



OUR
FRED

by

Martha Finley

L. H. ...
1915





Our Fred;

or, Seminary Life at
Thurston

By

MARTHA FARQUHARSON

Author of "Elsie Dinsmore"



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P R E F A C E .

“**A**N Old-Fashioned Boy” was written without any thought of a second part; but the book found favor, and so large and steady have been its sales, that more than a year ago the Publishers asked for a sequel. Also, wishes and requests “to hear more about Fred and his sister,” coming from various quarters—both near at hand, and from far-off California—were gratifying and inspiring, and finally led to the preparation of the present volume.

Ill-health on the part of the Author, has much delayed its completion, but given more time for the collection of fun for the amusement of its readers; so that she hopes it will be pronounced better, and more entertaining than the first.

She trusts, also, that it may be owned and blessed of Him who can work by the feeblest instrumentality—and without whose blessing the strongest will avail nothing—to the profit of all who shall peruse its pages; and may stir up her young friends to become good, true, wise, earnest, patriotic, and Christian men and women.

M. F.

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OUR FRED.

CHAPTER I.

Our Fred.

THE street lamps on Fifth Avenue were gleaming out like stars in the deepening twilight of the short winter day, as two children, a boy and girl, seated themselves in a bay window of one of its palatial dwellings, and gazed eagerly out into the gathering darkness.

“Is it most time, Thad?” asked the little girl, tossing back a wealth of flaxen ringlets, and putting her face close to the window pane.

“Yes, most, Maggie. But don’t you hear mamma calling you?”

“Is she? What is it, mamma?” turning her head to look and listen; then springing up and dancing across the room to an easy-chair in which sat a lovely delicate looking little lady.

“I am afraid you will catch cold in the window there, Midge, it is such a bitter night, and you had a sore throat only yesterday, you know,” Mrs. Ramsay

answered, throwing a soft fleecy shawl over the child's shoulders. "There now, dear, you can go back if you wish."

"Yes, mamma. We're watching for Fred, and it isn't a bit cold, but I'll wear the shawl to please you," and the little maiden tripped back to her former station.

"She's a good child, and so fond of Fred," murmured the lady, half to herself, half to her husband who was looking over the evening paper on the other side of the centre-table.

"That's true," he said smiling; "but who wouldn't be fond of our Fred? Eh, Lena, what do you say?" to a young girl seated at the piano running her fingers lightly over its keys.

"That I entirely agree with both you and mamma, sir," she answered, gayly.

"There, Thad, isn't that our carriage?" cried Maggie.

"No, silly," returned the boy, with a contemptuous sniff, "those are brown horses, not half as handsome as our splendid grays. Besides that's going down town and Fred 'll be coming up."

"Isn't it nice to be rich folks?" queried Maggie, ignoring the sneer. "Don't you like to live here, Thad?"

"Course I do! I wouldn't go back to Wisconsin for anything."

"No, it's so aw—*very* cold there—mamma says I musn't say awful—and here it feels just like summer in the house."

"Pooh! I don't care for the cold! Glad they

didn't name me a girl. But I like to stay here, because it's ever so nice "

" And this father is gooder than the other one we had."

A carriage drew up at the door.

"There he is! Fred's come!" shouted both at once, making a rush for the hall, followed by every one else in the room, father, mother and sister,—Thad gaining the front door just in time to throw it wide open at the instant the bell pealed out its summons for admittance.

A young man stood on the threshold. He sprang forward.

"Fred, my dear boy!" and the mother's arms were round his neck, her face lifted to his, as he bent his head and clasped her close, in a reverent, loving embrace.

"Oh how alarmed we were when you did not come at the appointed time, but instead, news of another dreadful accident!" she said, in low tremulous tones.

"Ours were only slight," he answered cheerily; "the smash-up of freight cars ahead of us in one place, the boiler of our engine springing a leak at another; each time causing detention and a failure in making connections. But here I am, mother dear, by God's good providence, safe and sound," he added, in a lower deeper tone, as he clasped her slight form still closer and more tenderly in his strong arm.

