging of the sea puts the legs into a state of

disturbance, the head has nought left but to follow suit, and the stomach falls out sadly, between the entanglement of the two."

In truth we had led Mr. McKenzie in beyond his depth. But he was not a man to shirk responsibility.

The next day was one of those days in June "so cool, so calm, so bright, the bridal of the earth and sky." The earth lapped in sunshine seems "all very good"—to have gone back to its primal beauty; a day when gladness is very glad, and sadness doubly sad, and grief the more profound. When all the softening influences of nature seem to open the pores of the heart, and bear in upon the soul, and press to the core the barbed arrow of a grief, and the sunshine mocks at tears. On such a day as this, the message came to Mr. McKenzie that the *Mohican* had capsized, in a sudden squall, while at anchor off Staten Island, with all sail set for her start up the Hudson, and while all the party were below at luncheon; and host and hostess and merry guests passed from festival to funeral; and Sydney Morris was an orphan, with none nearer to him in all the world than Mr. McKenzie and the Master.

The brave old Scotchman came into the schoolroom with a strong, nervous stride, and a pale, set face, and laid his hand on Sydney with a firm

grasp, and led him from the school-room to the parlor. His coming had always been the signal for fun; but we were awed by his strange, hurried manner now. When he was alone with Sydney he drew him close to his side, with strong tenderness, and broke the sad tidings to him.

"My laddie, are ye strong to bear me tell to you that ye canna go on the cruise, that has been fillin' your thoughts for the days past?"

Sydney's face fell.

"My laddie, are ye fit to bear anither disappointment, when I tell you, that your father and mither are gane on a lang, lang voyage acrass the sea, and ye maun see them not for mony a day?"

Sydney looked at him in a dazed way, thinking the merrie Scotchman had gone mad.

But this was no joke of his; that was plain to be seen, for his eyes were wild with suppressed grief, and his tones were deep and hollow, while he wrestled, not only with his own sorrow, but was pierced with the pangs of the young heart that was beating against his side. He became almost incoherent in the intensity of his feeling. He drew Sydney closer, and gripped him with an almost cruel hold.

"My laddie," he said; and there rose before him the picture of his own boy, who had died in the bright beauty of his early boyhood;—he had always called him "Laddie."

"My laddie, ye are God's ain bairn,—the bairn that He lo'es with a lo'e that a puir human mither canna give you, wi' a pity that a puir human father canna feel. Laddie, do ye ken how God lo'es you—and will ha' nane betune ye and His ain sel'. Do ye mind, laddie, how God tells us that He is aye the God of the fatherless?"

The boy thought the man demented. He was terrified beyond description, by the vague horror that seized upon him; but he clung to his old friend.

"Tell me, Mr. McKenzie, what has happened? Why can't we go on the cruise? What has happened? Where is my mother?"

Then the old man told him plainly. With a great sob he gasped out, "She is wi' God. She is deid, my laddie. She has found a gentle grave, under the blue waters of the river. The *Mohican* was o'erturned in a squall; and, while they smiled kindly on one anither, they went 'hand in hand into the silent land'; and God buried them saftly, in the river."

Sydney drew himself away from McKenzie and sat down and stared out at the river, with a dull, fixed eye that saw nothing. Dazed in mind and struck dumb at heart, he felt not, and scarcely knew, what had happened. He uttered neither cry nor moan, and his eyes were dry and fixed, his face ghastly

white, and the blood clutched his heart. He muttered in a dull monotone: "The river. In the river." That was his only answer to the dreadful revelation.

McKenzie leaned over, buried his face in his hands and groaned, as though his heart were breaking. Mrs. Armstrong came into the room, and McKenzie rose and left them, muttering to himself, "I'm no' fit to heal heart-wounds, e'en though I've made 'em. God gi'es it to angels and to women to administer His comfort to the breakin' hearts. Aye, since they ken the mode of dealin' through and through wi' the hearts o' men,—aye, gi'e me the touch of a woman rightly to soothe a lad or a bairn." And so he left these two alone.

The Master told us the news in the school-room, and it fell like a near stroke of lightning, and hushed us to an awed silence.

First he rapped for attention. "Boys, you may lay aside your books." His face was white, his hands trembled. He stood with close-shut lips looking over the school-room, while we hurried, with instinctive fear, to put away books and slates. After the clatter of closing desks was over, and the hush of suppressed excitement could be felt through the room, the Master broke the silence in that low, set tone of one who wrestles for the mastery with an intense feeling. "Boys, there some-

times fall upon us sorrows so heavy and sudden, that they seem greater than we can bear. And we have to look outside of ourselves for strength to bear them. We must look, finally, to God; but before we can feel His presence, we have to lean on what is nearest to us. Now I want every boy in this school to feel that he has a share in helping Sydney Morris bear the crushing sorrow that has fallen on him. Mr. McKenzie led him out of your midst this morning to tell him that his father and mother had both been drowned by the capsizing of the *Mohican*, as she lay at anchor off Staten Island, with all sails set to start up the river; she was struck by a sudden squall, while the whole party were in the cabin, and was upset, and they were all lost."

There was an audible inspiration of horror through the whole school.

"I want to give you a text to guide your conduct, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' You can't do anything much for Sydney: but you can do many little things, such as will make him know that you are sorry for him. You can let him talk to you about his sorrow, if he wants to; and this will do him good. Each of you must find out, for himself, how to help him. If such kindness is to be worth anything, it must spring from your own hearts, and not from

what I tell you. I know that every boy in this school feels sorry for Sydney; then try to let him see that you feel so."

Then he dismissed us. We crept out of the school-room and down the hall on tiptoe, a scared, trembling group. As we passed the half-opened parlor-door we cast frightened glances toward the room, and saw Sydney kneeling, with his face in Mrs. Armstrong's lap, and she was gently stroking his head.

Fairly out of the house, we ran and gathered, like a group of hunted deer, around the spring, and talked almost in whispers. We were more afraid of seeing Sydney come out of the house than if we had awaited the walking forth of a spirit. We were anxious to help him; we half understood what the Master meant, but we were as helpless as infants, and we felt the leaden weight of our helplessness.

How strange and awful it seemed to us. How could the birds sing and the sun shine, and the river sparkle, when such grief was in our midst? None of us dreamed of seeking relief in any sport. We stood compelled to inaction, to stand, all the day long, in the shadow of this darkness. Oh! how long and weary that summer day seemed to us.

Let none imagine that, because the tie had not

been closer between Sydney and his parents, he did not suffer keenly in their loss.

Now that his mother was gone, he idealized her and endowed her with a tenderness of love that may have been in her; but the weeds had choked it.

And there was the added loneliness to his grief, that he lacked the solace of the memory of those tendernesses, which seem to add poignancy to our sorrow, but do in truth soften it and take the salt bitterness out of our tears. Our first consolations are the precious recollections of love that has ministered unto us, and that we have been allowed to minister unto. These memories weave the silver cord that death cannot loose, and fill a golden bowl that cannot be broken. They are the pledge that life may go out, but love cannot die.

Sydney Morris had no such memories to lighten the sorrow that lay, a smothering weight, upon his breast. His was

> "A grief without a pang—
> Void, dark and drear;
> A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief
> Which finds no natural outlet, no relief
> In word or sigh or tear."

In wan and heartless mood, he could not feel the soothing influence of God or man or nature. And besides, there was a sense of shadow on him per-

sonally, a darkening of mind and heart, a sense as of fate pursuing him and driving him to the depths of despair; a strange, strained mood that resisted all reason and thwarted all sympathy, because it set him, in his own mind, aloof from others, as one branded for sorrow and doomed to suffering.

He grew reserved and quiet, with a startled look, as though he were the hunted quarry of some demon horde. It was awful, the loneliness of his grief into which he shrank and seemed to lose himself.

CHAPTER V.

SLOWLY, as time crept on, the shadow lightened from the life of Sydney Morris; but, for all the healing that time and the vigor of young life brought to him, the scar of the sorrow remained. His father had left him ample means; had named him his sole heir, and fixed the age for the inheritance of his property at twenty-five. He had left Mr. McKenzie as sole executor of his will, and guardian of Sydney; had charged the boy to remember the obligations which he was under to McKenzie, and deal with him justly; though no such charge was needed, for no tie of nature could have strengthened the bond that knit these two together; their love was "passing the love of women."

Sydney had grown, at nineteen, into a strong, well-knit, attractive fellow, full of grace and gentleness; but not of gladness. He was bright, earnest, eager to learn, and devoured everything that came in his way, with avidity. But, with the ardor of youth, he seized upon and accepted what pleased his taste. He did not try conclusions with his author, nor take much pains to verify a broad

generalization that was put in a form to attract his fancy. An aptly turned sentence, a bright, dashing, epigrammatic style went a long way with him. An hypothesis clothed in daring and confident terms, a theory with a neat round turn in its phrasing, reached him and pleased him, and he gave it a ready acceptance that made him overlook the speciousness of its argument. A well-turned epigram was, to him, wisdom in a nugget. And if, in one glaring instance, it held true, he accepted it, and thereafter was always seeking verifying instances. It was only the way of the world, leading him on in his youth. Given the bright hypothesis, let us take it for what it is worth and observe the instances which tell us that it is true. There is the charm of discovery along this path, the fascination of being in the van; we are leaders of fashionable thought. But perhaps we are led; and led by the light that dances over the bog.

For some minds, there is a satisfaction, also, in looking at things in their extreme form. Truths seem more vividly true and forceful, when they are put *in extremis*. There is a grim pleasure, for such, in making themselves the sport and plaything of these extreme phases of truth, their life the inevitable solution of these ultimate principles. We all admit the charm and power of paradox, and its value to drive home and clinch truth, so that we

cannot escape it. And, in a master's hand, it is the final stretch of the power of mind over mind. But it is a dangerous weapon for the young to handle; it is always loaded.

The fascination of wit, that makes it pass for wisdom, is like the spell of beauty that makes it pass for goodness. These influences are more potent with youth, when the lively appreciation of all that charms the senses has not been toned by the "years that bring the philosophic mind."

Ah! yes, I hear my young reader say: that is the prate of that ancient cynic Experience. He is a toothless mumbler who has lost his appetite for sweets, because they make his old teeth ache, and give him the heart-burn, and the sour brash rises in his mouth. Ancient cynic, the only difference between us is, that you can't eat these things any more, and I can, for some little time longer.

Be it so, my young rider of Pegasus. I will own my shortcomings, only do you join in the litany when the turn for your response cometh. "We have left untasted the things that we ought to taste." *Peccavi*, I cry. And now, youngster, for your turn; "We have tasted the things that we ought not to have tasted, and swallowed the fruit, be it good or evil." *Peccavi.* Youngster, out with it.

And Sydney ate of the fruit in the garden of knowledge, of every kind which seemed to his un-

instructed mind to be good and fair, and to be desired to make one wise. And wisdom was to know, and to know more and more both of good and of evil, of great and of small. And he was thus wise, wise beyond his years. McKenzie told him he was in beyond his depth; he had better wait till his legs grew, before he waded in any deeper.

He was ready for college now, and had been ready two years ago, but McKenzie would not hear of his going until he had a back broad enough to carry the load. He said, by laying too much on the mind in youth, you make a man bandy-legged in his mental capacities, and any cur could slip through his knees and trip him up at a bound. The Master was no ways averse to keep Sydney at school, for he was deeply interested in the boy, and they were very near to one another.

Of course the question where Sydney was to go was not once mooted. The old Scotchman did not declare it, but simply assumed it, as though there were but the one college in the United States. The only possible choice would have been Edinburgh or Princeton, and Princeton, even there, held the preference for an American boy.

"Mind you, I say for an *American* boy. Edinburgh will fit you with all that ye need to navigate the quiet waters of the old world; but, when ye must pull against the turbulent stream of your American

life, ye'll need perhaps some different kind of timber in your craft."

And so we turned over the page, and school-life and the Master, and the quaint, old, brick house, and the bubbling spring, and the noble river, and our boats and canoes, and our desks, and many a joy and gladness became things of the past—the unforgotten, but unrecoverable past—the past that we say we can recall—oh, there is a mockery in that word recall. What is the answer to our call, as from later years we try to live over again the past—"Ye cannot enter now." The gist of life, after all said and done, is what we can take out of it;—not what there is in it, but what we are able to receive; it is like the landscape over which the ox ruminates and the poet idealizes.

What we had gathered of the fruit of our school-life was ours; but how much of the sweet, ripe fruit had fallen unnoticed, and lay, like the apples in the long grass of the orchard, sweet and cool, and fit for a feast, but ungathered by any save the ants, or Mr. Armstrong's Jersey cow, who had a keen nose for forgotten fruit, and whose milk was the sweeter for the apples which we failed to gather.

Some one perhaps is always the better for what we do not gather of the world's fruit, and sometimes it comes back to us, in ways that we do not look for; but some fruit is never garnered. But

our boyhood was gone now. Its sorrows were buried in the merciful past, and its fruit was like the apples, which we picked up and stored in our pockets, to munch by the way, on our long country rambles.

We brought out of it a fair stock of knowledge that enabled us to pass our entrance examination for college in good form. Sydney, Tom Hadley, and I went to Princeton, the majority of our schoolmates to Harvard, and a sprinkling to Yale. We brought out of our school-life a somewhat broader culture than is usual with school-boys, and an honest, manly desire to know the truth and to follow it. We parted from Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong with real sorrow, and from all the scenes of our school-days, with genuine regret. We paid farewell visits to brook and meadow, to wood and river, and took our favorite walks over again for the last time, and had a grand final boat-race on the river, and held a *Powwow* round the spring, and swore fealty to Sand-elfin, and to one another, as long as the winds blow and the waters run; and we turned the page, whereon 'school-boy' was written, to the next one, headed 'college-men.'

As we lay in the moonlight, by the side of the spring, on the last night of our school-life, and were talking of the scenes, which we declared, we would never forget, and had all agreed that no college

in the land could give us a river like this one, Sydney broke in upon the conversation, almost vehemently:

"I feel as if my life would be a happier and a better one if I never saw the river again. How dark and black its waters flow, outside of the silver path which the moon makes over it. It looks sullen like the Styx. I do not wonder that the symbol of death is a river."

We were silent, and could not wonder that he was glad to leave the river.

Mr. McKenzie went down to Princeton with us, and superintended our establishment there. He could not bear to give over his care of Sydney, and leave him to shift for himself. It was touching to see the whole wealth of a great honest heart laid at the feet of the younger man. But Sydney knew that it was pure gold, and set great value on it.

With the adaptability of youth to new scenes and conditions, we were soon as thoroughly at home in college-life as we had been at school. We got our cue from the upper classmen, and were wary in our first essays at collegiate manners, and so fared well.

McKenzie took us to see the President; and we had that welcome, which those who have had it know without description, and those who have not,

would never know by pages of description. One word describes it. It was *hearty.*

With what awe the gentle and true-hearted McKenzie, full of all the finer qualities of the hero-worshipper, sat and drank in the few, simple, genuine, kindly words with which the President welcomed three freshmen to his college. What could he say more than to bid us kindly welcome, and God-speed; which he did in a simple and genuine way that won us to him.

After we left the house McKenzie's repressed enthusiasm burst from him.

"Was he na glorious; the grand old man. Did you mark the crown on him?"

We started; we had been considerably overawed by our introduction to the President;—but we did not think, to the extent of overlooking such an ornament as this.

"Crown did you say, Mr. McKenzie?—what crown?"

"Why, the silver crown of a head grown hoary in the service of God and of men. Did ye note the forward stoop of the shoulders, and the inclination of the head?—as though the soul was aye fore-runnin' the body, and, while he walked abreast of his fellow-men, his head was ever a bit in the lead of the others."

He left us quite satisfied that Sydney was at the fountain-head of all wholesome knowledge.

After our introduction to the President, our next distinguished acquaintance was of one who graced the other end of line, and bore his honors with an easy grace that became his rank among the instructors of guileless youth at Princeton.

His name was James. He was purveyor-in-ordinary to the college men. He dispensed temperate drinks, as lemonade and spruce-beer, also cakes of varied form, age, and texture; candies, apples, and such stuff as nightmares are made of. The arena of his game was the college campus.

James was easily located in his true ethnic relation to the second son of Noah. He was Hamitic without any doubt.

I am afraid James was *rapax*. The nimbleness of his desires outran his powers of speech; and he would stand, making facial contortions that were a perfect pantomime of the laureate's line, "Oh that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me."

For, like the great Athenian, James was an intermittent orator. His stream of speech flowed with rapidity and volume until it struck the snag of a hard "g," and then it was violently arrested. His gutturals gripped him, and threw him into an ecstasy of facial and laryngeal contortion that threatened to do him a damage. I doubt if James could

have uttered the sentence, "Great is the greed of gain"; against it his whole nature, moral and physical, would have risen in gasping insurrection.

It was his glory that he had served under four Presidents and forty-three classes; and that now the head of the college line, and the foot, was graced by the same name. He was pleased to call the President James I., and himself James II.

He thought he knew the average college man. For him they ranged themselves into two classes—those who did pay, and those who didn't pay.

The wealth of the nation, James believed, depended upon the rapid circulation of the medium of exchange, with a vortex in the bottom of his own pocket.

He held you "with his glittering eye," he halted you with his stammering speech, and told you a favorite tale;—how once he had gone to Baltimore, and was walking on Charles Street, and had met an old Princetonian, and had recognized him, and had called him by name, and the Princetonian had recognized James—with a five-dollar note—and James had never forgotten it, and the memory of that little transaction will live, as long as James haunts the college green.

And while he recited to you this touching tale of the renewal of by-gone associations, there was a

wealth of suggestion in James' eye and a persuasive twitch of his fingers, which spoke volumes to the man whose better nature had not been wholly spoiled by contact with a cold world.

There was only one recognized mode of escape from James, and that was a metallic exchange. He was not very brilliant at repartee, but now and then made a good hit, by accident.

We sauntered up to the group who were chaffing and chaffering with James, just as he answered:

"Young g-g-gentlemen, you c-can chaff me wid yo're big words, but ef you'll fill yo'reselves up wid dese apples and ginger-bread, it will be g-g-good for you and better for me."

"James," answered one of the seniors, "sordid greed governs your opinion of men."

"I knows a gemman when I sees him, and I see a lot of 'em here to-day," retorted James.

This brought out a fair show of nickels; and James went off, well content with his morning's work.

James had his personal ambitions and pride of achievements, which led him sometimes to boast: "Some can beat me at roast beef, mutton, and potatoes," he would say; "but at eatin' eggs I take de belt."

"The Doctor is a younger man than I am, but in a fair catch-as-catch-can wrastle, I *believe* I can

down him," was another of his flights, with which his ambition tried to solace the seeming inferiority to which society had doomed him.

James was *sui generis*, though he did not know the meaning of the term.

CHAPTER VI.

WE entered, with all the zest of the novice, into our new mode of life; and relished its larger opportunities and its sense of greater freedom. We were our own masters now, and yet with no cumbering sense of increased responsibilities; there was all the glory, without the trials of manhood. We felt the imposing dignity of collegiate caste; and magnified the ancient distinction between 'town and gown'; and cherished the true university feudal instinct.

The quaint old New Jersey village, straggling along its one long street, which forked at the upper end, to form the two sides of the triangle, with "lover's lane" as its base, had a beautiful consistency in all its make-up. Its architecture was early American in style. It was side-tracked by the railroad, "far from the madding crowd," quiet and sedate in the even tenor of its life. There was no bustle of hurrying crowds to distract the thought, or make one feel that they were living in the eager nineteenth century. It was full of the repose which fits one for meditation, and attunes the mind to feel that thought, slow, well-considered thought,

is, after all, the grand motive power that reaches far down the ages, and contributes the largest and most stable element to the world's progress.

And Sydney entered into this charmed circle of the scholastic repose of the old town, and felt its influence, and was eager to embrace its opportunities, and to play the part of the monastic recluse. It all chimed in with his dreamy mood and with his enthusiastic temperament.

But, while he imagined himself so keenly in sympathy with the intellectual atmosphere that surrounded him at Princeton, Sydney manifested, very early in his career, a restless impatience at the restraint of a prescribed course of study, and a desire to assume the direction of his own intellectual life.

He felt the restrictions imposed on him by the college curriculum as an imposition of authority, hampering and restraining the free impulses of his mind, as a narrow and mechanical scheme for moulding all men in a common type, which discouraged effort and restrained the highest powers from coming into play.

During the first year of his course, he was an enthusiastic classicist, and contended stoutly for the analytic study of the language and literature of Greece, as embodying the thought of the most cultured race among men, and therefore better

adapted than any other means, both to teach men to think clearly on high themes, and to clothe their thoughts in the most expressive language.

He would brook no denial of this theory, and pushed his enthusiasm beyond all bounds of reason. He regarded the appointed curriculum in the classics as meagre in the extreme, going just far enough to make them a task, not nearly far enough to open their beauty and let their stimulating power touch and develope the mind.

"We learn just enough Greek," he would say, "to let us know how hard a thing it is to enter the portals of their temple, and not enough to let us know how rich, and exquisitely beautiful, the inner temple is."

Later on in his course, as the vigor of this whim was spending its force, and he was ripe for the adoption of some new fancy as the true mental stimulus, he transferred his loyal allegiance from the classics to mathematics. Now he was ready to enter the lists and maintain, with a new ardor, the claims of that mental training which marshalled the faculties in serried ranks, and brought a man always face to face with a solution, which was either right or wrong, and was susceptible of an unanswerable demonstration. This was to be found only in the processes of mathematics. Here was no possibility of evasion or quibble; here was no chance for

wool-gathering, while you hung over the open page, with the eye fixed, and a form of words floating through the brain, and the mind wandering, with a fool's wit, to the ends of the earth.

He was brave in the formation and defense of one after another of his pet illusions.

In this new field, too, he was ready to raise the standard of revolt against the prescribed course of study. Here again he was prepared to battle for wider opportunities and a larger share of time for this new favorite. He felt that he was bound, like a galley-slave, one of a chain-gang, condemned to row over a prescribed course, and to proceed with the steady monotony of the stroke which the average man of the crew could maintain.

Everywhere, and always, he was prone to wander out of the course, and shun the beaten track as he would shun infection, certain that this was the sure road to stupid mediocrity. He was neither listless, nor idle, nor stupid, but very restless under any restraint which interfered with his pursuit of just what pleased himself.

He was unsparing in his criticism of those whose authority had set up the college curriculum: and by no means flattering in his estimate of the ability of those who could regard the mental requirements of six hundred men as absolutely identical, and proposed to meet these requirements by doling out,

to all alike, a pittance of every kind of study, in small and regular doses.

He cared more for the hours spent in the library, following the bent of his own fancy, than for all that was offered to him in class- or lecture-room. He took very little interest in the sports that form so prominent a factor in college life.

He acquitted himself well in those which he did undertake. He was a quick and graceful tennis player, and an agile gymnast. With base-ball and foot-ball he would have nothing to do, having an utter distaste for the one, and a thorough disgust for the other, regarding the latter as unworthy the consideration of men who were striving to lead an intellectual life.

He was somewhat contemptuous in his criticism of those who showed a preference for football; and he made more than one man his enemy, by the free and truculent expression of his opinions on the subject of college athletics.

He had many warm friends, but also not a few warm enemies, among those whom he had characterized as of the baser sort of fellows, because they were willing to risk a broken head or a dislocated limb, for the fleeting triumph of a gladiator's arena.

Tom Hadley was an enthusiastic football player, and always snatched up the cudgels, and used them stoutly over Sydney's back and head, whenever he

peeped or muttered, as the cynical opponent of the healthy game. Tom had won, not only college honor, but inter-collegiate glory on the broad field of the Polo grounds. He was a lithe, active, little fellow; sturdy, but light on his feet, and, once the ball was in his embrace, there was small chance for the opposing eleven. He ran with a quick, sure step, folding the captured treasure in a fond and sure embrace, dodging between the very hands of his opponents, who were never sure of their prey even when they had their hands on him, for he sped like young Lochinvar with his bride.

He would drop, like a hare hunted by the hounds, and, while his headlong enemy was pitching forward in the vain effort to arrest the speed that had overshot the mark, Tom was up, and away for the goal.

He was an enthusiast on the game, as those are apt to be on games that they can play well, and he was in nowise ready to listen, quietly, to Sydney's denunciation of it as a childish game of tag, made brutal by the roughness which characterized the play.

We came home one Fall from the Thanksgiving game, where Princeton had once more won and held the championship for at least another year. Tom Hadley, whose running had won the decisive game, was the hero of the hour. He had been car-

ried from the field on the shoulders of the attending crowd of Princetonians, with "tigers" worthy of an Indian jungle, and the "orange and black" signals had fluttered from the grand-stand, in the hands of fair damsels who graced the tourney with their presence, and rewarded the victors with the meed of their smiles, and the vanquished with the balm of their pity.

He had been toasted and cheered at the dinner at Delmonico's; and, on the return of the team to Princeton, the little engine that does duty on the by-road that leads to the ancient burgh, was fairly silenced, and the scream of its whistle was drowned in the roaring "tigers," the cry of the Princeton men, which greeted the hero who had kept the place, which Princeton had won and held so long. The whole college was out *en masse* to welcome the man who had carried the "orange and black" on to victory.

Tom was a philosophic little fellow. His head was not turned by all this adulation. He knew that he was not the sole, nor perchance the chief, agent in winning this glory. He had been fortunate enough to handle the last ball that turned the scale. He felt, therefore, that he was simply the representative man, and in him his college was being honored, and, therefore, he bore his honors modestly, as became a true hero.

Then, too, he was well convinced that so far as he was personally concerned, all his glory lay in his legs. They were not a handsome pair of legs; they were too short, altogether too short, to be considered types of manly beauty. They had an undeniable tendency to an outward curve about the knee, so much so that a cruelly disposed person would have called them bandy.

Tom valued them not for their beauty, but for their serviceable quality, which was undeniable. They were, despite their failure from an æsthetic point of view, a most excellent pair of legs; and Tom looked on them very kindly, and stroked them with a gentle satisfaction.

A large party of us were gathered in the Captain's room, on the evening of our return, and Tom was sitting on the table, these same legs, which had done such doughty service, dangling idly over the edge of the table, and looking like a very ordinary pair of mortal extremities; and we were talking, as college men are wont to talk on such occasions, over the exciting scenes of the contest, its hairbreadth escapes, as the doubtful fortunes of war put, now this one, now that one, in the ascendant. We discussed the points raised and decided by the referee, with all the possible *pros* and *cons;* we gloated over our own delights of victory, and chuckled over the gloom that filled the

college halls, where our adversaries returned to digest their chagrin, and explain away their defeat as best they could; when to our circle entered Sydney. Tom bristled at once, ready to defend his favorite game as stoutly as he had played to win it on the field.

"Well, Tom," began Sydney, "I suppose you feel that your bed will be too narrow to hold you to-night, while the big city is ringing with your praises, and the college is turned upside down to do you fitting honor."

Tom answered merrily: "After a fellow has run a game of football for all he is worth, as I did yesterday, and has wound up the day with a Delmonico dinner, it must be a mighty mean bed that he would complain of the next night."

"Does it strike you, Tom, that the game is hardly worth the candle?" said Sydney, in a tone full of calm superiority.

"Well, Syd," answered the imperturbable hero, "we've won the game; and so far as the candle goes, you can take that. It strikes me that the use of candle-grease lies more in your line than mine; but I don't see that you get much fun out of it."

Just now Tom was not very assailable, and Sydney's shafts fell harmless; but he felt a satisfaction in aiming them, whatever execution they might do or fail to do; and so he persevered.

"Tom, you are certainly less of a fellow than I take you for, if you can feel that such triumphs as this are worthy of you. The game is one demanding neither skill nor grace. It is merely a rough game of children's tag, enlivened by an occasional slugging match; and college men are simply degrading themselves and their college by giving these exhibitions before the public of a great city. The usual wind-up is a drunken bout called a supper, and a night of wild dissipation. These are not only my sentiments, but those of thoughtful men and friends of the college, who have her interests at heart, and who deprecate this unseemly exhibition."

Tom spoke up quickly now. "You, who never honor us with the light of your countenance, and the smile of your approbation, are not perhaps the very best judge of what the game is. And I would advise these same thoughtful friends of yours to think twice before they speak. Perhaps, like you, they never saw a game; and their unguarded condemnation of the game, that holds so high a place in college athletics, may not be as much in the interests of the college as they think. In the excitement of the game we may play rough; and now and then a mean-spirited set of fellows may be found, in one college or another, who will lay for a good player, to do him up, and so win the game;

but you don't often strike that kind of mean streak among college men, and the Princeton traditions are all dead against it. I suppose you will light on a mean streak of humanity, whenever you get enough of it together to be a representative mass; but the bulk of it is not mean. Them's my sentiments."

Into the discussion at this juncture, rolled Will Lamberton, who was by all odds the fattest man that Princeton had ever fed, as far as the memory of man runneth. In honor of his attainments in this line we had curtailed his final syllable, and christened him Daniel Lambert—called Dan'l for short. Dan'l was quaint and fatly sentimental, with a craving for sweet sounds, which had a vast sensorium in him on which to work, and were, on this account perchance, sweeter to him than to those who listened, as he wooed them in uncertain strains from a melodeon, his cherished companion, and the solace of many a lonely hour.

Alas! for a fellow who exposes to the irreverent college men some lurking æsthetic propensity; it at once becomes their opportunity. We were ruthless in our assaults on Dan'l's source of delight. We plugged the pedals, or cut their straps, or opened the bellows' valves, so that all kinds of disappointment, that are susceptible of being thrust on a man through the mechanism of a melo-

deon, were sprung upon Dan'l, when he sat down at the close of a day's toil to rest his soul with music.

He met each trial with a soft, fat remonstrance, most pathetically comical, as he turned on the organ stool to reproach us with his eyes, and with his hands still resting on the voiceless keys. Each time we felt condemned by that pathetic gaze, as "fit for treason, stratagem or spoils," because it told us that we had no music in our souls.

But the climax of our evil machinations was reached one night when Dan'l, whose head was not the stoutest to resist a vinous assault, came home, slightly the worse for wear. We had been arranging the melodeon for his reception. In the rear bank of reeds, which contained the stronger stops, we had gently twined some horse-hairs in and out, so as to touch, but not interfere with the speaking of the reeds; the front bank, containing the soft stops, we left untouched.

We asked Dan'l as he came in mellow with wine and obliging, as he always was when thus softened, and full of music,—we asked him to play for us Handel's Largo; we told him that we loved the mighty surge of the majestic movement; soft, soothing, and melancholy, like the sea. We asked him to play it in the softest strains that he could command, and then to swell with all the grandeur and power of the instrument he loved.

He took his seat and played the noble strain, and played it well and feelingly (as tipsy men will often play sweet music), and then with a vigorous pedal threw all the power he could command into the bellows, and pressed the knee-stop wide open and leaned back in the approved style of the maestro delivering a forte passage, when—horrors! what a sound rent the air, an orchestra of forty boys all blowing discordant grass between their thumbs. Dan'l jerked his hands from the keys, as if they were red hot, turned on his seat and looked at us with eyes speaking unutterable reproaches, then laid down his head on his beloved melodeon and sobbed like a child, whose feelings have been hurt. It was maudlin, but it was pathetic, too; and we were more than half ashamed of our joke.

But he cherished no ill will, and sauntered, with easy gait, into our circle to join in our *Io triumphe*, and to offer his congratulations to Tom. Alas! for Dan'l, he had had one cup; and it was one too much for him. You could never say of him that he was in his cups, but in his one cup; that was enough to turn the delicate balance of his brain.

So in he rolled, and up to Tom, and saluted him with: "Bandy's the word, my boy." Then he stroked Tom's legs, as one would rub down the legs of a favorite pony.

"And *these little legs* did the business, Tommy

Straddles, eh?" and then he turned and smiled blandly on the crowd.

Tom blushed and the fellows shouted, and Dan'l felt that he had his innings on Tom; for Tom was the rascal who had twined the horse-hair discord into Dan'l's music.

The college-life which we led at Princeton was filled with no incidents worthy of a special chronicle; we pursued, with more or less success, the road to knowledge, as it lay open before us, some on one side of the way, some on the other, some in the middle of the road, and some—some were lost to view, though still to memory dear. And yet they were not lost, but gone before, or behind, according to what point of view you may choose, from which to regard the nature of their "untimely taking off." But there was a good majority that carried the class colors on into the junior and senior years.

Here the road of knowledge forked into many paths, some narrow, rough, and very steep, others ascending by a slow and easy grade. And here our approaching manhood received becoming recognition, and we were left to choose which of the many paths our eager feet would press. By this time we were supposed to have received a bent, which would be recognizable, and to have acquired a thirst for knowledge which would never be slaked,

except by draughts from the springs of purest water, which always bubble on the very top of the highest and steepest and ruggedest hills.

This high-endeavor theory, however, I observed, was properly modulated by a discriminating selection of some of the more gently graded paths, in order that there the exhausted system might recuperate and brace itself for the harder climb.

Here Sydney was met by a new attraction, in a sphere that robbed his earlier studies of all their charm. He was brought face to face with the difficult, but alluring, study of the phenomena of mind, in the course on metaphysics. He felt that he was especially gifted for just these pursuits, to enter on the broad field of philosophic speculation, where men did their own thinking and drew their own conclusions, where each one found, in his own consciousness, the very foundations of pyschological science, and could be required to believe only that which he himself felt to be true.

He was a dashing, but a callow thinker, and he became for a while an intolerable bore to the circle of his intimate associates. He was forever harping on the refrain of the Kantian chorus, the "*Ding an sich*"; until this was his nickname in our circle, and we often greeted his approach, by chanting, in cacophonous chorus, a verse of Tom Hadley's:

The Ding an sich and the ding dong bell,
Truth and pussy at the bottom of the well,
Kant and Johnny Green
Put truth and pussy in,
But Syd and Tommy Stout
Are safe to pull 'em out,
With a sis—boom—ah.

And now Sydney was inclined not only to criticise, but to bid defiance to his instructors, and to put himself on his mettle, and cross swords with any man. He felt that, in this field, he could not allow any man to tell him what was the truth, he must know it and feel it himself to be true; or, for him, it was not true. Once, in the class-room, he had undertaken to run amuck, and to tilt with the venerable Professor of Mental Philosophy. After propounding some Hegelian hash, which he had prepared in his library hours of recreation, and, when the Professor, with a quiet but kindly smile, had exposed the fallacy of Sydney's hastily drawn conclusions from scant premises, then Sydney blandly answered, "I can't agree with you, sir"; to which the Professor's answer came, with a still broader smile, "I am *very* sorry that you can't, Mr. Morris"; and Sydney scarce knew how to take it; but the class did, and there was a ripple of laughter through the class-room, which conduced to Sydney's enlightenment, if it did not to his comfort.

He was soon carried away by the German philosophy, especially with Kant and his immediate successors, principally because it was reputed as incomprehensible to any except the favored few, who had the gift of the philosophic imagination, and were metaphysicians by the divine right of birth and mental endowments.

For the Scotch philosophers he had scant respect, regarding them as mere common-sense philosophers, and therefore as lacking both depth and penetration. He took "common" in the debased sense of that which belongs to the vulgar herd, the meaner faculty allied to instinct, which feels its way along the surface of things, and hence worthy only of the contempt of the deeper thinkers.

He gathered little from his later college course, save an added strength to this antagonism. He thought that such reference as was made by the professors to the German phases of thought were rather in a contemptuous vein, as "cloud-born," and a "mystical web of individual fancy," and the theories embodied in it, as already exploded, or certain of speedy and spontaneous combustion. He felt that they were not appreciated, they were lightly criticised and condemned, but were not explained. What more fascinating lead for an ardent, young, self-confident scholar than to appoint himself the task of mastering the post-Kantian sys-

tems, and to answer the still unsolved riddle, which the sage of Koenigsberg had left for future ages, "What is the thing *per se?*" At all events, he was fully persuaded that this was the absorbing question of the future and of the final philosophy, the pivot on which hinged all truth, and all certainty of what truth is. He declared that Princeton was not seeking an answer to this question; she was not even telling her men of the riches which lay in this Kantian legacy. While he was prepared to listen to what she had to teach, he was not prepared to accept it; nay, the more he listened, the more strongly was he disposed to sever himself from her influence.

Then, while groping his way through the mazes of German thought, he heard the blare of the brazen trumpet with which Schopenhauer proclaimed himself the prophet to whom it was given to unravel the mystery, and to tell men the answer to the unanswerable, to the question that contains in itself an argument in a circle, a contradiction in terms.

It fell in with all his vague imaginings, his unhealthy dreams, his unhappy grasping after what is not, and cannot be, and ought not to be, within the compass of the human mind and heart; namely, to be happy in itself, self-centred, self-satisfied, self-being all and in all.

To enable man to realize this; or, failing to real-

ize it, to furnish him with a vocabulary wherewith to rail, with all the bitterness of a lost soul, at the power which orders the universe so that it shall not be abandoned to the sway of this quintessence of selfishness; this is the aim of the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. He has set himself the task of finding the hidden spring, which, when touched, can unlock the worst recesses of human nature, and array before the mind the darkest side of human life, and can finish the work of Him, who, in Paradise, wrought on the trusting heart of a woman guileless of evil, by the promise of the power with which the knowledge of evil would endow her.

The litany of his philosophy is, let evil be my good; let darkness be my light; let misery be my ideal; let despair be my portion, and let hate be my God; and let all these bring forth fruit after their kind, the tasting of which shall blast life, and banish hope, and send men howling into the blackness of that outer darkness, whence we came and whither we are going. And under the spell of this philosophy, which presents the strongest appeal to the weakness and wickedness of human nature, Sydney Morris fell; not by virtue of, but in spite of, his surroundings.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN our appointed course at Princeton was run, we closed it with the usual crowning excitements of Commencement. Mingled with the severer exercises of the occasion, were the lighter ones of a gallant attendance on the hosts of maidens fair, to whom a college man is always something rather grand and mysterious; and we endeavored to sustain and heighten this illusion in their fresh, young hearts.

We gathered around the cannon to break asunder the mystic class circle, which had bound us for four years, as the brittle clay of our last pipe together was broken against the iron cannon. We planted the ivy, which was to keep our memory green, and cling to the gray stone walls, as our affections would cling to our *alma mater*. And so we moulted the callow feathers of our college life, and plumed our early manhood. Now would begin life in earnest, work on our own account, and along our own chosen lines of thought.

Sydney hesitated long between a post-graduate course at Princeton, or a course in one of the medical schools. I do not think it ever crossed his

mind to enter the medical profession, and tie himself down to the imperious restraints of a doctor's life.

He proposed rather to prosecute the course in medicine, as a student of human life on this other side, and see for himself what were the elements which entered into this strange compound called man.

He had studied the processes by which our trains of thought are developed and governed, and now he proposed to investigate the machinery by which these processes are carried on.

He felt himself ripe for ardent study in this field, and stood, like the uninitiate at the Eleusinian shrine, believing in the mystery and keen to realize its solution. He entered the dissecting-room without horror or sickness, and looked, unblanched, as the knife lay bare muscle and nerve, bone and artery, and exposed the inner marvels of the most curious and wonderful of all mechanisms.

It was with a thrill, almost of delight, that he watched the deft severing and lifting of the skull, and saw the mysterious gray matter of the brain, the six hundred million cells, each one the centre of life and force, uttering itself in word or look or gesture or determined action.

Here he felt himself on the brink of the solution of great problems, and that his previous training

specially fitted him to lay hold on and master the intricate questions, which are involved in the action and inter-action of mind on matter, and matter on mind.

How near he seemed to come to tracing back the fascinating thread that linked man to his surroundings. He tracked the sound wave, through the air, to the gateway of the ear, and along its winding passages and resounding caverns, past the harp-strung inner gate, and along the nerve-channel, until it set the gray matter of the brain in motion, and then the Jack-o-lantern was gone, and all was dark.

But he cherished the hope that it was not wholly beyond the reach at least of mental definition; and, while we could not lay our hands upon the phenomena, and subject them to the test of demonstration in the laboratory, yet we might be able to frame an intelligible answer to the question, How does a man think? Whence comes the power? Where does it reside? And how is it sustained?

It seemed as if there were but one short link needed to connect the material and the spiritual, mind and matter; and the discovery of this would give coherency to our knowledge of the dual nature, which confronts us with its perplexing problems.

This was the only spur and guide under which Sydney pursued the study of medicine.

That profession, which embodies such noble aims, which comes as the minister of human suffering in its endlessly recurring forms of wasting and disease, that profession which enters the homes of men on the consecrated mission that was part of the Redeemer's work on earth, enlists all the noblest and best qualities of a man who enters it with a just sense of a true doctor's mission to men. How near the noble-hearted physician draws to us and we to him. "He knows many of our secrets, of our sorrows, which no one else knows,—some of our sins, perhaps, which the great God alone else knows; how many cares and secrets, how many lives, he carries in his heart and in his hands!"

How we bless him for his gifts of healing, and hang upon the message of life or death, which his words and looks convey; and how wide is his power for good.

All this higher aspect of the noble profession did not touch nor mould the character of Sydney Morris. He was pursuing it, not that it might be in his hands a potent blessing to the lives of his fellow-men, to bring health and healing and help to toiling men and weary women and wasted little children; he was pursuing it to gratify his own selfish curiosity.

On him, therefore, it wrought neither to deepen

his character, nor to soften his heart, nor to elevate his aims.

In the clinics and dispensary and hospital, whither his studies led him, he came in contact with all forms of human sin and sorrow and suffering. It was not gilded sin, with its hideous deformities disguised under a mask of sentimentalism, and made to ape the virtues of constancy, devotion, and self-sacrifice in its abandonment. But here was sin, in its ghastly and naked deformity, reaping already its harvest of blasted lives and wasted bodies,—men and women dragged to a premature retribution. There was no glamour about this. This sorrow and suffering were not the kind of which we read in books, with a sentimental touch that makes it beautiful, and wakens a feeling of well-bred pity and starts the sympathetic tear,—but it was real, living, squalid, filthy, unmitigated suffering; unadorned with anything to make it picturesque.

It was not noble and interesting; it was sordid and selfish, greedy and repulsive, coarse and hideous.

It is the kind of misery and sorrow that oozes from the slums of a great city, from the festering plague-spots of the body politic.

It is not the class of scenes that are suited to raise one's view of life or human nature; and it

calls for a higher faith in God and a deeper love for man to endure it, without loss of one's better feelings, than perhaps any other test to which a man can be put.

And Sydney was in no wise fitted with armor proof against such shafts.

He saw it seething around him on every hand, and the tide barely stemmed by the agencies which charity had set to work. It was only slightly healed over; not cured, nor the source of it touched. He was at the hospital of St. Martin's one evening when one of those cases that reveal a whole life's history was brought in.

It was a raw, spring evening, and the weather controversy of the day had been settled in favor of a cold, drizzling rain and a discouraging fog, thick and penetrating, and defying every effort to resist its chilling discomfort.

The street-lamps showed lustreless and dim, and their irresolute reflections staggered, in a discouraged way, over the wet flag-stones.

People hung their heads in a depressed way, and were inclined to take their humor from the weather, and be cold and disagreeable; and men hurried along, with the common impulse to find some place of shelter from the damp discomfort.

There were few women among the jostling throng, but there was one, who strode leisurely

along, apparently unconscious of her surroundings.

There was nothing in her trim, neatly-fitting, sober-colored dress by which to fix her station in life; nothing to characterize her, save the listless walk, and the free-and-easy stare with which she greeted the passers-by.

Time and again she had striven to break away from the life she was leading, but had always drifted back to the beer-garden and the street.

But to-night she was heartily sick of the hollow and evil life, and she thought with a sob of the village home that she had left in her native land, to seek the riches of the New World and win a competence for her old father and mother. And the memory of her innocence and youth received the tribute of a sigh and tear.

Hers was the trite, sad story of love and desertion, and she left to bear the burden alone.

As she walked along the sloppy pavement, she remembered that this was Holy Week. Last Sunday she had seen palms in the hands of those whom she felt were too pure to look at her; and, though the church doors stood ajar, she had resisted their silent appeal to enter, and kneel, and be forgiven.

Then she remembered a little church, on a by-street, frequented by the poor and the forsaken;

she would go there and confess her load of sin, and try to regain her lost womanhood.

She walked down one of the broad city streets, with its brilliant electric lamps illuminating the gaudy shop windows, and the hideous posters of the dime museums, from which came bursts of discordant music; past the beer-halls, just opening for their unhallowed orgies.

Her gait was no longer listless; there was purpose in her movement. She paused on the street corner for a moment, watching her opportunity to cross. A horse-car came swinging round the corner, and a big loaded express wagon rushed up from the opposite direction.

In a moment the street would have been clear again; but a little girl, impatient of delay, and not realizing her danger, started to run across. She saw the child's danger and sprang to save her, and reached the little one just in time to push her back, while she herself slipped on the wet stones and the heavy wheels of the express wagon rolled over her.

They carried her to a near drug-store, summoned an ambulance, and hurried her to the hospital.

The surgeon, seeing at once her hopeless state, simply administered opiates to numb the cruel pain. She never woke to consciousness. As they listened to her rambling sentences, they could not

understand her. They did not know that she was a girl again, in her far-away home, and in the village church was kneeling, among the other girls, in white dresses, on their confirmation day, and listening to the good Father tell them to be always good and pure, and then God and the saints and angels would watch over them, and lead them on the way to heaven.

Then she fell asleep, as though for the last time; but when the bells rang out the Easter greeting, in the hush of the Sabbath morn, she opened her dark eyes again and turned wistfully toward the window and listened. The troubled, tired look faded from her face, and in its place came one of peace and rest. As the sweet tones came faintly to the listening ears she smiled and closed her eyes. She had begun a better life.

What a bitter lesson her short, frail life conveyed to Sydney. Here was the reward of an act of consecration, by which she laid down her life for another; as she turned from the path of evil, to seek a higher life, she was crushed to death. Men could gather no high incentives from such a commentary on fate.

And these scenes of misery appeared to Sydney, not as one phase of human life, but as the epitome of life, the type of what life essentially is; in these cases wrought out to its complete solution.

When restraining influences were withdrawn, here was the true level of the waters of humanity. He had come in contact with this polluted atmosphere with nothing to protect him from its virus; nay, he was inoculated with a virus which these surroundings served only to inflame. And so there was kindled in his soul no purifying fires of sympathy and longing to alleviate, but he was filled with disgust for humanity, in its wretchedness, and with loathing of life with its abounding misery.

He looked on all this, not as the consequence of a violation of the natural laws of health and morality, but as the true and natural evolution of human life in its free scope.

Hence, he was more than ever confirmed in his theory that life was an unmitigated evil. His thought had guided him to that conclusion, and now his observation was confirming him in this belief. It was illustrated in his study of human life under every aspect. To this belief the mind of man naturally tended. To this conclusion a study of his body drove the mind.

What was the human body? A tissue of imperative appetites, craving satisfaction.

As the lungs required air for their expansion with an imperious demand, so with the same imperative reiteration all the appetites and desires of the body enforced their demands for recognition. And when

these were all sated until they could ask no more, there remained, still back of them, the restless and insatiable monster within, whose rapacious maw all heaven and earth could never fill. Where are the confines of desire, where we can ask no more? What can fill the soul of a man so that he will say, It is enough; I am satisfied; here is fullness of joy and pleasure evermore?

Such questionings rose within him as he looked on men, seeking, in vain, their answer, and mocked by each new solution that burst in their grasp, or laughed at their misery when they tasted the bitterness of the cup in which they had thought to drown their sorrows.

Moreover, he took a grim satisfaction in marking the symptoms of these various phases of human suffering; not a cruel exultation in it, nor a feeling that would have led him to add one mite to the load of evil. Nay, he felt sorry for "the poor devils," as he called them. He was often deeply touched by the picture of blighted childhood, the very travesty and mockery of the word, that, in gaunt form, haunted the streets and alleys of the city slums. More than once he had stopped, at sight of some pitiful object, and given, with no stinted hand, to relieve the pressing misery. No! it was no cruel nor callous temper that colored his view of these aspects of human life. He was in no way re-

sponsible for it, he was glad to say; nor could he do anything much to help it; nor could any one else, for that matter.

But here it was, and, as it stood revealed to his eyes, it was all the confirmation he needed to settle him in the conviction that no philosopher had yet opened his lips to tell us one-half of the unfathomable depths of human misery. Go down until you think that you have touched bottom, where man and woman and child can sink no lower, nor life cover humanity with a blacker pall of sin and misery, and you will find depths still deeper below you, sin still more sinful, misery more appalling and woful; and where was the end of it all?

He had yet to meet the man or woman who did not, and justly so, look down on some one lower than himself. Did men ever touch the bottom? Or was this, after all, the Hell of the Christian belief? Was the "bottomless pit" only another name for unadulterated humanity? At all events he pursued the diagnosis with a keen interest, not because he rejoiced in the malady of the patient; but, having forecast the stages of the disease, his pride was gratified in seeing his predictions verified.

"I told you so!"—there is a volume of exultation in the phrase, not at the misery of others, but over our own penetration.

And as the proud seer writes down the record of

human life as full of the woes which substantiate his theory of life, they touch no chord of sympathy, they open no fount of sweet charity in his heart, but he writes "*Pulvis et Umbra*" on the parchment scroll, and seals it with his signet, graven with a great "I," and mutters, "*I* told you so."

This was the influence which the life of men had on the soul of Sydney Morris, viewed in the light which his studies in metaphysics, biology and medicine, cast athwart the path.

He was right. There could be no question of it. Who could doubt that life was evil? Humanity was a mass of "vital putrescence"; each atomy elbowing the other aside, and rising by virtue of the down-trodden mass under his feet.

Nor were men to blame for this. No one condemned the starving wretch, who stole bread under the impulse of a necessity that supersedes all law.

And, for this poor struggling mass, who had been denied the opportunities of higher culture, there was no sin in reaching out and taking what gratification lay within their reach.

He did not blame them, but he loathed them from the bottom of his soul; he sickened and revolted at the sight of their misery, and the sedatives with which they sought to allay it.

He went one night to visit an opium den. It was the usual low apartment, divided into stalls, in

which were the lounges where the smokers reclined. This evening they were well filled, two on each lounge, men and women mingled indiscriminately.

The oil lamp, hanging from the ceiling, burned with a sickly light, rendered duller still by the cloudy stratas of smoke that lay in long level bars across the room, thick and white, and filling the air with the dense, heavy odor that made even the visitor feel languid.

Around the room, prone on the couches, were men and women in all stages of languor and stupefaction; some still holding the pipe and gazing vacantly with filmy eyes, fishy and cold, lacking the faintest gleam of intelligence, with just enough instinct left to cling to the opium pipe.

Others lay wrapped in the deep sleep of the opium-smoker, limp, pale and motionless; and, through the mist and gloom, the little sweet-oil lamps, with which each lounge was equipped, glimmered with a pale blue flame, like some sort of devilish fire-flies.

In fancy he had pictured this, as the simplest remedy for the ills of life, to take the potent drug which nature had provided as the panacea for sorrow.

Here was an impregnable fortress, within the confines of a dreamland, whose border neither sin nor sorrow nor suffering could cross. And the fear

of death, which was its sting, could be taken away, as we lapsed from life folded in the soft, dreamless sleep that would know no waking.

But when he came face to face with the reality, when he saw how far below the drunkard's disgrace was the opium-smoker's degradation, when he saw this mass of writhing or listless creatures, with only the form of humanity remaining, the slow reptilian movement, the fixed and glassy reptilian gaze, then his fine-spun theories of opium as the grand remedial agent for the sorrows of life, went drifting to the limbus, where other of his illusions were gone, which Ariosto tells us is the place of all lost things.

Then what was left for man when the sorrows of life became insupportable, when endurance ceased to be a virtue? Where was he to turn for succor in his sore extremity?

McKenzie was ready with an answer to all these questions. He too came in contact with this life of the great city; he too felt the throb of its sorrow, and the anguish of its sin.

He and Sydney had more than once debated the questions that rise in a man who faces the world, and does not shut his eyes to the lessons which life thrusts upon him.