Elena's turn came next, then a hearty shake of the hand from Mr. Ramsay and Thad, and a shower of kisses from Maggie. Thad had grown quite too

large, in his own estimation for such tokens of affection from anybody but mamma.

"O Fred, you darling brother!" whispered Elena, with a half sob; putting her arm about his neck again, "I thought I'd never see you alive."

"We were indeed terribly anxious and distressed till your telegram came," added Mr. Ramsay, laying his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder; "and if our fears had been realized, I don't know how your mother could have borne it."

"Yes, it was an awful time, Fred," cried Thad, clasping him from behind, while Meg held fast to his coat, exclaiming; "So it was, Fred, and I'd have cried real, *real* hard, if you'd got killed."

"Would you, indeed, my little Midget?" he said, laughing, as he stooped to give her another kiss. "But where's Albert?"

"Here, Fred," cried a voice from the stairs, and with one bound the lad was by his step-brother's side.

The two shook hands heartily.

"Now, dears, let Fred come in and sit down. He must be both tired and cold," said Mrs. Ramsay, leading the way into the drawing-room.

"Thanks mother," said he, "taking the chair she offered near the glowing grate. "No company to-night, I hope."

"No, indeed my son; we wanted you all so our selves this first evening."

"Ercurius Burns is here; but not considered company now," said Elena.

"Aunt Silence's step-son?"

"Yes; he's been here for several days, and

begins to seem quite like one of the family," said Mr. Ramsay. "Ah, here he comes!" as the ringing of the door-bell was presently followed by the entrance of a very tall long-limbed, square-shouldered young man about twenty years of age, but generally taken to be much older by reason of a heavy beard and moustache of the same shade as his hair, which was so dark a brown as to pass with many for black. His countenance was good humored and intelligent, and its rather plain and rugged features were lighted up by a pair of keen, kindly gray eyes. He caught Fred's hand in a vice-like grasp, and shook it heartily as Mr. Ramsay introduced them to each other.

"You are like an old acquaintance, Mr. Landon," he said. "I've so often heard mother sound your praises, and have looked at your photograph in her album, till I should have known you anywhere."

"Ah! Aunt Silence is, I believe, one of my most indefatigable trumpeters," laughed Fred. "She somehow took a fancy to me from the first, and has never opened her eyes to my faults. I hope your stay in the city is to be long enough for us to become well acquainted."

"Thanks; that depends on how fast we accomplish the business. I leave with the others on Tuesday next."

"The others? What! have you decided to go too, Elena?"

"Yes; Gitsie has won the day; she and Albert together."

"To that young woman's great contentment," cried a gay girlish voice from the doorway.

Every one turned at the sound to find a young girl standing there, seemingly awaiting an invitation to enter. She was a pretty brunette, with regular features, roguish black eyes, and rosy cheeks, set off to advantage by the fleecy, snow-white nubia tastefully wound about her head and neck.

There was a general "Good-evening, Miss Estel," while Fred hastened to offer a chair.

"Speak of angels," laughed Elena, coming forward with a pleasant greeting.

"Thanks for your compliment, *mon ami*," returned her friend. "Good-evening, Mrs. Ramsay and gentlemen all. Glad to see you safe home again, Mr. Landon. Hope you didn't let any of those pretty Wisconsin girls steal your heart."

Fred reddened slightly as he shook hands with her, merely remarking that he was glad to see her looking so well.

"Come, sit down, and let me take your wraps," said Elena.

"No, thank you ; I can't stay a minute. We are going to a concert this evening and have two extra tickets, which I hope some of you will do us the favor to use, if so inclined." She handed them to the lady of the house as she spoke.

Mrs. Ramsay thanked her, and, turning to Albert, said she thought he had better go and take Mr. Burns with him.

"But does no one else wish to go?" asked Burns.

"Oh, no ; not to-night," she said. "Fred is too tired and we want to be with him. Must you leave us already, Miss Estel?" as the latter drew her shawl

more closely about her and with a gay "good night," turned towards the door.

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Ramsay, I promised not to stay a minute."

Burns followed to see her safe home, though she protested that it was quite unnecessary as the house was but a few doors off.