He too was studying the problem, according to his lights, and was gathering his share of experience from it. He had often urged Sydney to visit with

him some of those agencies of Christian charity in which his hope for humanity was centred, and to see that there were means at hand, and efficient means, for alleviating the sorrows of the world; agencies which looked on life from another point of view than that of the opium den.

This suffering and degradation were, in large part, needless. They were only the direct result of the violation of well-known laws; and you had but to bring men to the knowledge of and obedience to these laws, and a vast mass of human misery would be obliterated.

He offered to take him to homes that had once been very types of squalid misery, where now he could see as pure and simple happiness as one would wish to bless his sight. And the change had been wrought, simply by the influence of a right understanding, and a due obedience to moral and physical law.

"A shad in a wheat-field will have but a sorry trip of it, my lad; but toss him in the river, and ye'll see him show you anither kind of gait. As we are made to live, so we can live,—and a very fair life of it too; but out of the bounds of our nature we are fit only to suffer. That's aboot the gist o' it, I think."

For such talk Sydney had no relish; it was a mixture of cant and prattle which he hated and despised.

No; he wanted to see no more. He had looked on every phase of life, not as painted by the imagination, but in its naked reality. Now he would turn, with new lights, and review his metaphysical studies, and decide who came nearest to the truth in his solution of the ghastly riddle.

In his own mind he was pretty well settled as to where the answer should be sought, and with a new zest he returned to the study of Schopenhauer and Hartmann.

CHAPTER VIII.

HE had saturated his mind with a philosophy that was a distillation of the poison of more than one system. It was tinctured with stoicism, but was without the grander truths that underlie the old Stoic philosophy, and give it dignity and worth. It had stolen somewhat from Buddhism, but had misinterpreted its terms, and had fallen to a far lower plane of observation of the present, and had lost altogether the mystical future of that elder creed. It had in it the fatalism of Mohammedanism, but not its power. It was a mingling of the weaknesses of all these creeds; an emasculated fatalism, a kind of bastard Buddhism.

It viewed life as consisting only of the circumstances of this present life, and man as merely one among the accidents of this present order of things; an embodied shiver at the terrors surrounding him; a mere conductor, through which the tremors of grief and pain might be made to pass, in order that they might find utterance through him.

The mystery of life it declared that all philosophy hitherto had merely formulated, but had not

even attempted its solution. The solution of this mystery was pronounced in trenchant terms, to be one of the faculties of all intelligent free-agents. Then, around the name Will, was woven a fanciful definition, and with arbitrary dogmatism, it undertook to account for the existence, and life, and character, and destiny of men by this abstraction called by the name of one of man's own mental faculties. And while it endowed all nature with this monstrosity named Will, it left man without volition.

But, shallow and hollow as were its foundations, it was the current of the day, and found its way into the parlor literature, as well as into the class-room and the review. And the shallowness of the reasoning did not neutralize the poison of the system. Nor was Sydney strong enough to toy with it, as a purely mental exercise, and prate, in gloomy jeremiads, of the afflictions of life, and yet live the life of a Sybarite; to pose as a grim philosopher, who saw beneath the surface, the hidden mysteries of life, and could expose the hollow sham, while yet he enjoyed life to the full; and did not think it all the part of a philosopher, any more than it was that of an apothecary, to swallow his own drugs; to make the bitter tinctures for others, while he himself drank wine.

Sydney was too earnest and too sincere a nature

to play such a part. He was too impulsive to be able to resist the impetus of such a train of thinking, or to adopt it without pursuing it to its fair, legitimate termination.

He was, therefore, verging on the conclusion which is the inevitable and only logical one for the sincere believer in such a creed. Life is an affliction; the wider its scope, the larger its suffering; the higher its powers, the keener its misery; there is only one true solution for such a dilemma. There is no hope of rising above the reach of the arrow of the archer, beyond the range of the slings of "outrageous fortune"; to rise is but to make one's self the shining mark; the sole remedy is to leave life.

"The happy are only those who are not"; even such folly as this did not daunt his adherence to the creed.

To be is woe; and the only attainable bliss is to cease to be. And so all his thoughts were tending to self-destruction.

A still gloomier tinge was given to his sombre creed by the growing belief that his unhappy temperament was the result of heredity. Partly from his own recollections of his home, and partly from other sources, he had gathered an impression of the hollowness of the fashionable married life of his father and mother, of their discordant natures, and

he saw in himself, the shadow athwart their life prolonged through his.

Without his agency, and beyond his control to check or modify, he was cast on the river of life, endowed with certain fixed qualities, physical and mental, that would determine, without his ability to change, the color of his hair, the tone of his voice, and the temper of his mind. He had merely to await the outcome of the action of the circumstances of his life on this constitution of body and temperament of mind, and watch, with what interest he could summon up, the solution whether for good or ill.

All this lay directly in the line of the pessimistic philosophy, which had won him by its eerie glamour. He had toyed with the asp, and there was poison under her lips.

He had entered into darkness; deep answered unto deep, and the shadows grew gloomier over his life. There seemed but a few steps more to take, and the final plunge into the outer darkness would be all that there was left for him.

But, at this time, the drift of his thoughts was arrested, and the current changed, by a power stronger than the philosophy of any school that has yet risen among men.

There was dropped into his eyes the juice which has blinded the sage, and distorted the vision of

the philosopher, through all time, which will lose its power only when time shall be no more.

He fell in love; and this is how it came about.

In a cozy little flat, high up near the sky, with four modest rooms, as to size, but fitted up with rare taste, lived Tom Elliott, the artist. His studio and sky-parlor were on the floor above. Here were three connecting rooms; the one a veritable working studio, with the kitchen of the suite fitted up as work-shop, etching-room, and general storage-room of impossibly useless stuff, such as accumulates in an artist's household—never to be of use, but cherished for its useful possibilities, and treasured through years of idle uselessness. The other two rooms were fitted up as half bachelor den, half reception-rooms, with some show of elegance in the hangings, and with plenty of genuine comfort in the furniture.

He and his daughter Gladys, who kept house for him, made their semi-monthly receptions something to be remembered by those who frequented them.

Elliott was no great genius, given to struggling after the expression of grand ideas, but he was a fine painter, with a true love for his art, and with a pencil facile, and ready, and full of humor or pathos, quick to catch, and clear to express, in soft, rich tones, genre pictures—lyrics in color.

All his pictures embodied an idea and told a story, and a story with a point, and told it well and sweetly; so that he who runs might read.

He was well read, and literary in the best sense of that word, with a taste for rare editions, and fine bindings, and choice imprints, with wide margins. He grew friendly with his author, and wanted to see him well clad in seemly and becoming garb.

And he could render a fine passage, from one of his favorites, in a way to stir the blood, or reach the heart of any who loved the concourse of sweet sounds, or felt the flash of keen wit, or the kindly touch of a gentle humor.

The gatherings at his house were of a mingled set of *bon vivants*, and artists, and literati, and poets; and their life was a careless, happy-go-lucky, pitch and toss with fortune; sure if it came up tails to-day, heads would win to-morrow.

He had a favorite aphorism: "There are houses in which diamonds are led; there are homes in which spades are the winning card; there are dens where clubs are the full hand; but here hearts are always trumps."

His daughter Gladys was a genuine "nut-browne maide." Her eyes were brown, her hair "bright berry-brown"; her cheeks were brown, with a ruddy hue. With a dancing tread, and a light-hearted laugh, and with an energy of life that seemed

enough for ten such small bodies, she won her way to all hearts with a quickness "past discernin'."

And sombre-hearted Sydney, who came to air his pessimism in this literary circle, came under the spell of her dancing eye, and his philosophy was riven by her sunny laughter. The dawn had met the night shadows that are the darkest; and we know what always happens to the shadows.

She could not enter into Sydney's gloomy caves of thought full of grim troglodytes; but she led him out into her sunshine.

She was not intellectual, but she was very intelligent; she was not philosophical, but she was wise. She could not reason, but she could reach very just conclusions, and they seemed within easy reach for her.

She was not musical, but she sang well, with a rich, sympathetic, penetrating voice. She had not much imagination, but enough to appreciate good literature, good music, and good pictures. She had ever so much good sense, and was true, deep, and devoted in her feelings; but not demonstrative, her friends thought.

She had a propensity for managing those about her and a tact, which guided her almost unerringly, in doing it well. Her little plans generally worked out to perfection; where they did not, she took the failure philosophically.

She was the life of the social gatherings in her father's rooms. She believed in him, heart and soul. She did not overestimate him. Her affection never blinded her; but she heartily believed in his decided ability, as a true artist; in his exquisite taste, from which, for her, there was no appeal; in his talent for reading aloud, and in his literary judgment. And she was determined to make others appreciate him, and feel the pleasure of being one of his circle of friends.

These little gatherings were not stiffened by any formal restraint; they were large enough to give the interest of a varied type of character, and yet small enough to let the individual character of each make its impress; and so, in the true sense, they came to know one another, in a delightful way.

Their talk ranged over art and literature, new and old, and, in so far, it was intellectual. But they were not met for the exhaustive discussion, and final settlement, of the "burning" questions of social and political economy, nor to propound the final philosophy of the nineteenth century.

They started all manner of questions, discussed them, and left each one to settle them in the quiet of their own hearts, to their own satisfaction, which is not an unusual result of a discussion.

There was therefore unlimited freedom, a wide range, and bright, but not searching, inquiry

into every phase of thought that was moving the waters.

Sydney dropped into this circle by virtue of his association with Arthur Delaney, a bright, young fellow, just entering on a literary life. He had brought himself into quick and favorable notice, by some fine discriminating *critiques* of current literature, and some delicate verses, in the vein that the later English poets have made so popular, and by a collection of *Vers de Société*, made with so just and discriminating a taste, as had won him great applause; and he was finding himself sought after, at literary gatherings.

And Sydney came into this bright circle, charged with his sombre load of the newest darkness, which is called light; feeling that he knew more of life than it was given to the average man of his age to know, ready to be the apostle of this new explosive of worn-out creeds.

He was loaded to the muzzle, but he lowered his weapons before the soft light of a woman's eyes. His cannon-balls could have shattered walls of granite, but they simply buried themselves in the green, sodded escarpment.

Gladys Elliott was attracted to Sydney from the first. His large, dark, restless eye, and his nervous, attentive observation, attracted her notice, as soon as he entered the room. Her instinct as hostess

led her to set herself the task of drawing into their sprightly circle one, who seemed to feel himself apart from the others.

Her very first essay, at calling him out, only provoked her interest the more. For she found him neither shy, nor dull, nor unimpressionable; but, on the contrary, full of life, and the power of entering into the life around him; but there was a strange mood in him, a weirdness in his talk that was new, and, in a measure, antagonistic to her, and therefore interesting.

As for Sydney, she was a new phenomenon to him, and he proceeded to investigate it, with the usual result.

Here was a young girl, full of life and intelligence, with unmeasured capacities for enjoyment, fit and capable to take a place in the lead of society and fashion;—no stupid dolt, who sinks the measure of his desires to his means, and thus limits the soaring of his mind and heart by his mean and paltry circumstances, but one able to fill a large place in cultivated and refined society; and she was not merely contented, but she was exasperatingly delighted with her station.

Their limited means never dampened her pleasure; the anticipation of the want that would be her lot, if anything should befall her father, never threw its shadow over her heart.

They made no secret of their restricted means, though they never made complaint over the restrictions. If the conversation turned on some play, that was the talk of the town, or some new book, that was in everybody's mouth, in a simple, natural way, they would say, "Yesterday was rent day," or "We bought that vase last week, and we are not to get any new books for the present, nor go to an amusement but twice this month, and we are waiting until a picture is sold."

And yet the shadow of this uncertainty never darkened their doors. They lived like the birds of the air; and they seemed just about as anxious in regard to the future as the average song-bird.

It was certainly not lack of intelligence, for she was shrewd, and bright, and practical, and had a very pretty little womanly account-book, in which she set down, with great care and exactness, all their expenses, and apportioned off the sums at their command to the necessaries of life, and to the luxuries, as she called what some would deem necessities; and stray sums, which would not let themselves be confined under any of her headings, and were of that uncertain nature that one could hardly say where they did belong, and also any little discrepancies due to the failure of the rules of arithmetic to do their duty,—these all went to "Sundries." And "Sundries" presented a formidable array of items.

Her accounts had a fashion of mixing themselves up in an odd way, but they came out nearly right, and she allowed always a good margin for safety. She would sit, with pencil in hand, and tightly-knit brow, poring over her accounts, and drumming with her fingers a tattoo of additions of small sums, on the table, and derived an immense satisfaction from these same random account-books.

But they kept the little mistress of the tiny household on the safe side of bankruptcy, and she asked and needed no more than this.

Sydney could not understand how a woman, of such intelligence, could be the victim of such a false philosophy of life, as gave no consideration to the dangers that threatened her, and to the narrow restraints that fettered her.

So he set himself to enlighten her, and soon found that the interrupted conversations, of the semi-monthly evenings at home, were not sufficient for his purpose, and so he became, at first, an occasional, and then a constant visitor at the house.

He had too much innate refinement to attack her position on the ground of their present restriction in means and their prospective poverty in the event of her father's illness or death; and so he entered on the broader field, to win from her the concession that life was only the bitter realization

of unfulfilled hopes, the tantalizing water that just reaches the lips, and that there was an unfailing polarity between the desires of man and the unattainable, which robbed all that we do attain of its power to satisfy.

He could not complain that his teachings fell on inattentive ears, nor that Gladys lacked the power to understand his meaning. He felt that there was an inertia in her position, which he could not overcome; but it was not the inertia of dullness. She could not always follow the line of his argument, nor did she show any power to resist by counter argument, but she understood his conclusions, and, in the main, how he reached them. And she had a swift, terrible way of upsetting them, woman fashion, but over they went; it was not logical, but it was conclusive.

Sydney drew for her a picture, in exaggerated perspective, of his boyhood, drawn in part from his own unhappy recollections, and in part from what he had heard from others, and gave her, what he regarded, as a fair presentment of his father's and mother's fashionable married life.

He told her of the discord that jarred through all their intercourse, and held them aloof at heart, from one another. Of this miscalled union he was the sole fruit, and in him was concentred the discord of their two lives, and heredity had evinced

its truth in him, whose nature could not attune itself to joy, through no fault of his.

To this she replied with an argument, which she had heard young Dr. Hale present, in a tilt with Sydney, at one of their reunions.

He was a young physician, who, by virtue of his taste and skill with the etching-needle, had found an entrée to their circle, and had made himself thoroughly acceptable by his broad culture, outside the lines of his profession.

He and Sydney had met in combat, more than once, and Sydney had hardly held his ground with the bright young doctor. Doctor Hale scouted the idea of heredity. He maintained that it surely could not account for temperament of mind, if it did not for our constitution, and, in this sphere, he said, it was rejected by medical men.

Disease was not an inheritance, but the result of poisonous germs, which are absorbed from our surroundings, and are not lying latent in the system, like the grain in an Egyptian sarcophagus.

He scouted the idea of heredity, as opposed, on general principles, as well as in particular instances, to all the later and more advanced medical science. If this theory were true, the spread of disease, by inheritance of children from their parents, would be such that the second generation would develope an almost complete crop for the tomb.

It was a theory that would be proven, only when we see that all blood diseases are on the rapid increase, and the average of human life on a swift decline; while the opposite was, in fact, the truth.

He had a hearty, confident, cheery way of delivering his opinions. They were comfortable doctrines; he had an abundance of facts to substantiate them, and Sydney had the worst of the argument.

He did not like this Doctor Hale. He did not care much for his etchings. He did not relish the quotation of his arguments by Gladys Elliott; and he told her so. She only laughed, a quiet, little, chuckling laugh: more to herself, than at him. Her eyes twinkled; Sydney thought her unduly merry over a very small thing. He came to the conclusion that he did not care to argue with women; they were inconsequent, deficient in reasoning power, and had recourse to little artifices to confound a man, which were very embarrassing, but did not prove anything.

He cut short his visit, almost too brusquely, and went out and wandered away the hour, which he had expected to spend with Gladys, in the park, and glowered at his fellow-loungers on the park benches, and wondered what use the world had for a set of loafers, such as these.

She watched him, from the window, as he crossed

the street, and sauntered restlessly out of sight; and with a sigh, and "Poor fellow," dismissed him from her thoughts, and set herself to read *Nathan the Wise*, which was to be the subject of the evening's discussion. She wondered whether Sydney would come that evening.

His dissatisfaction did not reach deep enough to hinder his return that evening. It did not rest on her head at all; it was with himself, and with that unconscionably healthy, and cheery doctor. He spent the hour, literally, with himself, in speculating what he thought of himself, and also what Gladys Elliott thought of him. It was fast narrowing itself down to the personal question. The broad fields of philosophic speculation through which he had been wandering were now fast fading into the background; and he was strolling down a narrow lane, with tall hedge-rows on either side, and the hawthorn bloom made the air full of odors, and there was a dreamy hum of insects gathering honey, and the sky was blue overhead, and the airs were soft, and the sun was bright,—only here and there he saw thorns, half hidden under the flowers. It was a long lane, and a winding lane, with a gentle, easy grade. He could not see the end of it, but he did not care to look for the end, for nothing could be more delicious than to stroll along, free of care.

It was one of those lanes that run along the outskirts of many a country town,—outside the borough limits,—and the simple rustics call it "lover's lane." But what if, at some turn of the lane, he should catch sight of the broad back of that abominable, cheery doctor, with his great, sturdy legs and ample feet sending him along, with a springy, bounding stride, which he (Sydney) could not overtake?

He determined to go to Mr. Elliott's that evening, and, in the meantime, to read *Nathan the Wise* with all his might, and have something to say apt, and to the point, when discussion arose.

So he jumped the hawthorn hedge, at a bound, and landed on his feet, in the city park, and made his way home over the hard, stone side-walks.

When he found himself in his room again, before a cheery grate, with just fire enough to take off the chill and brighten the room, and with the book in his hand, soon "Nathan" and "Templar" and "Saladin" and "Recha," all merged themselves into a dream of Gladys Elliott, and he spent the hour over a half dozen pages, out of which he had gathered only, the wish that it was eight o'clock, and the conclusion that he was a fool,—which last did not strike him as such a painful and bitter truth, as it had sometimes done.

When the slowly turning hands, at last, had

chased the minutes round, and cornered them at eight o'clock, he started for the Elliotts'; and found his way there, by an instinct that was true to the direction, for he was scarce capable of conscious selection of the windings of the way.

He was among the first to arrive, and had an opportunity to explain his hasty leave-taking of the afternoon, which he began to do, after a lame and involved fashion, which Gladys greeted with her provoking, merry little laugh, which exasperated him beyond measure. It was not a rude laugh, but it had all the power of rudeness; it was not mockery, but it baffled him; there was nothing of contempt in it, but it made him feel small. He resented this tremulous, low laugh, but he did not know in what form to show his resentment; it was eminently discomposing.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT evening, at the reunion, Dr. Hale was present, and the discussion turned mainly on *Nathan the Wise*, which was read aloud by Mr. Elliott. Sydney took the ground that Lessing's purpose, in the drama, was to illustrate the futility of all religions to produce a character worthy of their precepts.

"The whole point of the piece is evident," said he, "that, neither the circumstances of a man's life, nor the creed which he adopts, can overcome the fatal bar sinister on the escutcheon of humanity."

Dr. Hale took issue with him, at once.

"I read almost the opposite lesson, between the lines," said the doctor, earnestly. "I see, in each prominent character, the innate nobility of man portrayed. And, where a narrow adherence, to the mere forms of his creed, does not blunt his finer perceptions, then every creed, honestly accepted, will evoke the better qualities of a man. And the true kinship of noble souls will assert itself, outside the bounds of birth, or nationality, or creed."

"But what is a man," argued Sydney, "save the

resultant of the inter-action of the forces that mould him, namely, his birth, his education, and his creed? Do men ever exhibit anything except the qualities that descend to them, or grow upon them by surrounding influences?"

"Yes," retorted the doctor, "I have seen, and you have seen more than one man rise above these. You are placing men in the same category with chemical substances, whose reaction is determined by mere contact with their affinities."

"And, pray, what else are men?" answered Sydney.

"They are living free agents," answered the doctor, with some warmth of indignation in his tone. "You cannot deal even with a man's body, on the assumption that it is a mere retort, and address yourself to his bodily disorders, trusting to a simple chemical reaction. In the administration of well-known remedies, to meet disorders of the body, we doctors have to take into consideration the personal idiosyncrasies of our patients, mental as well as physical. A mechanical theory of the human body will meet its refutation, in the course of a very limited practice."

Sydney was nettled, at the calm, cool, almost imperative tone of the doctor, and answered with some asperity:

"You have the advantage of me, doctor, in cool

assertion, on the field of medical science. But, in the sphere of mental philosophy, I am sure that no one can question the assertion, that choice is the result of desire, and desire is the fruit of temperament, and training."

The doctor, smiling at Sydney's heat, answered quietly:

"I will grant you, that, in a measure, this is true. But it is a low, and narrow philosophy, that puts the soul in slavery to the body, and makes its behests, the iron edicts by which the soul is bound, in utter helplessness. I know men, who have broken that bondage, who, under the impulse of strong moral purpose, have mastered desires that burned in them, with incessant, and, almost, consuming heat."

"We will call in Miss Gladys as umpire," said Sydney, as she stood, for a moment, near them, in a respite from her duties as hostess. "Miss Gladys, the doctor and I have been mooting the difficult question, whether a man is master of his life? or is life the master of the man? And we would end the uncertain issue, by reference to you. What do you say?"

"If you will change one single letter," she answered laughingly, "you will bring your discussion within my range, and, without delay, I will answer you as I think good."

"We will certainly agree," said Sydney, "to such a modest request; and authorize the change, and await the decision."

"Change life into wife," she laughingly replied, "and, perhaps, I can give you an answer, that would suit."

"That would indeed make life another thing," quickly threw in Dr. Hale.

And Gladys with a laugh, and a faint blush, turned to look after her guests. Sydney thought her blush the tribute to a hidden meaning in the doctor's repartee; the doctor thought it the result of the eager gaze, with which Sydney devoured her, as she smiled upon them; Gladys did not know why she blushed.

After this Sydney stood apart, and watched her, from a corner, as she moved to and fro among her guests, and noticed how every one smiled, as she spoke to them; and the smile lingered on their faces, after she was gone. But he grew restless soon, and, before long, he beat his retreat to his own quarters and made up his mind, that he was not well fitted to take his part in general conversation; that he could talk much better alone with Gladys, and that he would call and see her to-morrow.

Accordingly, on the next day, he determined on a morning call, and eleven o'clock found him at

the house. Father and daughter were both hard at work—Mr. Elliott, in the studio, busy over a half-finished painting, and Gladys, in an agony of book-keeping, in the little hall room, which she had fitted up as her boudoir. The window was hung with white muslin curtains, and on the walls were tacked, here and there, dainty little sketches in water-color, unframed and unfinished suggestions of some pictures of her father's, which were special favorites with Gladys. There was a small escritoire, a little fancy table, in one corner, with two or three books on it, and a vase with a few flowers, and a work-basket; but there was only one chair, in this cozy little nest.

Here she sat, with her account-books and bills, scattered over the open desk, and bits of paper, on which she had worked out her little sums in addition, subtraction, and division, for entry in her tidy, little ledger.

She was dressed in a morning-gown of deep wine-color, and of soft, clinging texture, with a white apron, whose tiny pockets were overflowing with bits of paper and memoranda.

She was as pretty a little housewife, as one could wish to see, and her cares and duties were very becoming to her. She told Sydney that he must amuse himself, for a while, with a book or magazine, of which he would find abundance, in the next

room. "For if you will call, sir, in business hours, you must expect to wait your turn. I have to arrange to pay my bills to-day, and to tell father what surplus is in the treasury. I think I have a balance of fifty-seven dollars, and I am delighted." She made no move to come out of the nest, and Sydney could not get in, and there was nothing left for him but to do as he was bid; but he did it with a sorry grace.

He sat down with a book, to be sure, but he chose a seat in line with the door of the boudoir, and kept Gladys in pretty steady view, over the top of his book. She was "a living book," he said, "and all the rest were dead."

When, at last, the balance was struck, and the books were closed, and the desk was shut, she came out, not quite so radiant as she had been. She had forty-seven instead of fifty-seven dollars, to announce to her father, as the balance available for the luxuries of life, for the next thirty days.

Revision of her figures had disclosed an error of addition, alas! on the shady side. She always felt that these sums, which thus vanished on closer inspection, were money lost. She had had them, and now they were gone.

In a natural, simple way she told Sydney of her loss, standing with the empty palms of her hands turned toward him, and a mimic plaintiveness in

her voice. How pitiable he thought it, this struggle with these petty sums of money; that a mere trick of figures should throw even a fleeting shadow over a life so young and beautiful.

He had means enough, and to spare, to maintain this whole birdlike household for a twelvemonth, and never know the difference. And yet he could not make the proposition to do it.

After announcing to her father, with mock solemnity, the history of her gains, and her loss, and the net result, she came back to the reception-room, and throwing herself on the lounge, near Sydney's seat, half-reclining as though worn out with her heavy toil, she closed her eyes, "And now, sir," she hummed in a low, sweet tone, "read to me from the treasured volume:

"'The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The music of thy voice;
And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away;'

"Steal my ten dollars away."

She was very winning in her ways; and she had pretty fairly won this game with Sydney.

He was fast falling into that hopeless state where everything that she did seemed charming; where,

to his thinking, there was a nameless grace in the way in which she did the most ordinary things, that lent them an interest, which it would be ridiculous to attribute to any one else.

"Miss Gladys," he said, as he hung over her, "why does life seem so changed, under different conditions, that——"

"Mr. Sydney, because the conditions are different."

He was provoked at this interruption of the flight, for which he had plumed his wings.

"Miss Gladys," he said more solemnly, "why do you never enter seriously with me into the questions which I suggest?"

"Because, Mr. Sydney, I am so constituted, that I have to enter merrily into everything."

She had foiled him again. He was growing desperate. Did she mean always to fence with him at arm's length?

"But at some time, Miss Gladys, you will have to listen to me, without laughing at me," he said, with some pique: "I mean to make myself understood."

She looked up quickly.

"Oh! Mr. Morris, you do not think I laugh at you. Indeed, indeed I don't. But sometimes you are so awfully serious, it provokes me to try and see whether I cannot draw you out of your mood, and make you merry with me."

"I am serious," he answered, in a softened tone, "only because, to the philosopher, life is always serious."

"Then I would not be a philosopher, if I were you," she answered.

"But surely, Miss Gladys, you would not have men and women take no more serious view of life than mere children, and always live in the present, content to toy with trifles, while great questions are thrusting themselves before us for solution?"

"Your life and mine must be very different, Mr. Morris," she answered. "I am not toying with childish trifles, and there are no great questions thrusting themselves at me; and, if there were, I am afraid I would give but a very foolish answer to them. But, every day, I find something to do, in the way of very small things, not worth a man's attention, and with which father should not be bothered, and I try to settle them. They are trifles; but, if they were not looked after, we would both be very uncomfortable. Then, almost every day, father wants a part of my time, to look over his work, and talk with him about it, or to show me a new book, in which he wishes me to share his interest. My criticisms, on his pictures, and on the books, are of small value; but father craves sympathy in his work and pleasures, and his love for me makes my pleasure

in these things a double joy to him. Then I have something to do toward my own improvement, and my small round of visits to return, and so, while I do not lead a grand life, nor do anything great or good, to make me think that I am of special service in the world, yet I cannot feel, with you, that my life is an idle life, sporting with trifles to the neglect of great opportunities. The sum of all my little round of duties is, that father and I are two very happy people."

If the doctor had said all this, how Sydney would have despised him, as a prattling fool; but, from the lips of Gladys Elliott, it sounded like limpid wisdom, and simply true.

He was not prepared to fight on this line, and to prove to this girl that her life of simple duty, and pure affection, was either a failure, or a delusion, or a fraud. What could he answer to this? She was silently awaiting some answer on his part.

"Miss Gladys," he said, after a pause, painful to him, but of which she took no notice, "you are teaching me a lesson, which I thought I could never learn."

She opened her eyes. There was something in his voice, which made her restless.

"I thought I had sounded the depths, and knew what was in man and the life of man; but I had looked only on one half of the race. I had forgot-

ten that woman is one half of man; and I have known little of women but the surface which they show to us, in the intercourse of society. You have given me a deeper insight into life—into a life lived for the sake of making others happy, a life in which the godlike principle of self-denial, takes the place of the human trait of self-gratification, and I——"

She broke in upon his rant:

"Now, Mr. Morris, you are poking fun at me, and I can't bear that. Let us talk about something else than poor me."

He was ill at ease, under this sudden interruption. He was ready to tell her how life, to him, alone, all bitterness, would be, with her, all light and sweetness; and she had balked him, in the prelude of his symphony.

"I cannot talk of books," he said. "My heart is full of something else. I must talk of what fills my mind and heart, all the time. I can think of nothing else. I can talk, coherently, on no other theme. What is my life? Whither is it drifting? What am I to do? What will become of me?"

She was at a loss to understand him.

"Why, Mr. Morris, to hear you, one would think you were in some desperate strait, that some awful catastrophe threatened you. Why do you not find something to do, that will occupy

you, and interest you,—some work, worthy of your talents?"

"What am I fit for? What can I do? And what can interest me, when the great question of my life is hanging in the balance?"

"I do not understand you," she said. "I am not fit to advise you what to do. But almost any path, it would seem to me, lies open to you, and you have only to choose what you like best and take it."

"What mockery!" he answered. "To choose what I like best and take it. When was that ever open to man? And this to me, when what would make life a dream of unutterable bliss, lies just above my reach."

She had no idea what he meant, thinking all the while of his philosophic theories, and that this was but another repetition of the oft-told tale; she added:

"What often seems beyond our reach is only so, because we are looking off to something we think better beyond. We do not receive because we do not ask, or ask amiss. Do you not remember what the Bible says, 'Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you'?"

This was too much for him. Then the fountains within were broken up and the torrents of his love were poured out before this girl. He told her,

in somewhat incoherent speech, how all his life had been in shadow, and how the darkness had closed in around him, and how, in the gathering gloom, the light of her life had shone in upon his darkness, at first like the glimmer of a distant star, but gradually with clearer light and joy, till she had penetrated his heart with the knowledge of a better life; her simple faith in God, her sure fidelity to duty had made him see that what he had despised as small was, in truth, great; and the narrow compass of her life was wide enough to teach him that the life is more than meat, that man is greater than his environment. And now, if she would not share his life,—he did not dare to ask that,—but, if she would admit him to share her better and higher life, then she could know that she had saved a life from ruin and a soul from death. His plea was pitiful in its earnestness. He caught at her hand, as the drowning clutch at straws.

How strong she seemed to save him; how powerless he was, without her.

Gladys was deeply moved, and her heart was touched, with pity and with love. And out of the strength of her trust in God, and her hope and gladness in life, she reached her hand to this one, who had lost both, and gave him, with her hand, an affection so deep, and warm, and tender, and true that it was a cordial of life to his soul.

She was not blind to his failings, or his mistakes. She did not share his errors. She knew him and loved him, and she knew that her love for him would be a new element in his life, and that she could do much for him, and bring about a great change in him, and therefore a great change in the world around him.

There were noble traits in his character, which she did not overlook; and his very weaknesses, she felt, were only the fruit of misdirected strength, the powers of a strong nature consuming itself.

She had no fears for the future. She staked all on the power of love. She knew how she loved him, and she believed that he loved her nearly as well; and, with this, for both chart and compass, she was sure they could not go adrift.

They went together to her father, and she told him, in a simple, straightforward way, that Sydney had told her of his love, and that, with his approval, she desired to accept him. She knew her ground right well before she ventured thus. She had often lured her father on to talk of Sydney, and declare his outspoken admiration of him. He had often said, that, whatever aberrations from a wise and healthy view of life might show themselves in Sydney now, yet, in the end, he would come out all right. "It is only the natural consequence of his present circumstances. He is a young man, of ex-

ceptionally strong, deep, and earnest nature, with means enough to rob him of the stimulus to exertion,—too much of a man to lead a life of pleasure about town. All he wants is something, outside of himself, to thoroughly interest him. Give that fellow a good wife, and he will start on a career that will end nobly." She knew, therefore, that he would see in this the fulfillment of his prophecy and wish for Sydney. For she knew that, to her father's thinking, the city held no woman who would make a better wife than his "nut-browne maide."

While Sydney hung, in an agony of suspense, on her father's answer to his own hasty appeal, which had followed her quiet announcement, she felt not the least tremor of anxiety.

"God bless you both," was all that Mr. Elliott said, and kissed his "maide" fondly, and laid his hand kindly on Sydney.

So they celebrated the event by having Sydney stay to lunch, and, lunch being over, there was no natural reason for his hasty departure, and so he lingered through the afternoon, and the afternoon drawing to a close, he stayed to dinner, and, dinner being ended, he spent the evening. As Gladys said to her father, "They were beginning life together"; to which her father's smiling answer was, "I should think so."

They spent the afternoon in picturing their life together; what they would do, where they would live, where they would travel, etc., etc., after the manner of such as are in this case.

They settled it that Sydney was to come and make another of the bird family; that there was to be no change in their manner of life.

When Sydney hinted that the restrictions which they had hitherto felt, need not, hereafter, put a check upon their pleasures, the suggestion did not meet such a delighted acceptance as would have pleased him.

"Do you not care, Gladys, to have larger means at your command, to gratify your tastes, and give you opportunities of travel, and cultivation, and amusement?" he asked, in a half-reproachful tone.

"Yes," she answered, "I am, of course, glad that we shall have ample means; but the want of them, now, does not distress me, Sydney, as it does you, in my behalf. The question turns, not on the possession of means, but on the ability to use them so as to promote happiness. And, Sydney, father and I have been so happy, living on a small, uncertain income, and adapting our mode of life to our means. And I see so many who are rich and unhappy, full of repining restlessness. Sometimes I think the rich never have a certain, sunny happiness, that *good cheer* which you see poor people

have. And I have often thought as our means increase, so that we can easily gratify every desire, then desire fails, and we cannot keenly enjoy what is so easily won."

Surely, thought Sydney, this is a strange, sweet nature, full of placid depths; and surely she has taken me for love, and not for money.

Their engagement was a short one. Sydney was eager for an early marriage, and as there seemed no good reason for delay, they were married in the spring, in the merry month of May, when robins build, and flowers bloom, and the bridal of the earth and sky is plighted.

It was a quiet church wedding, and there was a quaint little artist's reception afterward, at which hearty Dr. Hale appeared among the guests, certainly not in the guise of a wan, rejected lover; and Sydney found him a far more agreeable and sensible fellow than he had ever thought him before.

Gladys did her duty, as a bride, as she always did, and looked as pretty, as was safe for Sydney to have her look.

He had rushed into married bliss, with all his usual ardor and impetuosity. But there was fair ground for his ecstatic admiration of this lovely girl.

McKenzie was there, in all the glory of his silver hair, and snow-white, English whiskers, and ruddy

cheeks, and bright, blue eyes that showed, by their dancing light, how fresh and young was the old man's heart.

Of late, Sydney had not seen so much of the old Scotchman. He had met him, of course, constantly, on business matters; but it had pained the old man to see that there was less of freedom in their personal intercourse, that a sort of mist had risen between them.

But now this was blown away. McKenzie had listened, through four months past, to glowing descriptions of Gladys and her father, to enthusiastic essays on her beauty and her worth, to her conversations, retailed with all the ardor of one, who thought them wisdom, distilled from goodness and beauty.

The old man had laughed, and told Sydney that he was "gone clean daft." "The lassie is weel faured, and bonnie, and by that token, ye'll listen to a' she has to say, an' it be wisdom or folly. And you're no' the first mon that has been trapped in that net, my laddie."

On Gladys' invitation, he had gone there one evening, to dine and to hear this paragon discourse her wisdom unto men. It was a quaint little party, —the artist, with his dreamy, cultivated talk, the bright, hearty, and practical Scotch business-man, and the "bonnie brownie" (as he called Gladys),

and Sydney, ill at ease, watching the seemingly incongruous elements, which he had brought together. But he need have had no fear. They were all genuine people, each, after his kind real and true in feeling, and so they fared well together. The Scotchman had a fund of quaint and quick humor, stories of life and men, and they were like pages from a realist's novel, and they were keenly relished by Gladys and her father. And, though without cultivation in art, yet Mr. McKenzie could see, and feel the truth, and sweetness of many of Mr. Elliott's pictures. His criticism was that most flattering kind of homage, which accepts the whole technique of the work, without question, and feels, unhindered by technical considerations, the point and beauty of the idea.

As for Gladys, she and McKenzie got on famously together, and were dear friends before the evening was over. She won from him an admiration warm enough to delight Sydney, and she declared herself in love with the dear old man.

"Ye'll tak' a summat wild bird into your nest, Miss Gladys," said the old man, after dinner. "Are ye no' afraid that he'll straw things aboot, a bit?"

"I do not find him wild, Mr. McKenzie," she answered with a smile. "He is quite tame enough for my liking."

"Ye'll have found a braw new quick-lime, I

think me, to hold him so quiet, the while," he said with a twinkle in his eye. "But his song has changed greatly syne ye've had him in charge. The throstle is no sweeter, nor the mavis in the Spring more winnin', than his notes of the last few weeks. And, by the time that Spring is come, I'll dare match him agen the nightingale hersel'."

All this was music to Gladys' ears. Sometimes, she feared that Sydney was blithe with her, but sad-hearted, when he was away from her. But, to know that her presence followed him, and that his man of business knew her influence, confirmed her in the assurance, that love was conqueror, and that love was the reigning power, now, in Sydney's life.

When Sydney and McKenzie left the house, they walked, some little way, in silence; then Sydney turned and asked the question that was on the tip of his tongue, and the top of his heart:

"What do you think of her, Mr. McKenzie?"

After an interval of five or six seconds, slowly and tenderly Mr. McKenzie said, in a low, rich tone:

"The Lord has been verra gude to you, my laddie. Verra gude," he added. "The lassie's face is fair to look upon, and her voice is gude to listen to, and her heart is honest and leal. And may God gi'e ye grace to ken that, of all the gude gifts

that fall to the lot of man, on this side o' heaven, He has gi'en ye the best, a true, fond wife. And if ye bind up your life and heart wi' the heart and life o' yon lass, there'll come on ye nae ill, that God will nae guide ye through. But an' if your sad whim-whams of philosophy come atween you and her, your life will be naething but salt, with no savor, to be cast out on a dung-hill, or trodden under foot of men. And there ye have my opinion of the whole matter, in a nutshell, and, leaving you to pick out the kernel, I'll say, good-night, to you."

And he tramped off down the street, leaving Sydney looking after him; and the thought which crossed his mind was, "How great a thing it is, simply to be good."

CHAPTER X.

THE next two years sped with the fleetness of quiet, happy days, that leave no other trace to mark them than the summer sunlight, only the growth which the warmth has fostered.

There was one event of marked consequence, namely, the birth of their boy. The little Sydney Elliott Morris was ushered into this world under happy auspices, and received a welcome fit for a prince of the blood royal. He was a duodecimo edition of Sydney, the same, dark, curly hair, and large, restless, inquiring eyes; which seemed, at the very threshold of life, to ask what it all meant? And the first answer to this questioning was the fond smiles with which his mother greeted his every glance, and he seemed well content with the answer. He was, of course, a never-ceasing wonder, this nestling of the bird-family; all his doings and cooings were matter of surprise and delight.

Sydney saw budding reason in his earliest efforts to reach a consciousness of his own identity, and his relations to the objective world, which con-

sisted, mainly, in the ineffectual effort to swallow everything that he laid his hands on.

Mr. Elliott was ready to paint him, when he was no more than able to hold up his head, and to include in the picture the fond mother beaming, and brooding over this gift of God.

Gladys was simply content to feel this soft, little birdie cuddle close to her heart, and fill her whole soul with a warm glow of contented love.

Sydney could not but enter into the light and joy of the welcome that was accorded to this young prince, and accept the dictum of the whole circle, that there never was just such a child in the whole history of the race.

Every evening, when the table was cleared, Gladys went and fetched the little wonder, to make the household merry, and, as Mr. Elliott said, to give them a taste of the honey of Hymettus, as he kissed the rose-bud of a mouth.

He was passed round by his mother, like an extra dessert, from one to the other, and the precious privilege was accorded to each of the men, after a solemn admonition to be very careful, of holding him for a brief moment, Gladys, the meanwhile, standing, with outstretched hands, ready to catch him, in case their hold should relax.

There was only one drawback to Gladys' happiness, and that was Sydney's lack of occupation.

She had an uneasy feeling that a mere dilettante life, in which his pursuits were determined only by his tastes, was no life for him. She did not fear that he would fall into actual vice, but that he would lapse into a negative state, which would be far below what she had hoped, and pictured for him.

In vain he plead, that the one elevating influence on his life was herself, that she had drawn him out of the slough of despond, and that, if his life were spent, as far as possible, with her, this was the strongest assurance that he would never fall back again into his sad old way. She felt that he ought to address himself in earnest to some work, in order to keep himself alive and healthy. What that work should be, she had no idea, but something ought to fill his mind and absorb his energies, if he were to be anything worth the being.

It was a constant subject of discussion between them. He had entered as a student of medicine, and had carried on his studies, in a desultory sort of way. But he was always at work on some of those curious problems that lie on the border-land between physiology and psychology, ever probing questions for which medical science has found, as yet, no definite answer. He had toyed, too, with literature, and written some bright little trifles, which were nothing in themselves, but were enough

to show what he might do, if he were to set himself, seriously, to work in this direction.

But he was more intent on gathering, to the full, the honeyed sweetness of a life shared with one whose love was like the love of the angels, pure and purifying, on whose every word he hung with delight, and her mere presence filled him with warm content. And, as he sat silent by her side, his eyes feasting on her face full of all loveliness of soul and sense, to him, his heart was filled with peace, and his life was the life of the blessed.

He often thought, how safe and secure he was, now that her potent love-charms had laid the ghosts that haunted his life, and she had purged his vision with Eyebright, and he saw things, as they were, and not in the distortion which had made life hideous to him. Was he not clad in an armor proof?

Alas! for him who leans on another to lead him, and has not taken, into his own heart, the truth that purifies and strengthens.

One day they were alarmed beyond measure by a fainting spell, which overcame Gladys, as she was sitting, listening to Sydney read aloud, while Mr. Elliott painted, in the studio.

There was no apparent cause for it. She had been quietly sitting, embroidering a baby's sack, and the child was lying asleep, in the cradle, by her

side, one chubby little fist doubled up outside the coverlet, and a half smile flitting about the dimpled mouth.

Sydney was in an agony of terror and insisted upon hurrying at once for the doctor.

They summoned one to whom they all looked up with the greatest confidence and affection, Dr. Alfred Willard. He was a man who was the very type of his noble profession, tall, and erect in bearing, carrying with easy grace his three-score years, with great, broad shoulders, a large, benign face, a full, hearty, cheery voice, a kindly smile, and a twinkle in his eye. He carried assurance in the tones of his voice, and healing in the firm touch of his broad hand.

"Well, my dear woman," he said, "has that baby been too much for you? Now tell me just how you feel."

He had a kind, caressing tone, as if he were soothing a tired child.

He laughed heartily over some of her symptoms, and told her she was too much in love with her husband and her baby. He seemed more interested in drawing her on to talk of her feelings, and her life, and what books she read, and how she amused herself, and what she thought of her baby, than in any examination of her physical condition.

"And so you're very fond of this mite of a baby,

already. Well, he is a fine little fellow, to be sure. And, after all, they *are* interesting little things. It is strange to watch the life that has become such a stale story to us old fellows, beginning all over again for these little ones."

And so he talked on, irrelevantly Sydney thought, but Gladys thought delightfully, and he soon had her in full tide of interested discussion with him, and then he began to question her about herself, about mere trifles of her ordinary habits, and occupations, and feelings.

Then he felt her pulse, long and carefully, listened to her breathing, sounded her lungs, and said she needed some gentle tonic.

"And, my dear child, you must take regular, quiet exercise; live in the open air. God made that medicine for us, and we need it, and ought to have much more of it than most of our American people are willing to take. Your baby needs it from you, and I think *that* will keep you up to it better than if I tell you that you need it yourself. And this pale husband of yours will be all the better for quiet walks, along country lanes. He is young enough yet for a lover, and you can make him trundle the baby-carriage; and your father can go along sketching; and then you will have, what I think is the whole world to you, out walking with you.

"My advice to you," he said, turning to Mr. El-

liott and Sydney, "is to leave the city, and take a small country house, in one of these beautiful suburbs." And turning to Gladys again, whose eyes sparkled at this, for she loved the country, "Make this husband of yours turn farmer, and you can keep the chickens, and this boy of yours will sprout up, a sturdy country lad, who can climb fences, and chase squirrels, and ride his pony, when he is a little older."

He chatted on pleasantly, picturing the healthy pleasures of a country home, from the walk in the spring woods, after early flowers, to the hunting for the dropping chestnuts in the fallen leaves, and left a trifling prescription for Gladys, and made light of the whole matter.

Sydney followed him down to the door, to go directly for the *placetum*, which the doctor had prescribed; and was wholly unprepared when Dr. Willard told him that his wife was suffering from heart disease. He said that he would write him a letter embodying his opinion and advice. That afternoon he received from the doctor the following letter:

MY DEAR MR. MORRIS:

I have arrived at the following conclusion in regard to your wife's case.

I believe that she is suffering from an obstruction at the mitral valve—what is technically known as mitral stenosis.

This may be due to an inflammation of the lining membrane of the heart (*endo-carditis*), which occurred in early childhood, or may be a congenital malformation.

This form of heart disease is not at all rare in young persons. It consists essentially in a narrowing of the orifice through which the blood passes from the left auricle to the left ventricle.

When this obstruction is very marked, the patient suffers from shortness of breath on exertion; from a dry and hacking cough; palpitation, and a profuse watery, bloody expectoration whenever the heart's action is unduly accelerated by emotional, or physical excitement. There is great danger of sudden death, when the latter symptoms are presented. They mean, of course, that the blood current is backing up on the lungs and right side of the heart.

There are all grades of this affection, and, in slight cases, such as I presume your wife's to be, there may, at no time, be any grave symptoms whatever, so long as the general health of the patient is not interfered with by other causes.

In mild cases there is some shortness of breath on going up-stairs or making any similar exertion, and there may be a slight "nervous" cough, which need give you no anxiety.

If the general strength of the patient is lowered in any way, and especially in case an acute affection of the lungs should be developed, or in case of a sudden emotional shock, then, in an instant, death might occur without warning.

Still, she may live on for years, in good health, if surrounded by the comforts of life and shielded from its sorrows and toils.

The congenital cases are less likely to give rise to serious symptoms in later life than those which are developed from *endo-carditis*.

I have written thus at length believing that you have

sufficient medical knowledge to appreciate the gravity of the case, and yet not to be unduly alarmed.

Yours very truly,

ALFRED WILLARD.

And so, Sydney was set face to face with this dread uncertainty.

It assumed, to his mind, at once, the guise of certainty; and he heard funeral bells ringing in his ears, and saw himself left a raving, despairing man, with the child, that little waif of humanity, to struggle with the dark waters that would roll over him. And again there appeared a hand, which wrote on the wall of darkness, "heredity," that hateful and fateful word.

Here it came into his life in a new and awful guise. Here was something which no high moral purpose, no force of will, no buoyant and hopeful spirit could surmount. No love could sweeten nor soften this hard and cruel truth.

A young life, full of beauty and goodness, fitted to bless him and all around her, able to save him from the pit of misery, was stricken with a blight, brought by no fault of hers; born in the very texture of her being, laying its hand upon the very fountain of her life; a dread inheritance of pain and death. And where was the remedy, where the alleviating touch to gild this darkness with a single ray of hope?

And, now, what did it avail him that they loved one another? now her power to win his love, and to shed the light of her love over his life, only served to tip the arrow with a poison that drank up his soul, that was keen to wound, but not merciful enough to kill.

The kindlings of his love were as firebrands to consume him.

There needed no future world to taste the pains of hell. Here was a worm that dieth not; a fire that is not quenched.

He returned to her, after an hour's wandering in the streets, determined to hide the truth both from her and her father, and bear the heavy load alone.

Vain man! to think that a woman who loves can be let into one half of a man's heart, and shut out of the other; that a man can have a secret, that greatly concerns him, from his wife, if they are truly man and wife. The thing has often been tried, but the success of it is a sad commentary on the married life of the successful one.

It was not long before Gladys knew the whole truth. But, to Sydney's utter surprise, it seemed to have no effect in exciting her. It gave her a sweet, gentle, wistful way with them all, and especially with the child. She hung over it and looked at it with a longing in her eyes to live, and

now and then a quiet tear dropped on the baby's face, and sparkled there for a moment.

When Sydney could no longer refrain from expressing his surprise, she answered him quietly, "I do not see why it should affect me so painfully, my dear husband. What do I know, more than every one else surely knows, but fails to appreciate, that at any moment they may die. With care and caution I may live many years.

"I am only sure that the seed of mortality is sown in my heart by inheritance. We all know the same truth; but, in my case, it is more definite, that is all."

They made no delay in following out the doctor's suggestion, and took a house in the suburbs of the city, with about three acres of ground around it. It was about a half-hour's ride from the city, with another ten minutes for the ferry.

The rolling country was dotted with houses of all sizes and styles of architecture, among which the fashionable Queen Anne struggled with simpler and more truly national styles.

A hill, surnamed a mountain, ran along behind the straggling settlement, and, on the lower slopes of this, their house was situated. The outlook was over rolling hill, and broad savannah, to the glinting bay beyond, and the city, far, vague, and dim.

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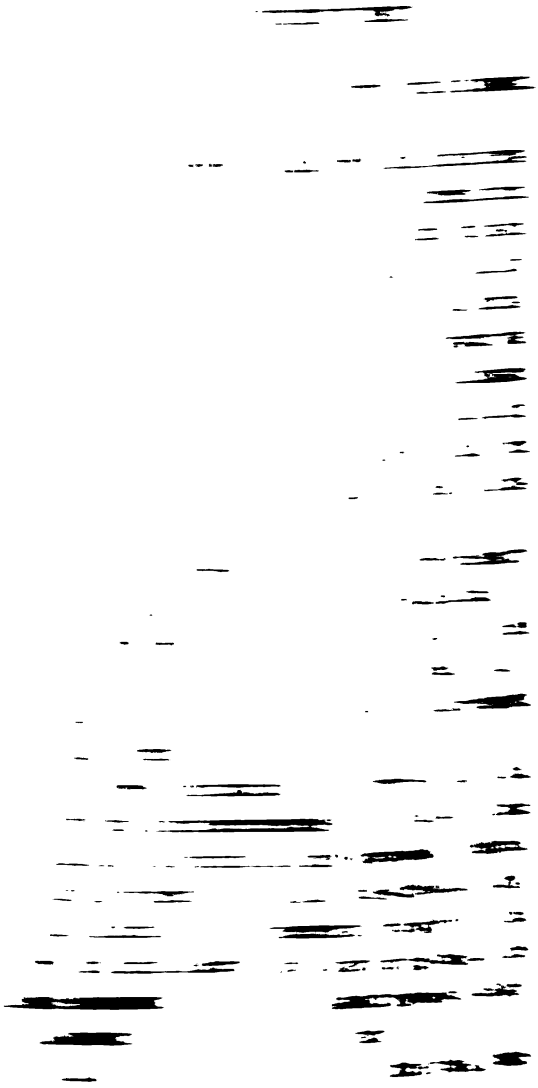

country air, as if she knew that it was her life; perhaps, more consciously enjoying it, because she could not fail to remember that, suddenly, she might cease to breathe.

But while this conciousness subdued her, it did not disquiet, or oppress her. There was the same wistful tenderness in her manner to them all, the same outgoing of her love toward them, as if to make them feel its constant enfolding of them, but there was no disquiet; she was at peace.

Her heart was full of that gentle courage, so rare in men, and so often found in women, to face a lingering pain, or a dread uncertainty, with a calm, quiet bravery. Such trials make men irritable, and make women very gentle.