It was a delightful family circle which Mr. Ramsay had gathered about him after his long and lonely bachelorhood. He enjoyed the change extremely, and never more than when he had them all together seated around his bountiful board. The sweet eyes that now and then met his from the opposite end of the table, the bright young faces on each side, and the lively chit-chat, or the graver, more earnest, but not less enjoyable talk, were in very pleasant contrast to the solitude and silence of other days. To-night, they were a merry set, and lingered long over their meal. But at length, Albert and Burns were obliged to hasten away, if they would not miss the concert; and the others rose and withdrew from the dining-room directly after.

The last hour before retiring was spent by Fred and Elena alone with their mother in her boudoir—a beautiful room fitted up and furnished with exquisite taste. Mr. Ramsay had lavished money without stint upon its adornment; but to him and her children there was nothing there half so lovely or attractive as its presiding genius—the sweet wife and mother.

The change in her circumstances and surroundings were to both Fred and his sister a source of intense happiness, and a sufficient cause for deep

gratitude and warmest filial affection toward Mr. Ramsay. They enjoyed his society, yet dearly loved now and then to get their mother all to themselves for a quiet confidential talk, such as they used to have in the old days of her early widowhood.

Fred quickly opened his budget of news. He had been gone only a fortnight, but had much to tell of old college friends and acquaintances and especially of his "lovely Isabel," grown sweeter and more beautiful than ever in her lover's eyes.

His mother listened, gazing with fond admiration into the handsome, noble face, glowing with love, hope, and happiness.

Elena too was an interested and sympathizing hearer, but at length indulged in a little good-humored banter, reminding him that love was blind, and Isabel only a mortal woman after all.

Fred laughed, and revenged himself by telling of an interview with Crawford in which it appeared that the latter's wounds were not yet healed, or his hopes entirely crushed.

Elena blushed rosy red, then dropped her eyes, saying demurely, "Well, I hope you finished the crushing and didn't leave him to the tortures of suspense."

"I?" said Fred; "my dear child, being only your brother, I could not take it upon me to decide the matter."

No, but you knew how I had decided it. I don't care at all for him; and besides an only daughter ought not to marry. I intend to live single and take care of mamma and father when they grow old and

feeble ;” she added, stealing an arm about her mother’s waist.

“Thank you, darling,” Mrs. Ramsay said, with a smile, which, though tender and affectionate, was a little doubtful and mischievous, also.

“Ah, Lena, Lena,” laughed Fred; “that’s all very well, now, but just wait till the right one comes along. But to change the subject—are you really fully decided to go to Thurston?”

“Yes; mamma and I have concluded that it seems to be the best plan.” And she went on to tell of pretty tasteful furniture—including two lovely pictures bought by “mamma and father” for her study and bedroom at the Seminary. “So nice and kind of them!” she continued, with a loving glance at her mother. “Gitsie and I are to share the same study, and there is a small bedroom for each, opening into it.”

“And Gitsie’s parents do their share of the furnishing,” said Mrs. Ramsay.

“Yes,” assented Elena; “and Gitsie is wild over the good times we are to have together there.”

There was a sudden pause, and a deep hush fell upon them as the clock on the mantel struck eleven, followed by the deeper, more solemn tones of a larger one in the tower of a neighboring church. It was the last night of the week and the last of 1870.

Mrs. Ramsay’s soft low voice broke the silence :—

“The sands of the old year are fast running out, my children; in another hour its account will be forever closed. How have we improved its opportunities? What service have we done for our sweet

and blessed Master, Christ? Alas, how much less than we ought. Let us now say good-night, and each apart seek forgiveness for the past and help for the future, that the New Year may find us more fully consecrated to the service of our God."

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CHAPTER II

A Fugitive.

IT was Monday morning ; the family and their guests were gathered about the breakfast table.

“Well, ladies and gentlemen, what is the order of the day?” asked Mr. Ramsay, glancing with a benevolent smile from one bright cheerful face to another.

“Calls for the gentlemen, and a state of preparation for callers for the ladies, I presume,” answered, his wife.

“Ah, yes ; and that includes refreshments to-day. What is your bill of fare, my dear ? cake and wine ?”