She was not a constant sufferer, but she was not left without frequent witness that the most vital point of her delicate frame was sorely hurt. And, many a day, her face was marked with the seams of suffering, and her eyes were dimmed, and her voice lost its resonance, and had that pained, dull tone in it, like the tone of an unstrung lute.

It was a kind of *Urbs in rure*, with a pleasant, cultivated society.

Here they made another nest, and settled themselves down to be a happy and contented circle. Gladys, with her pony and village-cart, was soon familiar with a wide range of country. Mr. Elliott had a studio in the city, which was more an exhibition room than a studio. His real work-room was at home; and he was soon drawn into landscape work, and roamed from valley to valley and along the brooks, picking up gems of scenery, which, when hung upon the walls of his studio, were like a country stroll.

Sydney became a diligent, but rather desultory and unsuccessful farmer, on a very small scale.

But there were a few things that could not help growing nicely, and these they enjoyed, with a keenness of relish, born of pride in the achievement of raising them.

There were constant little surprises of this kind, that gave an unexpectedness to a meal, and made it a scene of delightful little gastronomic triumphs.

Young Sydney, too, like a well-regulated baby, took his share of the benefits of country life; and he grew fat and hearty, and lay on the grass, in the summer sunshine, and kicked, and crowed as lustily as the bantams in the chicken yard.

And Gladys?—she breathed in the fresh, pure

country air, as if she knew that it was her life; perhaps, more consciously enjoying it, because she could not fail to remember that, suddenly, she might cease to breathe.

But while this conciousness subdued her, it did not disquiet, or oppress her. There was the same wistful tenderness in her manner to them all, the same outgoing of her love toward them, as if to make them feel its constant enfolding of them, but there was no disquiet; she was at peace.

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CHAPTER XI.

THEIR country life seemed to verify the doctor's predictions in Gladys' case. She lived in the open air, and bore, in her face and manner, the witness that no drug, in all the pharmacopœia, could rival this, to tone and quicken the pulses of life.

But she could not endure fatigue, and she lost a certain bright activity of movement, and she often showed a listlessness of manner, and dimness of eye, and spoke, with a weary tone, that was alien to her natural disposition, and gave Sydney the impression that she was slowly, but surely, fading; and he was sorely distressed.

She bore all this very patiently, without murmuring, or repining. Nay more, she was careful to repress every exhibition of her weakness or suffering, when in Sydney's presence, for it worried him and, in a measure, exasperated him. He seemed to feel it a sort of personal injury that his home should be invaded, and its peace destroyed, through no fault of his. He almost reproached her for feeling thus weak, and miserable; and took her suffering, as a kind of personal affront.

These fits of petulance against the inevitable

alternated with seasons of passionate sympathy with Gladys; and these were quite as trying to her fortitude. He would break forth into a rhapsody of mournful tenderness and pathetic portrayal of her sad condition, which would have been more fitting as a funeral oration, than to comfort and assure her mind, and help her to bear the burden of her present suffering, and the ever-present vision of sudden death.

She had more ado to soothe and sustain him, than to nerve herself to meet life, in this strange position of standing face to face with death, all the while.

Then too he was forever harping on the matter, in the light of a personal injury to himself, an unjust invasion of the peace and happiness, which he thought he had secured by marrying her.

She urged him, with gentle pleadings, to share with her the blessing of a present happiness, and not to let the fear of future sorrow cheat them of the joy within their reach.

"We can never be happy, Sydney," she urged, "if we are always demanding not only the full gratification of our wishes, but also that this shall be assured to us for all time to come. Our happiness comes not, while we are on the search for it, but as the result of doing our duty and forgetting ourselves and living for others, and then, before we know it, they are happy, and we are happy."

"But," answered Sydney, in a querulous tone, "my desires must be my guide to my happiness, and their fulfilment is what I call happiness. You are the sum of my earthly desires, your life is the condition of my enjoyment of everything, and you are doomed to die."

"But, Sydney," she replied, "you are living an aimless life, and therefore it is an unhappy one. Our pleasures, even those drawn from our love for others, are, like rest, a relaxation. And as, without labor, we cannot know the sweetness of rest, so without some occupation, you cannot enjoy your life with me; it should be part of your rest from earnest, hard work.

"Idling away your life in my society leaves you to dream and brood over my sickness, to exaggerate it, and make it cast its shadow over both our lives. This is not healthy for you, nor helpful to me; and it is not right."

"But, Gladys," he answered, in a tragical tone, "do you think so meanly of my love, as to imagine that I can absorb myself in any occupation, and forget that you are here suffering, perhaps alone, and needing me? No, my dream of life has been broken, by a rude awaking, and I may as well face the truth, first as last, and without flinching. Life is bitterness and woe and misery and affliction. I thought so once, I know it now; it haunted me in

the past, as a nightmare; it faces me now, as a reality. And the only question worth considering is, when endurance of it ceases to be a virtue."

"Oh, Sydney, you are wrong," she said; "so wrong in meeting this trouble in such an unrelenting mood. The pains and disappointments of our life, the failure to realize the full fruition of our hopes, are sadly miscalled when we rate them as misery and woe; their true name is trial. You cannot imagine a character worthy of that name which has not been formed by trial of some kind, small or great; something to test, to prove it, to fix it, to call it into being and exercise. Imagine a life with no trials at all, and what kind of virtues could it call out? I suppose, if we were perfect beings, we would not need these trials to bring out the nobler traits of character.

"And, if we meet them in this spirit, Sydney, they may be hard to bear, but they will not make us miserable, they will lift us above their own power, as we are chastened, and refined, and purified by them. Who was it, some of those good old men, compared them to the rounds of a ladder, by which we climb out of the dust?

"I know that I am stronger to bear my burden to-day than I was twelve months ago. If I had resisted the discipline, I would have been weaker;

but I have tried to learn, and I have learned from it a lesson both of patience and of strength; or, as Longfellow sweetly puts it, 'to suffer, and be strong.' Perhaps you think I am not so very strong yet." She smiled as she looked up at him, a little sad, sweet, appealing smile.

But his brow was knit, and there was no answering smile on his lips, nor in his eye.

"Gladys," he said, after a moment's pause, during which he patted the ground impatiently with his foot, "I am sick of such talk. It does not sound at all like your old self."

"Well, Sydney," she answered, still smiling, but more sadly, "perhaps my new self is better than my old self. I hope it is."

He almost snapped out his answer.

"A man cannot descend to such a view of life. It is our lot, as the stronger and sterner sex, to enter into strife, and fight the battle with life manfully. We cannot allow ourselves weakly to lower our colors, and admit that we are beaten. And, when driven from the outer works, back on the citadel, there is always one weapon that remains in our hands. We can cheat life of its anticipated victory over us, and thwart grim destiny in a way that often makes me smile, with a grim satisfaction, as I think of it. We can end the whole miserable farce, and begin life over again in a world that

can't be any worse than this one, if we take the very gloomiest possible view of it."

"Oh, hush, Sydney," she cried out, as if in pain. "I cannot bear to hear you talk like that; and I know that, in your heart, you do not mean it. You say it only in a fit of restless despair. But, Sydney, my dear husband, do not even think it, much less say it."

He was stung by the truth of her words. He despised them as weak and womanish, but he felt that they were true, and the feeling did not soothe his fretted spirit. He was chafing against adamant, and it hurt him.

"I cannot bear to hear you talk so childishly, Gladys. Why should I not mean it, and meaning, why not say it? What possible harm is there in discussing any feasible way of getting rid of a present load of misery?"

"Harm, Sydney?" she said, now thoroughly roused. "There is no end of harm in talking so. For, if once we let such wicked ideas fill our minds, and utter them, the very speaking of the words seems to familiarize us with them, and make them less awful to our hearts."

He answered her in a light, scoffing tone:

"I confess that I can't see what you call the 'awful and wicked' side of such an idea. You

swear by the Bible, I believe; then show me anything in the Bible which forbids suicide."

The sneering tone of his words touched her to the quick. The smile had faded into tears, and her eyes were full, as she stood at bay; but there was no tremor in her voice, as she replied:

"Why, Sydney, I am shocked. You know the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

"Gladys, it is hard to keep one's temper," he answered sharply, "to have you make such a quotation, as an answer to my question—'Thou shalt not kill'—'anything,' I suppose you would like to add? How preposterous! Why, Gladys, I really gave you credit for more common-sense. Do you not see that the latter half of the Decalogue is intended to regulate our duties to our fellow-men? This is plain on the face of it. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor'; 'Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's'; in these it is expressed, and in the others it is implied. Do you mean to tell me 'Thou shalt not steal,' means 'thou shalt not steal from thyself'?" And he laughed, a little angry, mocking, and triumphant laugh, which said, as plain as spoken words, "You poor little fool." He continued: "Why, you know that you cannot steal from yourself, your own property; the thing is preposterous on the face of it. No more can you murder

yourself. Your life is your own; you can give it away for any object that you deem worthy, just as you can your money. You can do with your own as you please. We know very certainly that we have to leave this world, sooner or later; then why stand upon the order of our going any longer than it suits us? There is just about the same moral quality to the act of leaving this world, as there is to the act of leaving this country, to become the citizen of another land. If it suits you, stay here; and if it does not suit you, then go where you think you will be better suited. That is the whole thing in a nutshell."

He could not laugh her down. She was hurt, but not frightened, and she answered without hesitation:

"Oh, Sydney, if this is what your philosophy has taught you, it seems to me the lesson was scarce worth the trouble of learning. Is there no God, who has put us here, at school, to learn from life His lessons? And is it not tempting and despising God to throw away the life, which He has given us, before its lesson is half learned? And, if we make such use of this life, which He has intrusted to us, will He give us any other life? Has God nothing to say about our future, and what it is to be? Are there no ties and duties to those whom we have bound to ourselves in the bonds of a common life and love? Is it fair to give them no

thought? Do we not owe it to God, and to ourselves, and to those we love, to throw such an idea to the winds, as an act supremely heartless, selfish, cowardly, and mean? Sydney, look," she said, pointing to the little Sydney, "look at that dear little face, innocent and trusting, and think, *think* what your words mean to him."

The little fellow had been playing around them as they sat out under the trees, too full of the business of his years to attend to the conversation that went on, and too fresh from heaven to have understood it if he had stopped to listen. The wind had been playing with his hair, and the sun had been kissing his cheeks, and his pow was curling tightly, and the frowsy curls hung damp over his face, and framed a picture, like one of Raphael's cherubs;—fat, rosy, bright-eyed and laughing, he ran down the grassy slope, with a reckless toddle, to be caught in his mother's or father's arms, it mattered not which to him.

But with the inertia of childish confidence, he came headlong, with a pitch and a stride too long for his legs, and which would have landed him solidly on his nose, if the expected support were not at hand.

He was an easy-going, rollicking, happy little youngster, at a point in life where his father's dark forebodings could not touch him, and where his

mother's smiles could find their way to his heart. He was almost all day long with one or other of the family. In the morning, while his mother was busy with the usual levee of butcher and greengrocer, he would sit with Mr. Elliott, cross-legged on the studio floor, with a few worn brushes or exhausted paint tubes for playthings, and coo with a sweet content, or, on a nearer level to the easel, in his cradle, with a quiet, sedate air, watching Mr. Elliott paint for a long time. His little eyes kept track of the brush, and he seemed absorbed in deep contemplation of the work, with a wealth of latent wisdom in his looks, which would have made him an art critic of the first rank, if he could only have given utterance to the wisdom that he could look. He had a funny, little, baby philosophy, which seemed adequate to his needs. I suppose, if he could have given it voice, he would have summed it up, "Take the goods that the Gods give you, and wait for more."

For instance, if he could not reach one of the Venetian glass vases, which stood on the mantelshelf, so as to drop it on the hearth, and chuckle with full delight as he heard the fragments jingle merrily (for he loved the tinkling music of breaking glass, as many of the young rascals do), then, after a few vain and ineffectual reachings for the coveted prize, without a murmur, he would drop

to a sitting posture on the floor, with a thud, and begin poking his fingers through the holes in the brass fender, and would laugh and play with the little pink ends that came through on the other side. When he had worn off the novelty from this, he would roll over on his side, and talk, in that mystic tongue of babyhood, which has all the sense without the forms of language, to the other baby in the fender, and they would have rare games of hide-and-seek with one another, interspersed with a match at making faces.

He had one of those open, fearless, beaming faces of childhood that win smiles from the stony-hearted, and which had in it the perennial invitation, "Catch me, and kiss me, and toss me on high." And that was just what all the women did, and most of the men, that he came across.

He was almost too confiding in his nature; for there was not a dog in all the neighborhood that he would not toddle up to and throw his arms around his neck, and try to crawl on his back for a ride. But he had never yet met with a surly rebuff.

He trusted all, both great and small, that the dear God had made. And he seemed to think that all were made for his special behoof, and he proposed to show, that, so far as he was concerned, they were not made in vain.

How his mother doted on him, how Mr. Elliott

revelled in him, as artistically perfect, the living embodiment of a painter's dream, a toddling poem. He maintained stoutly that, for all the little interruptions to his work, yet he could paint, with more ease, and content, and full assurance of success, with the child by his side; and declared that he drew his inspiration from the child's winsome beauty, and from his evident appreciation of the picture, as it grew.

The smile which, in answer to his own loving gaze at the little fellow, would illumine the child's face, this simple-hearted artist interpreted as the child's pleased recognition of the painting. And because, once or twice, the little imp of mischief had reached out his hands to imbrue them in the fresh paint of the picture, Mr. Elliott insisted that it was a recognition of the baby likeness, which he was painting.

But it was a sight to touch the heart and moisten the eye with a tender gladness to see this youngster lay violent hands on McKenzie, when he came out to spend Sunday with them. How he lorded it over the old Scotchman, and what vassal ever endured bondage, with such good grace and glee.

Down on his hands and knees, which were not so limber as in days of yore, with a string in his mouth for bit and bridle, and with the young knight on his back (he would have let him wear spurs if

he could have used them), he would lumber across the floor a steed as merry as the rider, or stand stabled under the table, or haltered to the leg of a chair, while my young master sat on the seat patting his head. Or, when tired of this (the boy, of course), then he would ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross; and, when the fun was out of this, McKenzie had to whistle, until his lips were dry and his tongue ready to cleave to the roof of his mouth; or to walk around the yard, with my young lord in his arms. His diversions were endless. In vain Gladys or Mr. Elliott would interfere to put a stop to the torture.

"Na, na; leave us alane," McKenzie would say, holding fast to the bonnie bairn, "wi' his wee round face." "He'll ha'e na much to remember aboot me. But when he grows to be a braw lad, and I am aneath the kirk sod, and ye tak' him, now and agen, to see that the grass grows fresh and green on my grave, and ye'll read to him on the tomb-stane, 'Here rests, in the peace o' God, Alexander McKenzie, of Dunfermline town'; then I would like that the lad should say, 'Aye, I ken; it was my dear old pony.' When they are young they love us for what we do for them, and when we are old we love them for what we do for them. We are only looking at the same thing each from the ither end o' the line."

So they let him have his way.

It would have been hard to say which grandfather loved the child the best—he who held the place by virtue of the tie of blood, or he who had been elected to it by the suffrages of pure affection.

Gladys welcomed the old Scotchman with a hearty kiss, on each returning Saturday, and had grown to feel that he was a second father, and certainly no daughter could be nearer to a father's heart than Gladys was to his.

She had a little stock of news to tell him each week, of the small doings and the smaller sayings of the young Sydney, and she told her tales to ears that were ever open to the story. He never grew tired of hearing this gentle mother tell the old story of her baby's prattle. She had grown dearer to his heart, as he saw how the dread sorrow of her life had not soured, but had sweetened her disposition.

How deep and searching are the ties of a pure affection, how far it reaches into the life and nature of those whom it purifies by its touch. How it permeates our life, so that the veriest trifles of every day serve to nourish it, just as well as the greater crises of life.

And there was another bond between these two, their kindred Christian faith. This had ripened in McKenzie under the warm experience of a long

life; a life that had been touched by sorrow, but the touch had not blighted but sweetened his nature. With Gladys' more sensitive nature, the fruit had ripened earlier. They both felt that the fruit might soon be garnered, and this sense of nearness to the other world threw a soft and tender light over their lives, and created a bond of sympathy between them that was very strong and deep.

McKenzie was the only one with whom Gladys could talk freely of this, which lay so near her heart. Her father met every allusion to the subject with a pained, helpless look that cut her to the heart.

Sydney, at any mention of it, was thrown into an agony of grief and despair, and Gladys felt that she must spare him every allusion to it. And as for the little boy, he could not understand the hidden meaning of his mother's yearning caress, and answered it with a crowing laugh, or a struggle to be free.

——"A simple child
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?"

And therefore her only resource was to talk with McKenzie; talk her heart out freely and fully to him who had looked on death, as near, not far away, and looked it in the face without blanching, as on the face of a friend. For him its mystery

was not clouded by fears nor dim with terrors that made his heart soft. He had the Christian's faith, which tells him just what death is, and what the other life is to be.

And so they had many a long talk under the trees in summer, or in front of the fire in winter evenings, their twilight reveries on themes, which some account most gloomy, but these two were not sad.

But did never a thought cross the heart of Gladys Morris as to the future of her child, left without a mother's care to the mercies of a cold world?

Yes, she thought of it often, with sorrow, but not with fear. In the first place, she did not think the world a cold world; in the second place, she believed that the winning confidence of her boy would find its way to the hearts of a band of savages; and lastly, she trusted in God. The only real sorrow, that ruffled the placid calm of her life, was Sydney's persistent effort to make her feel that life was of no value; that its joys were mere illusions, with which we cheated ourselves; its sorrows alone were real and permanent; and that a wise regard for our own happiness led but to one conclusion, namely, to stop playing the farce.

CHAPTER XII.

IT annoyed Sydney to have Gladys refer to his want of occupation. It seemed like a reflection upon him. He felt that it was beyond the province of a woman to suggest to a man what his occupation outside of his home should be. It argued, he thought, a want of appreciation, on her part, of his affection for her, and it suggested to him the possibility that she did not any longer find the same pleasure in his constant presence, as he found in being always by her side. She was, he said to himself, becoming absorbed in herself, and idolized her child, and did not appreciate his deeper and more earnest talk. Perhaps, she was not sufficiently intellectual to sympathize thoroughly with the more subtle aspects of his nature. Indeed he once suggested to her that, if she had shown a greater interest in his deeper trains of thought, and a higher intellectual culture, it might have developed in him a keener zest for a literary life.

But, with all this endeavor to make his wife share, in part, the responsibility of his idle life, he was

very uneasy under any allusion, even the most remote, to his want of occupation. But his restive impatience did not stay Gladys' hand. She knew it was for his good. How familiar this sentence became to Sydney. And familiar and trite it may sound to you, my reader, who have a wife good, true, and devoted to your highest interest, not content with making you a comfortable old Turk, and becoming the receptacle for all your growlings at the world in general, but intent on changing you, and improving you, and making you a man to be proud of—a man that any woman might be glad to call her husband.

But Sydney resented her criticisms, as the fruit not of affection, but of a purpose to sit in judgment on his character and conduct.

There was no pursuit that offered him the attraction of an adequate scope for his powers. He scorned the incipient stages by which progress is attained in any profession. He could not brook the delays that lay in his path to success.

With his inclination toward lofty aim and high endeavor he set himself the alluring task of becoming an investigator of nature's more recondite processes.

He deluded himself with the idea that the real stimulus to this line of study was his desire to find some hidden means, hitherto undiscovered, of

thwarting Gladys' fatal malady. He fitted up for himself in the city, where he could be free from the petty interruptions of trivial household and family affairs, a sort of study and laboratory, with a sleeping-room adjoining, where he could prosecute his studies in chemistry and biology, and could reach, by exhaustive analysis, a solution of questions that science, as yet, had but touched upon.

But his studies were merely a desultory sort of tampering with these hidden mysteries; they had no real and definite aim. And the aimless life which he was leading, even without the sting of Gladys' frequent appeals to him, was growing very irksome. He needed a stimulus, and finding none within his own nature or surroundings, he fell into the snare which always lies baited for the bitter in spirit or the weary in heart, and awaiting the footsteps of the unwary loiterer by the way; he sought an artificial stimulus.

And nature has supplied one exactly suited to the needs of the pessimist. One in which there is no glowing warmth of the mellow old wine that gladdens the heart, but does not madden the brain; there is in it no wealthy and generous juice of grape or apple, nor of any fruit ripened in summer suns, and holding the treasured warmth of many a bright day, clustered in mellow sweetness, and well ripened in the cool autumn air; none of these juices

of nature enter into this decoction. It is distilled from wormwood, the type of bitterness, and is heavy and sickly in flavor, and basks in the glass, glittering green in color, like the small, dull eye of a venomous snake. And when the skilled hand prepares it for the drinker, it is cooled over broken ice, and the lighter and more poisonous portion is drained off.

It is the drink of the student of the Latin Quarter, this green madness. And the gamblers at Monaco and Baden Baden were wont to turn from the fierce, exhausting heat of the gaming tables to sip this fiery stimulus. It is called absinthe, which means absence of all delight.

Its special power is to stimulate the bump of destructiveness, if there be such a bump in the ready catalogue of phrenology. But, wherever in the brain its special point of lodgment may be, this craving to destroy is its outcome in human action, this power to urge men on to the mad demolition of whatever they can lay their hands upon.

And, true to the impetus which it gives to men's actions, it plays the same role with their vital powers. Its destructive impulse assails the mental faculties, and under its baneful influence men become drivelling idiots—idiots of the most revolting type—grinning, gibbering, slavering imbeciles, in feeble despair, gnashing at their own impotency, any

longer, to destroy. Fortunately for the world, it generally sends its devotees to suicide before they reach their full development.

But to Sydney there was a charm in this essence of wormwood. It was the drink of the brilliant wits of Paris, the stimulus of their bright epigrams and *bon-mots*.

The common herd could not endure it. Its office was to kindle wit, and fire genius, and make men as Gods.

And so he was drifting into a wide, wild sea, and current and counter-current would whirl him to the East and to the West, to the North and to the South, and at last, perchance, to the unfathomable depths beneath.

He was oftener, and longer, away from home, at his "den" in the city. He would come back haggard, and pale, and worn.

To Gladys' wistful inquiry, he would make petulant answer, that he was busy with his researches and studies. This was, at least, half the truth, and with this she had to content herself; but she knew that there was something more behind it, but did not dare try to find out what it was that lurked in the shadow of the background.

All his studies and researches now tended to one point: 'How can a man best lay down his life?'

He had brooded over the thought of suicide until it held him with a fascination, like a spell.

It was not the mere extinction of life that so enthralled his mind. That was the gross, the brutal side of the matter. He aimed at the slow extinction, one by one, of those vital powers which, to him, were only avenues of suffering. He would leave this life conscious, and have full possession of his mental powers, as, one by one, the fatal bands were loosed that bound him to this body of death. He would, with his own hand, strike off the fetters, and see them fall, and be conscious of his freedom, as it came upon him.

It was suicide, considered as a fine art, that he contemplated. To this end, he studied the subtle principle of life as he found it manifested in himself. Its genesis he believed that he had fathomed. It was a molecular arrangement, similar to that of the crystal. When this was disturbed the crystal would become partially opaque, and if wholly disarranged, no rays of light would be transmitted.

In its perfect form, it would transmit the rays unhindered, and to the degree that it was imperfect, the resistance of the rays, in passing, would generate heat and electricity. And, in the body, this resistance of its substance to the transmission of the rays of life was, what we designate pain.

With this purpose in view he studied all those

methods by which animation is temporarily suspended, to discover by what means he would be able to pass, by sensible degrees, out of the present form of existence, into the new and higher form of life.

He had recourse first of all to nitrous oxide, as the most familiar agent for a speedy lapse into unconsciousness, and a quick return of the vital powers.

As the dense, sweetish gas began to gain its sway over heart and brain with soft, soothing influence, he felt a dreamy exhilaration, the motions of a subtle ecstasy pervading his whole being, and, as he was preparing to scrutinize his sensations, the light of consciousness suddenly went out; and he felt himself falling, with an immeasurable velocity, into an abysmal depth; full of a vast, deep horror, and a darkness that could be felt, and unutterable anguish; and as he groaned in spirit, over the abhorrent darkness of the pit, he awoke from the anæsthetic influence and declared this to be the very purgatory of the Romish theology.

And he rejected this, as a medium of suicide, as being one which precipitated a crisis of horror, in which the sum of the misery of living is concentrated in the effort to cast off life.

Then he made a careful study of what loss of blood the human frame could endure. And, having studied the pathology of death from loss of

blood, he took up with the theory that the life was in the blood, and, hence, that the gentle loss of blood would let life lapse slowly, and imperceptibly into death, and would leave the seat of consciousness untouched, to the last. And so he opened one of the veins of the forearm, and watched the great drops of the warm, fluid life fall, one by one, like the first big drops of the summer thunder-shower.

But he had not counted on the foretaste of death that fell upon him,—the dizziness, the deathly nausea, the horrible faintness, in which he seemed to be sinking away from life. It was not this life that was ebbing away from him, but he himself was dying. His head whirled, and a discordant singing filled his ears, his eyes grew dim, he was in an agony of weakness. And he forbore to prosecute this strange inquiry of death, after this method.

Then he tried hashish, the far-famed Indian weed. Under the influence of this he seemed to enter into a dim immensity so diffused that a horror as of annihilation seized upon him.

There were forms about him, but so vast that they were formless to his perception, and a sense as of the eternal confines of space stretched, illimitable, around him; and he was an atom, hurried across trackless plains of the universe, pursuing, in vain chase, his own identity. And the vast-

ness grew, and the immensity stretched out, around him, and above him, and beneath him, in vast aisles and corridors, with arches that never met, resting on columns whose height and length and breadth the eye could not measure, and out of the dim immensity, and, filling all space, came a thin, penetrating voice, like the voice of a lost child, making his ears tingle and the hair of his flesh creep, asking the heart-rending question, to which there seemed to be no answer, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

And he awoke; and the conditions of any life, in which he could know and measure his relation to the things that were about him, seemed better than wandering, a lost atomy, in the dim wastes of immensity.

And next he took the fascinating drug, which marshalled before the great opium-eater the serried hosts of dreams, and the "dread revelations that are in dreams," and lifted him to heights and plunged him into depths, that lie on the outermost confines of what the heart of man can conceive or the language of men describe.

But the dreams that filled the soul of Sydney Morris were not of moving majesty and glowing splendor, of "palaces and domes of pleasure," of damsels with dulcimers, nor of music as of a great organ, and anthems chanted by choirs in vast ca-

thedral spaces, but they were of dim vanishings, and dark forebodings, and awful suffering, and ineffectual struggles, vain wrestlings with Norns and Furies and writhing serpents, with all the grim and ghastly forms by which men have pictured sorrow and sin and failure and despair. And when he awoke, the light of life was sweet to him.

He had sought the use of these potent drugs, not as they are appointed of God for our use, a balm for bodily pain, to give us surcease from physical suffering. But he, with his mind poisoned by the asp of Pessimism, had sought, in a spirit of reckless daring, to use them to lift the veil that has been suspended between the seen and the unseen; and he had found that they had the power merely to intensify our mental states, whatever they might be, by abstracting the mind almost wholly from the influence of surrounding objects.

To the poet they bring dreams; to the dreamer, visions of a wider scope,—the clod they leave insensible,—and to the pessimist they summoned visions of unutterable woe.

Like the unhallowed incantations of the Witch of Endor, who pressed the recreant king's unwarranted inquiry for the prophet,—the revelation came, but it was an awful one, and the reply was a declaration of overwhelming disaster, and life looked to Sydney like Saul's battle on Gilboa. The an-

swer which nature returned to the pessimist was, 'The life that is to come, is the life that has been, in its fruitage.'

His only answer to this was, 'It is a lie. I have not found the true solvent;—the affinity is too strong. I will yet resolve life into its elemental form and know what, under every form of life, is the essence of life.'

But his heroic resolution to penetrate the mystery of life and death, did not carry him so far as to make a personal test of the deadly poisons. He was content to gain his knowledge of them from books. We must not look for heroism in the pessimist.

But, on the other hand, it did lead him to heavier potations of absinthe, and the poison of it was eating into heart and brain. He became, as the drinkers of absinthe do, irritable, and was full of a ready cynicism. He declared, in lordly terms, as though it were somewhat to plume himself upon, 'That the first thought that rose to his lips was always a sneer.' And so he took his pleasure in this form—a very cheap form, a very easy one in which to be (or to appear to be) smart beyond measure. For, alas! for the credit of our poor humanity, it is so easy to be disagreeable, so easy to sneer at our fellow-men, if thus we be inclined. And so Sydney called men 'fools,' and joined with

David, in his haste, and said they were 'all liars.' And he sneered again, when McKenzie said, "Hoot, mon, are ye a liar? And was David a liar? And if so, what becomes of your assertion?"

But Sydney was not prepared to argue; he was of the class of philosophers who assert, and by confident assertion, confirm themselves in their own convictions.

There was still enough left of the wreck of his affections to stay his hand from lifting itself against Gladys.

He still believed in her true affection for him. He still had a glimmering appreciation of her love for their little boy. But he despised the simple nature of her father, as contemptible in a man; and he was afraid of McKenzie.

There was a swift strength with which the old man would lay hold of him, not rough, but unsparing in the scathing exposure of his follies; and absinthe had made a coward of him.

Lately he had absented himself, on Sunday. The day was very wearisome to him, in the quiet country, and he was, more or less, discomfited by McKenzie's trenchant handling of his vaporings. He could silence Mr. Elliott; and Gladys, though brave, was an unequal match for his bold assertions. From her he could always take refuge in an ambush of vague technical terms, which he knew she did not

understand. But with McKenzie it was different. The old man would beat the bush and hunt him out of his covert into the open.

"I know little of your mouth-fillin' words, and my jaws are no' elastic to compass them; but I ken a lie when I hear it, and you've been delvin' deep to raise a full crop, I ween."

As Sydney was always lauding Schopenhauer, as the high-priest of the new creed, McKenzie quietly spent his evenings in the study of the life and philosophy of this "Princeling of Darkness," as he called him.

At the next mention of his name, he startled Sydney by pouring out of the vials of his wrath.

"And ye are led by this sage of a mildewed town? A man whose family are confessed to have lived on the 'frontiers of insanity,' and which, for two generations, had furnished mad men and women enough to stock an asylum. And by all accounts he was the maddest of the tribe, and devised the philosophy that his father endorsed, by dumping himself from his warehouse into the canal. And he secures you to follow him downward by tellin' you that 'no man who is religious can become a philosopher, and no man who is a philosopher can be religious.' And all this mixed with stuff too filthy to bear repeatin'. Ah! he was a braw philosopher, and he taught you that the sum of what the Chris-

tian religion had to tell us of life was, that it is a 'vale of tears.' Na wonder, is it, if he were such a mole as this, he did na wish to be religious."

Sydney was thoroughly upset by such attacks. He had swallowed greedily the reckless assertions which are used to maintain the pessimist's view of life; he knew nothing of the deeper truths that lay on the other side of the question; and he could not face them without flinching.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE Saturday in early October, McKenzie came out to render Sydney his quarterly report, and they spent the morning discussing investments and the management of the property, with Gladys sitting by; for McKenzie was anxious that she should know, and, as far as possible, understand his management of their affairs; holding this to be, at once, the right and the duty of every wife, to know something of her husband's affairs.

After lunch, they sat on the southwest porch of the house, where the shelter and the sun still made it prudent to linger in the open air. The day was bright, and still, cool, and clear; the lambent air was soft, and sweet with the generous smell compounded of the mellowness of ripened fruits and late flowers. Through the clear atmosphere the sounds of insects and of falling nuts came resonant, and startled the sabbatic stillness.

The whole atmosphere was charged with light, and the far hills were near at hand, and every sense was quickened to hear, and see, and feel, the vivid power of the fading year.

It was one of those days that touch and quicken

every phase of life. To the old they seem to give a "sober coloring to the eye," and are "the melancholy days, the saddest of the year," in which they hear the wailing of the wind, and see the flowers fade, and feel that death is near.

But its cool air touches and quickens the pulses of the young, and *they* feel full of life and springing vigor and freshness; and they see the glories of the autumn bloom, and the trees crowned with splendor, and taste the ripe grape, the juicy pear, and the rosy apple, and they feel that they are reaping, and the harvest is a joyful one.

The little Sydney was playing on the lawn, and for him the days were not sad, for the nuts were falling from the big chestnut-tree, which stood in front of the house.

And merrily he peeped under the fallen leaves, and grubbed in the half-open, prickly burrs, and, with his sharp, little eyes dancing with glee, and his deft, fidgety fingers, he extracted the brown beauties. He brought them, one by one, triumphantly, and distributed them with precise and grave impartiality to each of his friends on the porch; but always the largest and best ones were for his mother.

How differently these five persons looked on life, through the tinting of that October day.

Mr. Elliott sat dreamily feasting his eyes on the

living color, which had touched and glorified every tree and shrub, and which put to shame the dull pigments with which men try to make the canvas tell the same story. What riot there seemed, and yet what keeping in the picture, so that no contrast jarred, but all were blended to a soft, sweet harmony. It was the swan-like cadence of the dying year.

He felt that the eye could bear no more of beauty than this, and he said softly to himself, "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."

Gladys was content that her dear world was gathered by her side. A love, like the warm autumn sun, was shedding its wealth of blessedness upon her life. Her father was happy and content; McKenzie was a shield between their household and the cares of life; and that small boy, the epitome of her bliss, was full of all the health, and buoyancy, and winsomeness of early childhood, just beginning to know and feel the blessings of the love that clustered round his life.

And for the time, in "calm seasons of fair weather" like this, the shadow was lifted from her life, and she forgot, for the moment, the cloud that was below the horizon.

For the little fellow it was simply nutting-time, and that, for the nonce, filled his small head and hands with busy joy.

McKenzie glowed like ripe fruit, bright, juicy, sweet, and ready to be gathered.

Sydney sat by in silence, one of the group, but, at heart, not of them. Into his life there had entered a premature decay. The worm was at the core; the fruit was fair, but it was hollow. The soft, fresh air and sunshine fell upon his face and warmed his blood, but did not touch his heart.

They sat thus, for some time, talking little, falling into easy chat, as the little child led them.

Mr. Elliott rose, and, as he lingered, waiting to be gone, said softly, "How the year is crowned with exceeding beauty, as the summer says 'Goodbye,' and sends us indoors, to live the fireside life, and draw near to one another beside the hearth, while the cold without heightens the cheer within."

"Aye! aye!" said McKenzie, as though in reverie, "God is good, and the world is fair."

Mr. Elliott strolled slowly into the studio, and Gladys, having captured the young nut-gatherer, led him into the house, leaving McKenzie and Sydney smoking on the porch.

After a short silence, Sydney spoke in answer to Mr. Elliott's remark. "It is well enough for those who can content themselves with a mere surface view of things, to prate of the autumn glory. I fail to see glory in rotting leaves. Their color is, merely, incipient decay; and the sorry crown, made

of such stuff, withers before you can fairly weave it. It is strange that men can pass through this life blindfold to the truth, but open-eyed to every gaudy cheat that reiterates the universal lie, stamped on every atom of the universe. And it is all the more amazing to me, when I see that, all along the lines of literature, thoughtful men, poets, sages, and prophets, have been telling the truth to the world, and exposing the 'fleeting show for man's illusion given,' and yet, like tired children, they traipse after the cheap show."

McKenzie answered quietly, "It is easy to make up your mind to a theory, and then give a summary of literature manufactured from a line here and there to sustain it, and, if a man writes a few sad lines, set him down as an advocate of pessimism.

"It is easy, but not fair. It is easy to warp the truths of all religions, until every hope of a blessed hereafter is garbled into a belief in annihilation, or relegated to the sphere of idle dreams.

"It is easy, but not true.

"It is easy to play with the great, sad problems of the presence of evil and the mission of sorrow, and pervert religious teachings, until they all fade into the gloom of pessimism.

"It is easy, but it is false to God and man.

"It is easy to say that a being more intelligent

than man could not exist, because he would think life too deplorable to be borne for a moment.

"It is easy, but it contradicts all that we know of men, who, as they rise in intelligence and goodness, do not fall into any such belief. The minds that lead humanity are not the pessimists."

"It is scarce worth the wasted breath," said Sydney in a listless way, "merely to confirm the self-evident truth that your idea of the world differs from mine. After all, the whole miserable business is a mere idea, and to dismiss it is the height of common-sense."

"And by what course of reasoning," said McKenzie, "will you persuade me to give the lie to every sense of my body and faculty of my mind, and contradict the universal sense of mankind, barrin' a daft moiety, who paddle round and round in their idealistic puddle, and make some splash to be sure, but leave no mark on the world's thought, after all?"

"The proof," retorted Sydney, curtly, "is a very simple one, for those who have the philosophic imagination, and freedom from vulgar errors."

"Thank ye," said McKenzie with a smile nearly broad enough to be called a laugh. "I am afflicted with neither of those complaints. But, after that touching exordium, I will be pleased to hear you elucidate how the whole world, includin' the pres-

ent disputants and their talk, are but an empty idea. Well, my lad philosopher, almost thou persuadest me to believe that thou sayest true. But disclose it to me."

Sydney knit his brow, and beat a devil's tattoo on the arm of his chair.

"Without descending to any personalities," he said, in a tone, meant to be cutting, but whose edge was turned by McKenzie's good humor, "I would suggest that the proof of my assertion is a short and easy one. We are capable of three perceptions, time, space, and causality. Everything happens in time, or is contained in space, and exists by virtue of a cause adequate to produce it.

"Now these are the absolute conditions in which we are bound to think of all things as occurring, and without which nothing could be. But these are merely ideas, and have no reality, save in our conceptions."

"I will tell ye summat, which perchance ye never knew, or may be ye have clean forgot it," said McKenzie in answer to this. "Your argument is far too good, for it proves what ye wad na care to believe. If the world be but an idea, will ye tell me by what remarkable process such agreement comes to pass, amang so mony men of mony minds, that simmer and winter, seed-time and harvest come back at the same time, and all men are made

to concur in having the idea that 'tis warm or cold, 'tis day or night?

"And, beside our notions of time and space, you have left out of view the wide field in which the deeper side of our nature reveals itself, and where we see what is in a man, and which has more to do in forming his life, for happiness or misery, than all that he can see with his eyes or handle with his hands. Time has nought to do with these, they are eternal truths; space has nought to do with them; they are true if we ascend to heaven or go down to hell. They are the point of contact of the infinite and the finite, and have nought to do with our limitations.

"And you have forgotten the broad field in which our knowledge is immediate (innate ideas some have called them), when the mere statement convinces the well-balanced mind of the truth. Nay, my mon, ye canna rob us of our consciousness. We must know that; nor can ye tak' away the sense of truth that comes to us from our immediate perception of the things we see and feel, and the intuition of primal truths, and the assurance that comes from the fact that all men see as we see, and know as we know. You see, mon, it canna make itself credible, such stuff.

"Ye may twist your head into a tangle of words, which will lead ye to say such things are true, but

believe them in sooth ye canna, if ye would. The soul revolts against the treachery to its own nature, e'en as the stomach will reject unhealthy stuff with which the appetite may try to cram it.

"And, when ye have well stirred up this unseemly revolt among the faculties of your own soul, and have said to consciousness, you are a liar; and to sense-perception, you are a deceiver; and to conscience, you are a snare; their answer is simply to tell you that you are a fool; and that you are come as a traitor who has entered the camp only to kill and rob and destroy. Aye, Sydney, it is a great proverb, 'Be true to thyself.'"

"Stale proverbs," retorted Sydney, "that have been well-worn in being handed around for wisdom, are hardly worth dragging into a serious discussion. But, to take your proverb and give it an intelligible application, I would suggest that it is impossible for a man to be anything but true to himself. I recognize but one force in nature, and that force is will. This has been wrongly viewed as the act of an intelligent person, by which he becomes self-determining and exercises freedom of choice. But this is a travesty, a phantasm of true will. Will is that pervading, unconscious force, which inheres in all the universe, and determines all action. Chemical affinities are its simplest form of expression, and by it the plant selects its nutriment, the animal its

food, and man the gratification of his desires. In all it operates alike, to determine, by its own inherent force, just what the selection, in every case, will be."

McKenzie threw in:

"Then call it by anither name, mon. Ye are degradin' the very speech of man, to stir the mud in your pool. This is no will that ye are tellin' of. There is no element of will in it, at all. It is robbing the world of God, and robbing man of the image of God, in which he was made. He has little enough left of it, and not a jot to spare. Ye are deprivin' man of the power to tak' the good that God gi'es him."

"I tell you, Mr. McKenzie, we are too far apart to argue," said Sydney. "We have no common starting-point, and can never come to an understanding. God gives men no good, and cannot give it to them. What man has of good is a mere alms thrown to the beggar, to prolong his misery. Life can be no more than a restless pain, with only two phases, want and *ennui;* the one for the lower, and the other for the upper classes. And so it must be, for desire can be lulled only by gratification, and, though sated, returns again with keener edge to appetite, and so on, in endless round, until satiety has killed it, and the worn-out mortal grieves inanely that he can no longer burn with desire."

"Perhaps," answered McKenzie, sadly, "perhaps what you say is all too true,—we canna reason together. And you tell me 'tis because we canna stand side by side, and tak' the same start. To me the trouble seems, that we are seeking a different end. Lang ago, when I was a young mon, just ending my course at Edinburgh, I went to spend a year at the University of Halle. There I used often to see and talk with a philosopher whose name has become famous the world over. And when I left, he wrote his name in my album, and a line, which, he said, embodied the great lesson of the ages. It was a line from the great Bishop of Hippo: 'Lord, Thou hast made the heart, and therefore it is restless, until it finds rest in Thee.' And good George Herbert has it thus:

> "'Let him be rich and weary,
> So that if goodness lead him not,
> Yet weariness may toss him to my breast.'

Sydney Morris, ye are seekin' to find all in self and in gratifyin' selfish desire; I am seekin' to find God and peace wi' Him. I have found it, Sydney, and ye have not found your quest; and, I fear me, the findin' would ill reward the toil of the search. Oh, Sydney, my son, my son, *canna* ye turn from your dead phantoms and see the livin' God afore

your een—oh! my lad, *canna* ye turn from the grim shadows and see the gracious Saviour?"

It was a strong, but unavailing plea; strong in its love, its yearning over this young man; strong in its firm conviction and assurance of the ground on which he stood; strong in the assurance which had found religion a sufficient guide and stay, that could say, "I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep me." But, to Sydney, it was an old man's feeble prattle, who had succeeded in deluding himself into the belief that he was happy, when in truth he was miserable. It was the way of the world, he thought, of all such as leave others to do their thinking for them, and are content to go in leading-strings all their life. Nothing led him; he was going his own way, to his own place.

"It may not be that I shall have many a chance to tell you what I have learned in a long life," said McKenzie, sadly, "and I would fain have ye profit by my experience."

He had never told one of this little circle what he had known for more than a year past, that his days on earth were numbered. He had received the announcement with unruffled calmness, and determined not to speak of it to any one. And yet he knew that, at any hour, he might be called away, almost without notice, and that a year longer of

life would be more than the average man, stricken as he was, could expect. But he moved about, unaffected by the near prospect, and needed not to ask for sympathy, and would not distress those who loved him with needless pain.

"I have listened," he added, "to all that you have had to say, and now do you hear some words from me. Ye have opened to me your view of life, and a sorry one it looks, to my eyes; and now have patience to hear mine. To me it seems that life is more than the environment of life. Even with the vegetable, life is the power to assimilate and gain growth out of the circumstances that surround it. For an example: the oak tree, and the peach tree, when planted on the same windy hillside, will show you that the rough soil and the storms, which stimulate the oak to a sturdy growth, will dwindle and sicken the peach tree. Life is the power to draw strength and sweetness, flower and fruit from our surrounding circumstances. And, therefore, if life is an affliction, it is we who make it such. Life is the innate and inalienable endowment of powers which enable us to be what we choose to be, good or bad, happy or miserable.

"The character of our powers mark our rank in the scale of being. One set of powers classify the creature as a plant; another, and wider set, place him in the category of animals, and a still higher

range of powers place him in the rank of self-determining free spirits. Man, being endowed with a dual set of powers, ranks as both an animal and a free spirit.

"His life is a thing apart from his environment, and no surroundings can degrade him, save by a figure of speech, from a man to a beast.

"It is easy to take the word life, in the false sense of the circumstances or accidents of life, to picture these as uniformly unfortunate, and then say that life is misery. Misfortune may produce that fruit in some lives, but in others it brings forth love, and joy, and gentleness, and peace that passeth understanding, which the world cannot give, and cannot take away.

"A friend of my youth, in my dear auld ain countrie, wrote some lines that have ever bided in my heart, and they sing themselves to one of our auld Scottish airs:

"'Confide ye aye in Providence, for Providence is kind,
And bear ye a' life's changes wi' a calm and tranquil mind;
Though pressed and hemmed on every side, ha'e faith, and ye'll win through,
For ilka blade o' grass keps its ain drap o' dew.

'In lang, lang days o' simmer, when the clear and cloudless sky,
Refuses ae wee drap o' rain to nature parched and dry,

The genial night, wi' balmy breath, gars verdure spring anew,
And ilka blade o' grass keps its ain drap o' dew.'"

His voice grew rich and tender, and the tone was low and full, as he recited the song, to the accompaniment of the autumn breeze, which was musical in the fluttering leaves. And, at the close, he added, still more softly, as though it were a refrain echoing in his heart, "He shall come down like dew upon the mown grass."

Sydney was silent, like one who stands at the church gate, unwilling to enter, and yet not daring to interfere with the worship of those who are within.

The afternoon was waning. He was thoroughly uncomfortable, and did not relish the prospect of spending the next day at home, with McKenzie in this mood. He rose, and telling him that he had some work on hand in the city, and might be detained till late at night, and, if he were, to please say to Gladys that he would not return until Monday: he left the house, and turned his back, for the last time, on the friend of his better days, who had watched over him from early boyhood, and who loved him, as his own flesh and blood, and who mourned for him, as David mourned for Absalom.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next day found the three, Mr. Elliott, Gladys, and McKenzie, with the little boy, together for the last time.

The fair weather held over another day, to shed its mellow light on their last day on earth together, and make the memory of it one of lingering sweetness.

They drove down the broad main street of the village to the brown-stone church, with its tapering, sky-pointing spire. The rich sunshine streamed in through the stained-glass windows, and made the church look warm and full of light, and the soft organ prelude set the air palpitating with music that could be felt. Without was splendor and within was peace.

McKenzie was almost startled when the preacher took for his text, "Is not the life more than meat?" He showed them how, in simple language and with homely illustration, fit for the minds to whom it first was spoken, yet this was, in fact, the comprehensive statement of the profound truth, that man is greater than his environment; and that the environment was made for man, and not man for the

environment. And, as he closed, he thrilled McKenzie with his earnest tone, as he said, "Would to God that I could lay my hand upon the throbbing pulse of yonder city, full of toiling men, and allay the fever of their heart and brain with the balm of this truth, 'The life is more than meat.'"

As they rode home they were very quiet, as those who have been brought face to face with penetrating truth, are apt to be. They spent the day in the happy fellowship of those who truly love one another.

And in this circle, nay, the very centre of the circle, with a radius to each one's heart, was the little Sydney; and they were the circumference, which he kept in a whirl, for his own particular delight. They watched his every movement; they listened to, and laughed at all his small sayings; they fell in with his varied imaginings, however wild they might be; they cheered all his small efforts in athletics, and especially the crowning feat of jumping from the porch steps, with great effort of swinging of arms, and elaborate preparation and balancing of himself for the daring leap. They clapped him as he returned, panting, from a foot-race to the front gate and back.

McKenzie outdid himself in efforts to amuse the youngster, and was rewarded more than ten-fold for all his exertions, when the winning little chap would

throw his arms around the old man's neck, and squeeze him with all the might and main of childish affection, accompanied with an irrepressible "*Dear* dan-pa Mac."

The old man's happiness would fairly ooze out at the eyes, and he was fully paid in the best coin of the realm.

Long did the memory of that day recur to Gladys, again and again, and shed its perfume about her heart, as an odor which summons to "the sessions of silent thought" a fond remembrance.

They were so glad together; they were so at one in heart and thought. Mr. Elliott drew very near to McKenzie on this day; and the little boy was, more than he had ever been before, inclined to nestle closely in McKenzie's arms, and stroke him fondly with his soft, childish hands, and listen with his deep, violet eyes wide open, to the stories of the days when *he* was a little boy, way across the wide, blue sea, and had a Scotch nurse, with a big white frilled cap round her face, who told him nursery tales, and crooned Scotch ditties to him about the little folk; such as

"Wee Willie Winkie
Rins through the toun."

And when

"Tirlin' at the window
Cryin' at the lock,"

was illustrated in pantomime, on the eyes and mouth of this 'caller bairn,' it was always welcomed with a chuckle of laughter; and

"Rattlin' in an airn jug
Wi' an airn spoon,"

was another distich that received a highly realistic illustration, with a bunch of keys, and was watched for as one of the crowning points of this delicious poem. And the climax:

"But ae kiss frae aff his rosy lips
Gi'es strength anew to me,"

always received the same illustration; and ere the line was reached there were the little round, red lips, puckered into a veritable rosebud, and pouting out ready for the real kiss, and the little eyes blinking shut, in anticipation of a brush from the bristling mustache.

Measured by the flight of years, these two were a long way off from each other; measured by the true law of life, they were very near together; for the old man had become as a little child.

Mr. Elliott and Gladys sat by, and watched them with a still delight, such as steals over every sense, when we sit idly listening to the song of birds, or while away uncounted moments, on a grassy bank,

with a purling brook at our feet, and take no note of time, nor count it lost.

There were endless diversions at McKenzie's command to set the young master in a merry mood, and keep him there; games that he played, with the little flexible fingers, and rhymes that were set to match them, with little surprises and starts and jumps, in the appreciation of which, these youngsters show the first symptoms of the universal human trait of the love of a genuine sensation.

McKenzie would have poor Mr. and Mrs. Jones, on their flimsy couch of wooden toothpicks interlaced, so that the match being applied to one corner, and the feeble flame, slowly burning, riveted the gaze until the appointed moment came when the fire reached the mimic bedpost (to wit, the intersection of two toothpicks), when, with a violent jerk, up flew slim Mrs. Jones and slimmer Mr. Jones, and were saved from burning only by this rude awakening.

There was always a neat little story of Mr. and Mrs. Jones' previous life, telling just how they felt, and just what they said, when they went to bed. And woe be it, if in thought, speech, or behavior they varied one jot or tittle from what they had always said and done before.

As the tale had once been told, so must it ever

be, at each recital; for these wee folk will not bear to have any rude liberties taken with an old acquaintance.

But, on this day, a new and delightful element had been added to the story. Jones and his wife had not been interfered with in the least; but there had been an addition to the family of six young Joneses, and these were all cradled, in the repose of guileless innocence, in similar life-saving beds, alongside of their devoted parents. The house took fire; at once the flames reached the corners of the four beds.

With what delight young Sydney capered round as the match was being set to the couch of the sleeping innocents, and then stood, in his kilts, leaning forward with a hand on each knee, bending, with rapt gaze, to watch for the elevation of the whole family, his eyes glistening with excitement, and his lips parted for a scream. Oh! it was rare fun, and it would be hard to say which enjoyed it most.

He could recite child-stories in verse, and introduce a life and action into them, which was better than a book full of glowing pictures. And he could bring out the children of the Bible and make them live and talk, like real children, and take them into the very life that this child was living.

And, when these stories had all been told, his

treasure-house was not yet emptied. He could take two handkerchiefs, and, knotting one end of each over the forefinger of each hand, and using the middle finger and thumb under the folds for two hands with which to gesture, he would make two funny little preachers; and one would talk in a gruff bass, and the other in a piping treble; and the two little fellows would nod and gesture at each other, and fall to debating, and rise, by quick degrees, to a squabble, and end in a rough-and-tumble fight, in which one was sure to lose his peaked hat and white surplice, and stand revealed for the little humbug that he really was all along, only it was hidden under his white surplice.