“You are not good at guessing, sir,” she answered, gaily. “There will be plenty of excellent coffee, lemonade, cake, confections, and fruits, but not a drop of anything intoxicating. It would be contrary to both my husband’s principles and my own to put such temptation in the way of our friends.”

“She seems to know all about my principles, doesn’t she, Fred, eh ?” laughed the husband, turning to his stepson a face full of proud delight. “I had nobody this time last year to tell me what they were.”

"I think we all know that you are a strong temperance man, sir," answered Fred; "and that my mother also abhors the vice that is sending its thousands and tens of thousands every year to a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's dread eternity. She taught me its danger and sinfulness, and brought me up with an utter abhorrence of every kind of alcoholic stimulant."

"Of course she did; and equally of course, she would never, for fashion's sake, or any other inducement, be guilty of tempting other mothers' sons to what she dreads for her own."

"Do you expect many callers, Miss Landon?" asked Burns.

"Not a great number; for we have been here too short a time for many of the city gentlemen to have the honor of our acquaintance. But we hope the few who are present will not neglect us," she added, archly.

"I shall be most happy," answered Burns with the deepest gravity; "and I think I shall be quite safe from any danger of intoxication as it will be the only call I shall make."

"I saw a man figatin' in the street one day, and he wasn't coxitated either," remarked Midge.

"'Course people can fight, coxitated or not," said Thad, with an air of superior wisdom.

Fred Landon, though so short a time resident in the city, was already an active worker in the church with which he, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, and Elena had connected themselves upon their arrival. There was a mission-school established by its members, and in

this Fred had a class of boys ; poor, degraded, vicious fellows, in whose welfare, temporal and spiritual, he had become deeply interested.

He visited them in their wretched homes, made acquaintance with parents and guardians, or fellow lodgers, and won the hearts of all by his sincere, earnest sympathy in their trials, his words of hope and cheer, and his ready helping hand.

And while relieving their physical sufferings, supplying their needs and endeavoring to put them into the way of earning their bread honestly, he spoke to them also of a world where sin and sorrow, poverty and pain are all unknown, and of him who is the way and the truth, and the life. He told the story of the cross in moved tones, and words fresh from a heart warm and glowing with love to Christ ; and his hearers could seldom listen to the tale untouched.

He had learned on the Sabbath, from some of the members of his flock, of several cases of extreme destitution and distress, and had silently resolved to spend the holiday in searching them out, and carrying relief to their abodes of wretchedness and vice.

He did so, and late in the afternoon turned his face homewards weary with his labors, but full of quiet happiness and earnest gratitude to the Giver of all good that he had been that day permitted to dry the orphan's tears and make the widow's heart to sing for joy.

It was growing dark as he stepped from the street-car within a few squares of home, and started at a brisk pace to walk the short remaining distance. He had but a few steps to go when a female figure robed

in the black dress of a nun, came hurrying toward him.

As they met she threw back her veil, clasped her hands together with a gesture of despairing entreaty, and almost falling at his feet, exclaimed in tones trembling with grief and affright, "Oh, sir, protect me! hide me! the pursuers are on my track even now, and I know not whither to flee. I'm a helpless, hunted woman; oh save me from worse than death!"

"An escaped nun! I'll protect you with my life!" cried Fred, much moved by the wan features, dimly seen in the gathering gloom, and the wild terror of the large black eyes. "Quick! this way." And he threw an arm about her and assisted her up the steps of Mr. Ramsay's house; for she was trembling violently and seemed ready to sink to the ground.

He opened the outer door, which was not locked, drew her into the vestibule, and hastily closed the door behind them, turning the key in the lock; then taking another from his pocket, opened the inner door and conducted his charge into a little back parlor seldom entered by any but the members of the family.

"Sit here by the fire; you must be half-perished with the cold," he said, courteously, wheeling an easy-chair near the glowing grate. "I will ring for my mother and sister. You ought, for your own safety, to be rid of that dress as soon as possible!"

"You are very, very kind," she murmured, in her low tremulous tones, her face half hidden in the folds of her veil; "and oh, heaven reward you, if you keep me from the hands of my persecutors!"

"You may feel perfectly safe here," he said, touching the bell.