Then he would wrap up his handkerchief in a tight little roll, and there it was, a veritable white rabbit, with two long ears and a neat little tail. It would lie quiet on McKenzie's forearm until Sydney reached out his hand to pat it, then, oh! what a jump it gave, that went through Sydney like an electric shock. They always had great work taming it, so that it would let Sydney touch it; but at last, after very cautious approaches, and very gentle words, and little pathetic pleadings on the part of the little fellow, it was always, finally, subdued;—and then, alas! it lost its charm. It was ever so much fun to chase, but it was very tame, after it was caught.

He could make Jack and Jill come and go at will. He could tear up a piece of tissue paper into small bits, roll them tightly into a little ball, unroll it, and lo! the torn paper was all whole again. And, best of all, he needed no begging and never was tired of fun.

"It comes ower me again, how *I* was a bairn, when this bairn tak's me into his fold; and the time is nigh when I maun think o' bein' a bairn again," he would say, and laugh softly to himself.

Surely, if it were love which this old man sought as the treasure of life, then he, a stranger in the land, far from the home of his childhood, with neither kith nor kin, to whom he could turn for succor in an hour of need,—if love made up to him for the loss of all these, then had he won it, in a golden abundance.

It would be hard to say which of these three took him with the most whole-hearted affection into their lives, as their own, Gladys or the painter or the child; to each he was theirs, their very own.

My cynical friend, I catch the sneer, waiting on your lips, to pronounce this a typical exhibition of inane folly. Well, then I pray, let folly be my wisdom.

As for Sydney Morris, he had turned his back on this scene, as he would have turned away his heart from it, if he had been present.

He had spent his Saturday evening in a restless, aimless kind of study, and closed it with potations of absinthe. He had risen to meet the beautiful October Sunday, with every nerve ajar to nature, and averse to anything that nature had to offer him. He spent the day reading an unhealthy book, "The Truth about Timothy Sauermilch," which pictured, in salacious style, the story of a man who had married a young woman, and found that his hasty choice, from his ill-assorted companionships, had endowed him with a wife, not only unworthy to be his wife, but unfit for association before his marriage. And this was held up as the typical result to be expected from marriage, disappointment in one guise or another, and from the known falsity of women, especially to be looked for in this phase.

Sydney had not the grace to see that his own married life, and that of all his friends, nailed this lie, and that such a picture was realized only by those, whose more than doubtful associations were alone to blame, if that was their view of woman's purity and constancy.

But he must needs gloat over the prurient stuff as true to life, and assume that his freedom from a like experience was exceptional, and lay the unction to his soul that, after all, his marriage was a cheat, through the discovery of Gladys' fatal malady.

Ah! no, he was not to be outdone by the paltry matter of a wife's unfaithfulness; he too had his sore, and he would hold it up, and ask the charity of the world's commiseration. And so he sat and nursed and hugged his grief; and grief begot bitterness, and bitterness malice, and malice wrath, and wrath hatred of life and its turmoil, and he turned for grace and strength and consolation,—to absinthe.

So the Sunday evening came, and the night dropped her curtains, and the stars great and small came out, and the full-orbed moon rose slowly out of the sea, and her light fell in through the big bay-window and discovered Mr. Elliott and Gladys and McKenzie, sitting in gentle silence, broken now and again by ripples of kindly, pleasant chat; and the same moonlight fell through the narrow city window, athwart the cot on which Sydney Morris lay prone, where absinthe had cast him.

On Monday morning Gladys drove McKenzie down to the depot, and he kissed her and the little boy good-bye, she thought afterward, with unwonted tenderness.

He stood on the rear platform and waved his hand, in answer to the youngster's violent signals, with his own small pocket-handkerchief. He stood ruddy and stalwart, framed in the doorway of the car, as the train sped down the track out of sight,

the picture of a hale old age; and his smile was like a benediction, and his "good-bye," spoken in a broad Scotch accent, seemed to bring out the latent "God be wi' you."

She never saw his living face again; and she never forgot her last look at it.

Two days afterward there came a message, from his landlady to Mr. Elliott, asking him to come immediately to town, for that Mr. McKenzie had need of him.

She knew, from McKenzie, the whole story of the household, whom he loved, and she thought to shield Gladys from the shock.

But her plan miscarried wholly, for Gladys would not listen to the suggestion that she should stay at home. And so they hasted onward to the great city, so full of varied life, and of stories more strange than those in books, some sad, some gay, but all meaning so much to the few whose lives they touch, so little to the throng who hardly note whether it were a wedding or a funeral train that halted the stream of passers on the city's crossing.

They drove hurriedly to his lodgings, and were met by the landlady, a countrywoman of his, a widow, whom he had rescued from destitution and started her in a boarding-house, and had been her lodger ever since, and made it his care to keep her rooms full.

There was no need for her to tell them what had happened, her face told its tale of woe, plainer than speech. Gladys said never a word to the weeping woman. She did not dare to try to speak; she was deadly pale, and her breath came thick and fast, and she felt as if she could not possibly mount those stairs.

Her father and the landlady were terrified, but did not dare restrain her. Her father put his arm around her, and half carried her up-stairs, followed by the weeping landlady.

They entered the room, and there he lay, with his eyes closed, his lips half parted, and the remnant of a broken smile about them, which death had not snatched when it called the spirit from the clay. One hand lay outside the counterpane, and some sheets of paper, torn from a pad, were lying at one side, and a pencil under his right hand, where it had fallen from his fingers; the pillow was smooth and unruffled; the counterpane lay without a wrinkle.

"I left him preceese as we found him," said the landlady, "that ye, wham he loved better than a' the warld beside, might see, for your ain sel's, how gentle he was e'en whiles he wa' dyin'."

Gladys felt ashamed of the tears that were falling like summer rain down her cheeks, while Mr. Elliott sobbed like a child.

"Father," she said, turning to him, smiling through her tears, and throwing her arms round his neck, "my only father now, this is no place for tears. Here was his coronation; we can go home, and sorrow that we shall see his face no more; but here, father, we ought to rejoice with him."

Poor child, her faith was strong, but the flesh was weak; and even while she reproved her tears, they would fall.

But she did not weep for him; he had won, but she had lost one who was full of strength, and tenderness, and wise counsel, and deep sympathy. She felt very lonely, and she would have given almost any price to unseal those eyes, and catch their kindling glance; to unlock those lips, if only to hear them say once more, "Dear lassie."

Then the landlady told them the brief story. He had come home about four o'clock, and said he was not feeling well, and would go straight to bed, and would not need any supper. She had gone up to him, about supper-time, and found him lying quietly on his pillow, with his hands resting on the counterpane. The pad of paper and the pencil were in his hands, and the sheets, on which he had written, lying as they saw them now. His eyes were fixed on the western sky. Gladys remembered to have watched the sunset last evening. The sky was suffused with that "peculiar tint of yellow green," in

which hung suspended cloudy bars of royal purple, edged with gold, and it had called up the lines,

> "And you could almost think you gaze,
> Through golden vistas into heaven."

And that fading light had fallen in his eyes, and bathed his face with its gentle glow, and a look of peace rested on his features. The landlady had asked him then if he wanted anything, and gave him a cup of cold water, and, in answer to her further inquiry, came his cheery, "No, thank ye. I'm in want of naething. I doubt not I will sleep saft."

In the morning she came to ask what he would have for breakfast, and, receiving no answer to her soft knock, left him to finish his sleep.

Later, thinking that he ought to have some food, she went again to wake him, and, failing to rouse him by loud knocking at the door, opened it and came close to the bedside, and reached out her hand to touch him, before she knew that he was dead.

They gathered up the sheets of paper and found them without address; but there was no mistaking for whom they were intended, and what was the burden that rested last on this great heart. It was the final witness of a love that many waters could not quench, of a friendship faithful even unto death.

"I am stricken, they tell me, with a mortal sickness; but I am not in a bad way to leave this world. I have arranged all your affairs so that you will find little to worry you in the management of them. My family are in heaven, where I shall meet them. I have had a happy life, and I close it with a pleasant retrospect, and a joyful anticipation. They tell me I shall not suffer greatly in laying this mortality aside; and I am glad that I shall be conscious to the end. I would rather have my reason at the last, so as to say, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' It is a small matter, to be sure, but it will please me, if I can do it. I have nought more to say to you, but what I have often said face to face. I can wish you no more than what I myself enjoy and know how good it is, viz., peace with God and charity to all men. Good-night, laddie."

The sheets were lying on the counterpane, as they had fallen from his hand, and the lines were without a tremor.

God had closed his eyes, at some hour in the night-time that no man knew of, and they opened in the eternal light. There had been no struggle; he had simply "fallen on sleep," alone in the dark, like a tired child; "for so He giveth His beloved sleep."

They laid him to wait in the family plot of the

Morrises in Greenwood; and they placed a simple Scotch granite headstone, and carved on it the epitaph which he had once used in talking with the child:

"Here rests, in the peace of God,
ALEXANDER MCKENZIE,
of
Dunfermline town,
And the days of the years of his pilgrimage
were three-score years and ten."

The hardest task which fell to Gladys' lot was to tell her little boy that he would see the face of his old playmate no more.

And I spare you, my reader, the history of that first Sunday after the funeral, when Gladys and Mr. Elliott, alone in their home, tried to answer the questions and still the sobs of the little fellow, who could not understand why the angels would not spare his old playmate for a single day from heaven, when they had known him only a few days, and he had always known him; and there were so many angels, and he was all alone.

But his name was constantly on their lips, a household word, keeping in fond remembrance the life that they had shared with one another, and though they missed him, they did not mourn for him.

When the winter was past, and the spring had

come, and the warm May sun had quickened the pulses of all living things, and the soft breeze fluttered the young leaves, and the grass was tuneful on McKenzie's grave, she took the little boy to plant a bunch of daisies at the foot of his resting-place.

Above all flowers, McKenzie had loved the honest daisy. He used to say:

"They are the blended colors of heaven in the daisy; the gold of the streets of the city of God, fringed with the white of the garments of the blessed. They are the 'bairn' flowers, and, standin' straight on their stout stems, wi' their wee round faces lookin' up to heaven, they 'mind me always of a rout o' stumpie bairnies, that meet your gaze wi' an open fearless eye, that says to ye, 'If ye'll lo'e me, I'll lo'e you, honest and true'; and they gar me lo'e them, the sonsie sprites."

So, at his head was the gude Scotch granite; and at his feet was the true American daisy, and, between them, the grass grew fresh and green. It was all very simple, and without pretense; but so was he.

CHAPTER XV.

SYDNEY had followed McKenzie to the grave, along with Gladys and her father, like a grim spectre with no more of the true life of the soul in his face, or in his thoughts, than one of those dead knights, which our Norse forefathers used to set, armed cap-à-pie, at the head of the board, to stare at the living while they were feasting on a fare which he could neither eat nor drink. He had fortified himself with his usual solace to carry him through this ordeal.

On their return from Greenwood he declined to go back with them to the country, on the ground that he must stay in the city and look after business matters, which might demand immediate attention, in view of McKenzie's sudden death.

It would have been hard for Gladys to say whether she would rather have him stay, or go with them. If she had been called to declare her mind, she would unhesitatingly have asked him to come with them. Her love for him was not dead; on the contrary, it was strong and yearning toward him, but he had drifted so far beyond her reach that she could only make signals to him, as it were.

Now she was in a tender mood, where she would stay and cherish a hallowed memory, and let the savor of its sweetness penetrate all her thoughts; but he was cold and rigorous in his mood, and his very voice was growing husky and raucous as the voices of those who drink fiery stimulants always do.

She felt instinctively that he would not sympathize with them, and she dreaded lest little Sydney's questionings would irritate and vex him into sharp reproof of the little fellow, and she knew that the child would need soothing. And so he withdrew, and, as she turned to say good-bye to him soft tears were in her eyes, and a wistful look that said, 'Come near to me, my husband, and let me lay my head upon your breast, and put your strong arm around and beneath me'; but he turned away, stung by her look, which was all love as it left her eyes, but which rankled in his heart with the stinging reproach of being ill requited. Then, again, she did not know that this was a final meeting and parting, that she was calling for the last time to him who knew not the things that belonged to his peace.

She never saw his face again. He left her and spent that afternoon and evening with his familiar spirit, Artemisia Absinthium. And the fluid madness wrought its work in heart and brain, and the next day he wandered desolate, as a maniac from

the tombs, and all day long the hurrying crowds jostled him, and when night fell he sought as with fated steps the river's brink, and cast into it the wasted remnant of a life that had fulfilled his own darkest forebodings; a life that had in it all the elements which men esteem as essential for happiness; the means of making life happy in his hands, and he did not know how to use them. And the darkness and the discord had been sent neither by Providence, nor fate, nor circumstance. In his own heart lay the root of bitterness, and this root was the philosophy that men call pessimism. Surely it had won its right to the name; it is *pessimus*. For life has no misfortune, and fate no disaster to compare with the wretchedness of one who is endowed with this belief.

And it was allotted to me to go to Gladys Elliott, and tell her that her love-dream had ended thus, and her husband and the father of her boy lay buried in the Potter's Field. No, I could not do that. It would be simply murder. First, it should be my care to recover poor Sydney Morris' body from the Potter's Field, and bury it in Greenwood, and thus spare Gladys the sight of what could bring her no comfort, and might kill her on the spot.

I instituted inquiries at once, and found that there had been no burial since this one, and, armed with the proper authority, I had the body ex-

humed, and placed in another coffin, and, though very loath to do it, I looked upon the awful face of the dead, and was able to certify Gladys that I had recognized her poor husband.

That evening, as the autumn twilight fell cold and gray, and a sullen sunset lingered in the sky, giving warning of an approaching storm, I, the sole mourner, followed Sydney Morris' body to the tomb; and, as the burial service was read at the open grave, it seemed to carry home the lesson of mortality, but to have nothing to tell of immortality over this grave. The "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," seemed to fall on and cover "the hope of a glorious resurrection."

I laid him at McKenzie's feet, as if the old man might watch over him even here.

I went to his rooms and found there a mass of books and notes, which were enough to account for his sad ending. It was a very charnel-house of literature. All that the inventions of the unhealthy brains of those who had wasted their life, and infused into it the bitterness of sin, and folly, and dissipation, or of those who had inherited an unhealthy temperament or a diseased mind from a weak or wicked ancestry, or those who, without such excuse, had set up as teachers of men, and found the *descensus Averni pessimi*, the easiest road to distinction, were all there; all *les miserables* of

literature; and there were sheets of incipient essays and stories by Sydney, which had for their one scheme the portrayal of some unhealthy train of thought, or unhappy chain of circumstances, which was assumed as the normal condition of the minds of all truly thoughtful men, and as the invariable fate of the fools who dreamed of happiness in life.

It was a chamber of horrors, that compared well with Dante's frozen region in hell, and might well have had over the doorway the famous motto that graced the portals of the Inferno.

He had left a will, appointing me executor, with Gladys, and guardian of the little Sydney, in case of Gladys' death. His books and papers I burned. I would not for the world that Gladys should have seen them, or that the boy should ever know the hidden history of his father's life.

And then, like one who goes to his execution, in the full tide of the powers of life, knowing, and able to appreciate the horror that lies before him, I went out to tell Gladys of her husband's fate. With the bravery characteristic of my sex on such occasions, I determined not to go there alone, but to take my wife with me. My part would be to engage the little boy's attention, and decoy him off to the studio with Mr. Elliott, and thus leave my wife to break the news to Gladys; women were so

much better fitted to deal with one another in such a matter as this.

How the argument always arranges itself, which is to persuade us that the easy course is the wise and safe course. But in this case it was doubtless true. These two were near friends, and saw one another almost daily; they each had a child near the same age, and they had therefore that bond of motherhood which drew them near to one another, and furnished them the theme for an interminable fund of sympathetic talk.

On the way up from the depot, where my wife had come to meet me, as the good suburban wives do always come to meet their toiling men, and to brush off the dust of the city from their clothes and from their hearts, with a deft, light, womanly touch and twist, that sets the derangement of their attire, and of their minds, at once in order, and we were driving along toward home, after this little family episode. Did you never note such, my reader, and see the wife, with scopic glance, take in the whole man at once, and with the lightest possible touch, straighten out his attire, and smooth out his temper? Well, after this preliminary had been arranged and we were bowling comfortably along, I told my wife the story of the close of Sydney's life, and thus explained what had detained me for two days in the city (for I am

one of those husbands who always render a strict account of themselves).

She immediately agreed to accept the unwelcome task which I had assigned her. Indeed, with true womanly affection, she would not have let me leave her behind. She loved Gladys Morris, and, if she must needs suffer, then she would be with her to do what in her lay to comfort her.

This is the angelic side of woman's nature. They are not angels in the sentimental sense of the word, which attributes to them impossible virtues and a fictitious perfection; but they are angels in the sense that they have the "ministering" instinct; and where we men shrink from scenes of sorrow and of suffering, and hasten to banish them from our thoughts, there women linger, and stand near, and make their presence felt as something that soothes and comforts after a wonderful fashion, still, but deep and restful.

I have seen a woman simply holding the hand of another woman who was in trouble, or bathing her temples with a soothing, quiet stroke of hand, and, with never a word to say, transmit comfort and healing to a heart bowed down. Her very touch would tell the other not only that she felt for her, but with her.

And therefore my wife did not shrink from this ordeal, but wanted to be by Gladys' side, when she should hear the dreadful news.

While we were on our way home, we saw Gladys and her boy, in their pony cart, coming down the road toward us.

How lovely a pair they were. She in her quiet subdued tone of womanly beauty, wearing mourning for McKenzie, and smiles for her boy.

He was dressed in an odd, artistic kind of way, which he carried off very well. His dress was fashioned mainly by Gladys' own hands, after drawings and paintings by Mr. Elliott.

If ever a child were spoiled by excess of affection, this young Lord Sydney was in a fair way to be ruined beyond hope of restoration.

He was his mother's world, in which she lived; and Mr. Elliott seemed to have forsaken every other *motif* in art to follow the lead which this child set him. Good Queen Bess' favorite had no more right to regard himself as the most famous gentleman of his time, than had this youngster to regard himself in the same light. For, of his small world, was he not the leading light?

But there was too much natural, pure, and unadulterated sweet humanity in this boy to be injured by such unguarded affection. It would seem that he was one of those children that you could not spoil, a loving nature that was enlarged by the love that was lavished upon him, a generous, open heart, that was quickened by the absolute devotion of these two.

He sat for the painter with an easy *sang-froid*, as if it were the common lot of all children to be painted, and he commented on the likeness and the costumes, with a childish simplicity and sincerity that was delightful. He wore the velvet costumes and broad Vandyke collars, with his long curls falling down over them, just as he wore his own violet eyes and long curling lashes, as the gift of nature; —and since his mother and Mr. Elliott were pleased, he too was pleased.

He won a smile from all who met him, for he was always alert on the lookout for a friend; and his eyes would light up, and his mouth would wreath smiles, long before you were face to face with him, while he prepared to doff his little cap. There must have been a heavy load of care, or a leaden weight of surliness, on the heart of any one who would not respond to such overtures of grace and gentleness.

He had prepared his ammunition, and was training his batteries to give us a salute, long before we were near them. I could see the coming of it, as one sees a streak of sunlight chasing over the lawn to meet you, when the cloud shadows sweep off, on a spring day; and how could we meet it?

I turned quickly into a neighbor's yard, as though intent on an errand admitting of no delay. But the errand was not to seek any one else, but to

avoid the greeting to which I could not respond and would not repel. There are other things that make cowards of us beside conscience, and I was afraid to meet that boy.

We drove on home discomfited and ill at ease, and, after a rather silent dinner, broken by fitful talk on the one subject alone, we made ready to start on our mission.

We had planned at least a half dozen ways of carrying it out, and had discarded one after another as unsuitable.

The baffling problem began to be irritating, and I thought my wife's temper was beginning to ruffle.

"Well, how *shall* it be done?" I said despairingly. "Shall I approach it gradually, and begin by talking of Sydney's absence for a longer time than usual, and suggesting that perhaps he is sick?"

"No, by no means," answered my wife, decidedly. "Since it must be done, it is better that it be done quickly. When you are in her presence, you will not be able to command your tone and looks, so as not to convey the portent of evil; and you will simply put her to the torture by such delay, and will unnerve her to bear the final shock."

"But," I retorted, "you surely would not have me blurt it out in one short sentence?"

"Oh! no, my dear," she answered, with irritating precision. "You need not rush from one ex-

treme to the other. You will have to tell Gladys of her husband's death, and account to her for your undertaking his funeral."

"Well, I thought it had been agreed between us, that you should tell her," I said, with a tone which I intended should let my wife know that the grain of my temper was slightly raised. "And I wish, my dear, that you would kindly vary your vocabulary a bit, and not speak of my 'undertaking his funeral.'"

There was something very discomforting in the situation, and I was determined that some one else should share that discomfort with me; and so I set to work on my wife, as being the most available target.

She sat and quietly looked at me for a moment, then laughed and threw me a kiss across the table, with her two fingers, and asked me to take that before I spoke again.

"Well," I said, smiling back at her, "you know it makes a man uncomfortable to be put in this kind of position. It is just as uncomfortable and out of place for me, in this position, as it would have been for you to have gone to the morgue and the Potter's Field and arranged for the removal and burial of poor Sydney's body. That was my share of the sad task, and this is yours."

"And, being very uncomfortable," she said, with

provoking good-nature, "you felt that you ought to admit your wife to share the discomfort, and you would take good care to do it. You are found out, sir. But we must go now to Gladys; and this is what I think about telling her. First of all her little boy must not be present when we tell her, and neither must he be very far away; for we may need his presence as a restorative to Gladys, if she should be faint; and he will be a better comforter to her than all the rest of us put together. It would be well, I think, to have Mr. Elliott present, if possible. More than that I do not think we can arrange beforehand. This is one of those critical moments in life when the proverb is sure to fulfil itself, that man proposes and God disposes. Some trifling thing will upset all our carefully prearranged plans. I will first tell Gladys, when we are alone, and will tell her all, tell her that her husband was drowned, no one knows how, and that you were the means of recognizing his body, and you had assumed the responsibility of burying him, because it was impossible, on sanitary grounds, to delay the burial any longer. With this meagre outline she will not be content, and will want to see you and ask for fuller details; but this very desire to see you and learn more will be a sort of break, a something to look forward to, which will lessen the intensity of the first blow, by the expectation of

learning something more. Then I will call you in, and you can tell her such details as will sustain her interest, without increasing the violence of the blow, but will rather temper it."

"It seems to me," I answered to this, "that the part which you have assigned me is about as difficult and unenviable a part as you could devise, if you had set yourself the task of doing so. And if you think that you are going to leave me alone, with that poor woman, after she has just heard such a piece of news, and she expecting to wring the details out of me, you were never more mistaken in your life. I'll take the boy off for a walk; or I'll catch you by the dress and hold on until the material gives way. So don't try any woman's *finesse* in this matter, or I will upset you as sure as fate."

And so with this arrangement we started out, and as we neared the Morrises' house, there was Gladys on the porch, and Mr. Elliott and the boy were down the road, on a stroll to the little brook, which ran at the foot of the hill, where Sydney proposed to launch a small boat, which they had been, jointly, building and rigging, all the morning.

As we came up the walk, Gladys rose, smiling, and stood on the edge of the porch to welcome us.

We were scarcely seated when my wife's prophetic foreboding came true, for Gladys, addressing me, said:

"Have you seen or heard anything of my truant husband, and, if not, will you take a commission from me to go to his rooms in the city to-morrow, and bring him back alive or dead; and I will pay you the ransom due to the captor. It is six days since I have heard from him, and to-morrow is his last day of grace. Since he has turned Rosicrucian, and has made the secrets of life his study, I have submitted, without a murmur, to a three days' absence; but he always promised that, within a week, I should have news of him, good or bad; and I always told him that, on the seventh day, I would send out my officers of justice and have him back, with or without the Elixir of Life."

She had looked down at her embroidery while she talked or she would have seen our faces blanch under her light badinage.

I began fairly to pant, as I would if I saw a child sporting with careless grace on the brink of a precipice, and, from under the little feet, could hear the loosened stones fall thump, thump, down from ledge to ledge and strike with a thud on the shore below or with a splash into the dark waters, and all the while I were waiting to hear the child scream, as it fell over, and then to hear the soft thud, thud of the living body and the fatal splash telling that all was over.

Do you know how people become silent and still

at such moments, afraid to move hand or foot, and almost afraid to breathe, until that sort of living tone, by which we feel that some one is near, is supplanted by a hush that seems suddenly to leave one alone, however near others may be? Or does the cause lie deeper still, and, in the intensity of moments of high excitement, when the heart is beating as if we were on a race for life, and the head is full to bursting, and the palpitating pressure on the eyeballs and ear-drum seems robbing us of every sense, then does the surcharged body give off a spiritual magnetism, like the silent induction of the thunder-cloud before it is ready to flash in vivid lightning, and thus, without sound of speech, or other token palpable to the outer sense, does spirit touch spirit, by an insensible and more direct vehicle than ordinary speech? It seems so, at times. It surely seemed so now, for Gladys, without word, or look, or sound from either one of us, dropped her work in her lap, and, as she raised her eyes, cried out in a voice faint with fear and very pitiful:

"Oh, tell me what has happened."

I was too frightened to speak, and did not know what to say or do. My wife rose and took her by the hand, and we led her into the parlor, and laid her down on the sofa, and my wife seated herself on an ottoman by her side, with Gladys' hand in hers. I went out and sat on the porch, and, through

the open windows, heard the soft murmur of my wife's voice, in a dull, soothing undertone, quiet, and with no excitement in it, and broken only by Gladys' gentle sobbing. There was something calming in my wife's very tone, something that stilled excitement in the very monotony of the placid flow of her speech, and I knew, by experience, how soothing was the flowing, regular, even stroke of her hand, and I knew that the worst was over, and that it was well with Gladys Elliott.

And as I sat there, I thought that it did not become men to boast that they were the stronger, and women the weaker half of humanity.

There are times and seasons that recur for each, to test and show forth the ingrain texture of their natures, and, when a woman's hour comes, she shows qualities of mind and heart that men may envy.

After a half-hour of suspense, during which I sat and conferred with myself, in a most uncomfortable soliloquy, as to what I should do when my time for action came, I heard my wife calling me, and went, with most unwilling steps, to answer the call. I found them as I had left them, Gladys lying with her face hidden in the pillow, quiet, with an almost alarming stillness, and my wife stroking her head.

"I have told Gladys," she said, "how you came

to know of Sydney's death, and she wants to hear from you just where you have laid him to rest."

Then I told her briefly and vaguely that I had heard of his death, and omitting, of course, all mention of her letter, and the Potter's Field, and the awful face that told me of the bitterness of his last struggle with life, I laid at the door of the sanitary regulations necessary in a great city the responsibility for his hasty burial, and then I dwelt with more detail upon the service at the grave, and described, with minute particularity, how and why I had laid him at McKenzie's feet, who loved him so, and loved us all.

It was, after all, but a sorry effort on my part, but it served to hold her attention and distract her, and she listened, gently sobbing the while, and, at all events, it seemed to comfort her to think that there had been one sincere friend to attend at Sydney's grave, and secure him Christian burial, and she thanked me, with a simple pathos that touched me to the quick.

I saw Mr. Elliott and the little boy returning up the road, and I rose and hurried out to meet them, that Gladys might be spared the telling of the news to them.

I was more at home in dealing with them, little as I liked the mission. I met them as they were in the full tide of animated discussion as to what

their boat needed in the way of alteration, in rig and trim, to make her a perfect sailer.

Mr. Elliott paved the way for me by the startled inquiry: "Why, my dear fellow, what is the matter with you? You look as if you had just come out of a fit of sickness."

"I have been the bearer of very bad news, Mr. Elliott, and I am rather shaken up by it myself. But the worst part of telling it is over, I think, for Gladys has borne it with wonderful bravery."

This was enough for the boy. The mention of his mother's name, in such connection, made him open his violet eyes wide and deep, and he fixed them on me intently, till they seemed to burn my heart, like a sun-glass focusing strong rays; they searched me through and through, until I fairly quailed.

Mr. Elliott guessed immediately what was the purport of my message, and I whispered to him the substance of it. Turning to the little boy, he said, very gently: "Sydney, your father is dead."

The child started, with a frightened sob, and, dropping his plaything in the dust, stared at us, and then flung himself, sobbing, into his grandfather's arms.

We sat down on the grassy bank by the roadside, the dusty road trodden by so many feet, passing along their way, and always so suggestive to

me as an emblem of life, and, between us, we strove to calm the first wild burst of the child's fright and grief.

And, first, we let him sob on his grandfather's breast; and when he grew more quiet, the burden of the little heart revealed itself in the query:

"How soon will mamma have to go to heaven, too?"

His grandfather, scarce able to speak, answered him:

"My little boy, God, I am sure, will leave your mamma here to take care of you. But you must try to be a very quiet little boy when you see your mamma. You will have to take care of her now, you know, and help her; and you must try to be brave, like a little man, and meet your mamma quietly and let her feel what a comfort and help you are to her."

"Can I help her really? And can I be a real comfort to her, like a man could be?"

"Yes, my brave boy," I broke in. "Let me tell you what your Aunt Bell (as he called my wife) said, when we were coming up here. She said Sydney must not be far away after his mother hears this news, for he can comfort her more than all the rest of us put together."

I never knew so well the meaning of what we call a noble nature, noble in the grain, as when I

saw it assert itself in that little fellow. To see him rise from his attitude of weakness in his grandfather's arms, brush away his tears lying wet upon his face, and in his tangled curls, all damp with the dew of his first sorrow,—to see him set his face steadfastly against the weakness of our human nature to give way to grief, compress his lips to choke back the sobs, and start with determined step to go and meet and comfort his mother, who needed him; it was enough to make one feel that man is not the ignoble creature which some delight to picture him.

He left his boat, which had, but now, been the sole object of his thoughts, lying in the dust, and started, ahead of us, to go to his mother.

I stooped and picked up the toy, and, as I carried it, following on behind with Mr. Elliott by my side, I felt humbled, as if, in another sense, "the boy was father of the man," and that he was rising to the needs of the occasion rather more nobly than I myself had.

I thought of how the Saviour had set a little child in the midst of His disciples, and held him up before them as a type of true greatness; and I thought if He were like this boy, then the men could well afford to learn of the child.

The little fellow walked straight up to the house, we lagging a little, and as my wife came out to

meet him, she saw that he knew what had happened. The child did not trust himself to say much; he simply asked:

"Aunt Bell, where is my mamma? I have come to comfort her; you said I could do it, more than any one else. Can I?"

"Yes, you can, Sydney; come to her," my wife said, scarcely able to sustain her part as well as this brave boy.

She led him into the house, and he walked straight to where his mother was lying, without any of that frightened shyness, which often overtakes children, and, for that matter, older people too, and laying his soft little cheek down on his mother's face, with his arm thrown round her neck, he said simply, "Mamma, I have come to comfort you. Aunt Bell says I can do it better than any one else."

The dear little fellow, with that utter unreserve of childhood's faith, he believed that, having been told by one in whom he trusted that he could do it, of course he could.

I suppose this is the kind of faith that would move mountains; if we had it.

At any rate, in this case it did, for it roused and lifted Gladys at once out of herself.

She rose, and drew the child to her, and the smile which came on the boy's face, when he saw the an-

swer to his summons of consolation, was not of earth; it was the "light that never shone on sea or land," and can shine only out of the casements of a soul in which dwell faith, hope, and charity, as they dwell in souls that are fresh from the hand of God. And Gladys could not but give back the smile with which her darling welcomed her first resurrection from her grief.

CHAPTER XVI.

I TURN, with a sense of relief, the page on which memory has written, with an iron pen, these records of the past, where the interwoven threads were sometimes severed, and the tracery of the pattern which we fancied was complete, was lost. I turn it over, with a sigh for those whom I have loved, and for the pictures hanging on the wall, whose frames are garlanded with asphodels; and I wish to end this story of more lives than one, with a sketch of the life which we see, almost daily, as it is lived in the sight of men and angels; the life of a mother and her beautiful boy. She, pure because she has known sorrow; he, pure because he has known it not.

She lives for him, and he lives in her; and beside their path sits the gentle, white-haired artist, watching the picture as it unfolds itself, and enjoying the tender color almost as if he were painting it with his own hands.

They are very near to us, and form, in reality, a part of our home circle, and I cannot forbear to let others see and to bespeak their affection for those whom we so love, honor, and cherish.

She is gentle and loving as those are who have been touched and purified by sorrow, who have been forced by circumstances to seek and find some greater help than men can give, and have found it.

And they find it, in such sense, that they make actual and immediate use of it, and their faith is simple, direct, and unconditioned.

She rose from her sorrow as one which would not be alleviated by ceaseless repining, nor lightened by dwelling on the circumstances. She addressed herself with active interest to make the boyhood of her son a season of happiness, a spring of sweet water, that would flow out through all his life, and carry the purity and power of its influence into his later years. She gave herself up to making him as happy as a bright boy could be, and to make him know that happiness and goodness go hand in hand.

All children loved her, and she was highly complimented and delighted by their affection. She gathered a circle of children about her for her own child's sake, and then became as eager to gain and keep their affection as if she had sought them as playmates of her own.

She was fascinated by the society of children, and she was the talk of all the children of our circle. Her craze, on this subject (as we called it), culminated in the determination to set up a child's

school, and install herself as school-mistress. So she canvassed the circle of her friends with as much earnest solicitation as if her bread and butter depended on the pupils which she could secure. When we laughingly asked her whether she had secured pupils enough to keep the wolf from the door, she answered:

"Yes, that is just what I am after. I shall starve unless I have something for my heart to feed on. And this is a pasture-field full of sweet flowers that will make the breath of my soul sweet as the breath of the kine in the pastures of clover."

"You are a poetical goose," said my wife, kissing the goose heartily.

The suggestion of this scheme had come to her from reading a charming book, full of the soft light of other days. In it there is an account of a Salem "Dame-School," so lifelike and fine, that one almost feels that they have been to such a school, after reading it.

Gladys was fascinated by the picture of the children standing at the dame's knee, on which the primer was laid open, and the letters pointed out, with gentle precision, with a great brass pin. She felt assured by the thought that such a highly-cultured writer spoke in praise of the system, as one well suited to the early training of children, and that, though no great wisdom was to be expected

as the fruit of the few and simple lessons, and the old-fashioned methods, yet the thorough teaching of the simple books, and the lessons not to be found in books, which were gained from the example of the fine old gentlewomen, gave them worth and training power.

This closing paragraph of the delicate and fine delineation of the olden "Dame-School" was the seed which lodged in Gladys' mind, and bore this fruit:

"Many are the children, now grown and scattered, who have sat under their gentle sway, and surely not one of them can think to-day without a thrill of kindly affection of the little dame-school in the gray old house on Essex Street."

Why may not I, she thought, under the impulse of affection, instead of the spur of necessity, teach these children, and live, as these two old gentlewomen are still living, in the memory, and affection, and lives of the children?

And so she solicited the custom of her friends and neighbors, and succeeded in gathering nearly a dozen pupils, and our little girl was one of the number.

She fitted up her school-room in a fashion of quaint simplicity, with desks and benches for the children, and an old-fashioned chair and desk for

herself. A pail of water, with a tin dipper, stood on a small table on one side of the room, and, beside it, a tin basin, in which to wet their sponges or wash their slates.

She wore a white apron and a morning cap, which gave her a very demure air, but it was, I fear, far too pretty to have passed muster among our grandmothers. She had a great brass bell on her desk with which she rang the children in from recess, and a long and terrific-looking ruler with which she rapped on the desk for silence or attention from the school. But she did not handle this ruler with that old-time vigor and force which became the historic character of the weapon, and her taps on the desk were so very tender that I do not think it possessed any awe-inspiring potency.

But it was a suitable part of the furniture of an old-time school, and was supposed to possess inherent virtues in the way of discipline, almost equal to Aaron's rod.

It became quite the fashion to take our city visitors over there, on a winter's morning, and show them this relic of antiquity brought back to grace our modern life, just as we bring our grandmother's clothes-press (if we are fortunate enough to have one) down to grace our library.

And I assure you the effect was very unique and pretty. Through the three windows with their

southwestern exposure, and curtained with simple white muslin curtains, streamed the clear winter sunlight; there on the row of hooks about four feet from the floor were neatly hung the hats and caps, and hoods and cloaks, most of them fashioned after those worn by our great-grandmothers, and underneath them stood the children's rubbers, shoes and boots which wear such a comical aspect and seem to retain an expression and character akin to the little feet which fill them and do such an immense amount of running in them.

At their desks were seated the rows of children, the little men in their knee-breeches and the wee women in their Mother-Hubbard dresses, and each girl with a tidy white apron, which was the school-uniform. Behind the stout, old-fashioned desk, with its four square, uncompromising legs, sat Gladys, in her white apron and morning cap. The cedar water-pail with its bright brass hoops stood in one corner, with the tin dipper floating on the water and the handle thrust invitingly over the edge; and the busy hum of a small school, intent on its small labors, filled the room. Oh! it was a rare sight and a fair one.

Gladys has taught the children the old-fashioned manners of the days gone by, so that when visitors come in, the children rise and the girls curtsy and the boys make their best bow.

We tease her and tell her she is altogether too pretty for a Dame, that she ought to wear green goggles and a pair of black-thread mits with half-fingers, and a brass thimble, and learn to knit stockings of stout blue yarn and click the steel needles, while she looks around the room.

She takes the teasing in good part; she knows what she wanted and she has it. I would do our "dame-school" gross injustice if I left the impression that it was either a farce or a pastime. It is a pleasure to Gladys, but not one which she earns at the expense of the children.

She teaches them, and does it well and sweetly too, so that it is a pleasure and a pride with them to learn their lessons well, and therefore their progress is both rapid and easy. She does not force them, but she leads them very rapidly along, and she teaches them that unwritten lore, which is graven only on the heart, and which cannot be set down on tablets or in books, the tuition of gentleness and honesty, of purity and truth; things that men are slow to learn and quick to forget, but which children are quick to learn and slow to forget, if they have learned them in their early childhood.

And these lessons came to this band of school-children as we breathe in pure air, or inhale a sweet perfume, not by instruction, but by a process of absorption.

Some flowers give off their odor only in the night-time, and some only when they are bruised or broken; but some are always breathing out fresh sweetness every hour, and pervade the whole house with their perfume; and Gladys is like the rose; simply to be with her makes the children gentle.

Mr. Elliott enters heart and soul into her scheme. Twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the children all stay to dinner and spend the afternoon with Gladys. When Gladys is through with them, Mr. Elliott gathers them into his studio, of a stormy winter's afternoon, and there he will entertain them with stories and draw pictures for them.

His old gift of reading aloud has not forsaken him, and he uses it now for the little ones alone, though often he has a large audience of us elder children too.

He reads the "Arabian Nights" to this little circle grouped about him, in the sky-lighted studio hung around with rich Eastern stuffs. He seats himself on a richly-colored prayer-rug, and, from his studio properties, he brings forth some bright-colored silken scarf, which he throws over his shoulders, and with a white turban on his head, he seats himself cross-legged on the rug, *a la Turc*, and, with the children squatted round him on the

floor, he tells them, in a lively, eager, recitative tone of voice, all those wondrous tales in which are stored the riches of Eastern imagination.

On another afternoon we came in and found him seated on a wooden stool, with a disreputable old hat, battered and torn, set down over his ears, a preposterous standing collar, and his hands and face blacked, with an apron made of a piece of gunny-bagging, and a pair of staring green goggles on his nose. It was a picture, verging on the extreme of the ludicrous, and I was at a loss to fix him in this character, until I heard the mellifluous flow of the negro dialect, which he rendered very well. Then I knew that I was in the cabin of old Uncle Remus, and that the mischievous chuckle of the chorus supporting this chief actor, was the response which greeted some of the capers of that tricksy Puck, "Brer Rabbit."

At other times he was an inimitable fresh importation from Erin, as he recited the "Legend of the Little Weaver," "Barney O'Reirdon," or "Handy Andy at the Post-office."

There was no threat so potent to reduce one of the members of the Hogi-Mogi, as this society was called, nothing which would compel them to such swift obedience as the dire threat that they would not be permitted to attend the next séance of their beloved society.

Nor was he dependent upon literature alone for his ability to delight his staunch adherents.

He had a great gift of writing very pure nonsense, and the children were keen for this.

He would take the rough water-color paper and tear the edges in the most fashionable style of raggedness, and writing, with antique lettering, his essay, verses or biography, as the case might be, or as the market demanded, he would then illustrate the cover and border the leaves with funny or exquisitely tasteful and suggestive designs and tail-pieces that would have made a book-maker envious.

And these were given as rewards of merit to such as Gladys reported as having accomplished some difficult feat in primer or the tables.

There was always some little ceremony connected with the presentation of these rewards, which gave them an added value, and all the while, as the youthful aspirant was struggling for the prize, he or she was permitted to have occasional glimpses of the book in course of preparation, and to express a wish as to its size and form and illustration, and was thus assured that as the struggle was progressing, so, too, the reward was in process of preparation.

I have one which my little girl won as the prize for the complete mastery of Part I. of the horn-book. It is an essay on the Syrian Goat. It was

margined with a design of goat's horns and hoofs, which are fantastic and highly suggestive in their bare but expressive attitudes toward one another.

On the cover is an illustration in sepia of a great hairy goat, ample in girth, rigid and straight in the back, and with long cashmere hair which almost reaches to the ground, so that he gives one the impression of being in the condition of Milton's beasts at the creation, but half emerged from the earth. His head is crowned with a terrific pair of horns, and a long beard reaches down to his breast; and, with full, beetling brows, his face is turned full at you with a solemn, didactic stare. You feel that he ought to wear spectacles. Our little girl insists that he looks like a doctor, whether D.D., LL.D., or M.D., she cannot discriminate, but he looks like a doctor. I think she is right; he does. But neither do I know exactly what kind of a doctor; but it describes him vaguely well. In long, hirsute letters the legend on the title-page is, "The Syrian Goat. A lesson in Natural History"; then follows this highly instructive essay:

"Of all the animals peculiar to the East, the most detestable is drunkenness. The rich and the poor, the North and the South, the active and passive, all agree in gender, number, size, and weight; and, whether we look at ourselves in a looking-glass, or at the consequences to society, we cannot but be struck by a piece of timber accidentally thrown down from the top of a house; for if two and two

really make four, how great is our responsibility, and such is the Syrian goat. It is of the French tri-color, and when tamed and transplanted will grow as well as usual. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

He wrote biographies of birds and beasts and fishes and dolls and children, all with illustrations suited to the story and to the market where his wares were to be disposed of.

The close of the school year is the last of May, and this is always made the occasion of a fine display, to which all the children of the neighborhood are invited.

On the broad meadow, which lies at the foot of the hill, and which is bordered by a fringe of trees along the margin of the brook that trips down from the mountain and wanders along the north end, and then winds diagonally across the meadow; near the margin of this grove, on the north end, a tall pole was set, wound round with parti-colored ribbons, and long streamers of ribbon were led from the top to a dozen smaller poles, ranged in a circle around the May-pole, thus forming a circular tent, with ribbon rafters and the blue sky for a covering, and the green grass for a carpet. Around and within this skyey tent were camp-chairs for the visitors. Away down the field were set two poles, with a cord stretched between them, from which a hook was suspended, and on the hook hung a ring.

Here a tourney was held, in which the boys played the part of knights, and the girls the part of the knights' fair ladies,—both a little shyly, before the older folks. Three or four of the boys had ponies, and these were entered on the lists and took their turns tilting with a long wooden lance, at full gallop, to catch the ring on the point of the lance. And when one joust had been tilted, if no one came off victor, then those who stood equal on the list, tilted again for the prize.

Sydney rode a little gray pony, (which he called Roland,) with long, sweeping tail and full mane, and a bushy forelock, which gave him a very mettlesome look. And indeed he was full of life and spirit, and entered into this game with a zest that was almost human.

He stood waiting for the signal to start, pawing the ground with a restive forefoot, with his neck arched and his eye glancing back at Sydney, proud as a horse can be, eager as a falcon to be let loose; and Sydney sat him like a little knight, with a velvet cap fitting close as a helmet, a short, tight-fitting jacket, little boots that came up to his knees, and buckskin breeches.

The pony and the boy were intimate friends. Each knew what the other wanted, each was better pleased to be companions together, than to have any one else along.

Sydney never rode Roland without first handing him a lump of sugar, as a token of good-fellowship and a pledge of good behavior, and never left him, after a ride, without redeeming the pledge and renewing the token of affection, by the gift of another lump.

He would follow Sydney around the yard like a dog, play and romp with him, and go through endless pretty tricks. I was often frightened to see them playing together, but Sydney knew him, and knew that there was nothing to fear from his Roland.

I would often see the pony feeding on the grass, all the way across the yard from Sydney, pretending to be absorbed in his own nibbling, and, all the while, furtively watching Sydney, out of the corner of his eye; then, at a signal from Sydney, who stood whip in hand, as he had seen the show-horse trainers stand, Roland would turn, rear high up in the air, then coming down with a spring, and laying his ears back flat, as if he were furious, and his head out straight and his teeth showing, he would rush for Sydney at full gallop.

The boy would straighten himself up, fold his arms and stand waiting, with his eye on Roland. On the pony would come with mad speed, until just in front of Sydney he would swerve, rush past him, altogether too near, I thought, to be a pleasant thing to look at.

Then he would turn and trot quietly back, and 'nose' under Sydney's arm to be petted.

I said one day to Gladys:

"Are you not almost afraid of such rough play between Sydney and Roland?"

"Oh, no," she answered placidly. "I can trust them both."

Roland would chase a rubber ball and bring it and drop it at Sydney's feet, like a dog.

Out on the road their understanding was complete. Gladys and Mr. Elliott would be in the pony cart, and it was understood that, in the village, and on the macadamized road, they were to amble along quietly, behind or beside the cart, but when they reached the soft earth bottom of the unfrequented country roads, then Roland began to chafe, and fret for a scamper. Gladys would often plead for him, "Do let him go, Sydney. He wants to have his run." But my young master would answer, "No, mother, not yet; he must always learn to wait until I am ready, or he will learn the trick of galloping as soon as his feet touch the soft ground." Then he would make him wait until there was a fine stretch of road ahead, when, with a "Now, Roland, away!" off they went like an arrow from the bow.

And so brave Roland stood, eager for the tilt of the tourney, and Sydney, with lance in rest, sat him easily and securely.

Not so the other boys, who accepted Sydney's generous offer of his pony, when their turn came.

One or two tried it, but the mutual understanding was not established between them and Roland, and they came to grief.

Never shall I forget the Gilpin expression of one poor lad, whose valor exceeded his discretion, and who mounted Roland with hardy assurance.

But his assurance speedily forsook him, when he felt the vivid motion of this lithe bundle of vitality beneath him, and he lost control of himself and Roland took control of him.

The pony went the way of the wind's will, jumped the brook at a bound, and carried the thoroughly frightened boy, in a wild career, around the broad meadow.

Sydney stepped out and called him, and waved the whip in the well-known signal for him to come,—and he came. First cutting his usual caper, which threw the poor boy's chin in violent concussion against the pony's neck, but which also offered him the opportunity to throw his arms around the pony's neck, which he was not slow to embrace, he came down on his forefeet with a bound, and, with nostrils distended and ears laid back, and his neck straight out, on he came panting, with the panting rider on his back, cleared the brook at a bound and rushed up to Sydney. It

was an inexpressibly comical picture,—the pony's distended nostrils and bright eyes, surmounted by the foreshortened figure of the boy, with pale face and wild eyes, clinging like a limpet to his neck, panting with terror.

When Roland swerved aside from Sydney, the last tendril with which the limp rider hung to him was broken, and he was laid flat on the grass at Sydney's feet, more dead than alive, unhurt, however, except in his mortally wounded pride.

The vaulting ambition of the other boys to ride "Syd's gray beauty" was checked by this escapade, and they looked askance at his rounded quarters and clean limbs, and were satisfied to see Sydney exploit him.

Sydney won the prize. His seat was so true, and the pony's gait, though swift, was so steady and sure, and Sydney was so perfectly at home on his back, that he was not diverted by the management of his horse, and could, therefore, give his undivided attention to the point of his lance.

The prize consisted of some little trinket which the young knight who won it was privileged to bestow upon the lady of his choice, and a wreath of flowers which he was to lay at the feet of the fairest lady, and she would decorate him with the badge of honor.

Sydney rode up, and received from the umpire

of the tourney a breast-pin, and the wreath with which to crown the mistress of his heart and life.

As usual there was one of the girls who was a favorite with all the boys, and who received, I am afraid, an undue share of gifts, as a tribute to her pretty face and winning manners.

Sydney rode up and tendered her the silver daisy pin which he had won, with a glowing face which showed that it cost him more effort to bestow the prize than it had cost to win it.

The wreath of flowers it was easier to bestow. He turned, and with a gentle, courtly grace, handed the wreath to his mother. She tried to turn aside his evident purpose, and, though there was some quiet laughter at him for turning away from the bevy of girls to crown his mother queen of the tournament, yet he was not to be diverted.

They had told him to give the crown of flowers and receive his decoration from her who was the mistress of his heart and life, and he knelt proudly before them all, at the feet of her whom he was prepared to avouch as holding indisputable possession of that place.

And never, I wot, did lady fair hold sway more potent over the heart of a courtlier and more loyal knight than did this gentle mother over the heart of her beautiful boy. And thus,

"Along the cool sequestered vale of life,
She kept the noiseless tenor of her way."

She had met with losses, and with gains, along the road. Some things on which her heart was set with strong desire she had not realized; or, if in form they had been realized, the very gain of them had turned to loss, even like those prayers which, being answered as they are presented, in truth would be denied, which, when denied, have then in truth received their answer. Yet there were some things which she must account as wholly lost. But, even by these, her life had not been blighted, though she knew that they were lost, and realized the meaning of their loss. Yet, like the fern which we call maiden-hair, which has a vital core, and sheds its outer leaves when frost or heat has blighted them, only to leave the greater power of life to nourish fresh, new fronds that spring up from the heart, tender, and green, and delicately tinted on the edge, as they unroll themselves to meet the sun and dew,—so did this woman's heart unfold itself always fresh and beautiful.

And why was this?

Was it because she was a woman?

It is true that women have a deeper insight, and are keener-eyed for one side of life than men, and see within, where men often fail to penetrate the outer husk of life.

It is true that, though we can jokingly offer as the crucial test of a woman's physical courage the sight of a mouse, yet they can endure sorrows that will crush the spirit out of a man. And therefore we will accept this as, in part, an explanation.

And further, was it because she was a "Sunday child," and could see fairies, as the pleasing old superstition has it; and these wee good folk were always peeping out at her from the stray nooks and corners of her life, and were lifting from off her shoulders the heavy burdens, as they do from those who love them, in the night-time, while the toilers are at rest.

Alack! the "Sunday child" can also see the uncanny Banshee and hear its wail on the night-wind, in the cry of the plover, or the hoot of the owl, or the baying of the dog; and these are portents of evil.

Or, forsaking the folk-lore of our infancy, shall we seek a scientific explanation of her calm, quiescent, peaceful temper of mind and heart, her power to turn gratefully and take the gains of life, and accept its losses?

It was not her environment (that fashionable explanation of everything), for this had been the source of her heaviest sorrow in life. It was not her nervous temperament, for that was sadly shattered by the many and intense emotional excite-

ments through which she had been made to pass, in the past four or five years.

Neither superstition nor science will render a just account of it. And hence, as a last resource, suppose we turn to discover its fount and origin where she herself declared it to be.

Sorrow had unstopped the ear of her soul; trials had purged her inner "visual nerve with euphrasie and rue"; she saw like her who stood disconsolate and weeping in the cold, gray, morning twilight, in the garden near Jerusalem; her eyes were dim with weeping, and the cloud of sorrow lay a smothering weight upon her heart, and she knew not that He whom her soul was seeking stood face to face and talking with her, until He called her "Mary"; and then her heart went out in love and adoration as she cried, "Rabboni."

And so Gladys had heard Him call her by her name, and she had answered Him, "My Master."

And He had turned and said to her:

"My peace I give unto thee. In the world thou shalt have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."