A servant answered it, but was not allowed so much as a peep into the room, Fred opening the door scarcely more than an inch or two, and bidding her go to her mistress and say that he would like to see her, or his sister, as soon as they were at leisure to come to him there.

Mrs. Ramsey came at once, full of anxiety lest something was amiss with her almost idolized son.

Fred, still standing guard at the door, admitted her, banished her fears for him with an affectionate smile, and taking her hand, said in an undertone, "Mother, I sent for you to ask your assistance in a deed of charity."

As he spoke he led her toward the fugitive.

Cowering and trembling in the chair, the girl seemed to be weeping behind her veil. There was no need for further explanation on the part of Fred; one glance at the costume told his mother the whole story, and in an instant the sweet, gentle, tender-hearted lady was beside the weeper, taking the cold hands in hers, pillowing the weary head on her bosom, and speaking words of pitying tenderness, of hope and cheer.

"You are safe now, poor child;" she said; "quite safe, and all your wants shall be cared for, all your sufferings relieved as far as it is in our power to do it. You are tired and no doubt hungry too; you shall have a nice warm supper, presently, and retire as soon as you please to a comfortable bed. We will rid you, too, of this dangerous, because tell-tale costume. Shall I show you to your room at once?"

"Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks sweet lady; it is long, long, since such kind words have been addressed to poor me," sobbed the girl, clinging convulsively to her benefactress; "but oh, let me first unburden my heart to you, and your son; let me tell you what I have had to endure for the last two years, and you will not wonder that I have escaped at the risk of my life."

"Tell it all then, and ease your poor heart, it will do you good," said Mrs. Ramsay, tenderly.

Some one tried the door, then tapped lightly on it. The nun started up trembling and almost gasping for breath.

"Don't be alarmed! it is only my daughter, another friend for you," said Mrs. Ramsay, while Fred admitted his sister, and in a few hurried words acquainted her with what was going on.

They drew quietly near to listen, and in a broken voice, interrupted now and again by sobs and sighs, the girl poured out a tale of deception and fraud, followed up by cruelty and oppression, when once within the power of her deceivers.

Her hearers were deeply moved; Fred utterly unable to suppress an occasional word of indignant anger.

She ceased and lay back panting in her chair. She was evidently very weak.

"Poor thing, she is quite exhausted," whispered Elena. "Mamma, should she not be taken at once to a room where she can lie down and be quiet?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Ramsay. "Fred, give her the

support of your arm. But first make sure that there is no one in the hall !”

Fred obeyed, reported the coast clear, then assisted the apparently half-fainting girl up to a bedroom on the second floor ; Elena leading the way and his mother following. The stranger dropped into a chair, and Fred retired, closing the door after him.

“ Poor child !” said Mrs. Ramsay, bending over her in tender concern ; “ let me take off this smothering bonnet and veil !”

“ And that ugly dress, too,” said Elena, coming from a closet with her hands full ; “ here is a nice double-wrapper that will be far more comfortable, I’m sure.”

“ Oh, you are too good, too good, both of you ! I ought to be ashamed of myself !” cried the girl, in a changed but familiar voice, suddenly starting to her feet and tearing off her disguise.

“ Gitsie !” cried Elena, in astonishment, as the white kerchief bound about the neck and face fell to the floor, releasing a wealth of raven black tresses, falling in heavy masses below the wearer’s waist.

“ Gitsie ! Miss Ertel !” faintly echoed Mrs. Ramsay, and sank trembling into a seat.

“ Oh, my dear Mrs. Ramsay ! what have I done please say that you forgive my mad prank,” cried Gitsie, in dismay, running to her hostess, dropping on her knees by the side of her chair, and putting her arm about her neck.

“ Certainly, my child,” Mrs. Ramsay said at length. “ Never mind me ; ’tis only that my nerves are weak, and you acted your part so thoroughly I can hardly

believe, even now, that you and that poor trembling fugitive are one and the same." She finished with a faint attempt at a smile, and the color coming slowly back to her cheek.

"It was only one of my practical jokes," said Gitsie, apologetically. "I wanted to see if I could hoax you all, Mr. Landon in particular."

"But, my dear, don't do this again. People do not like to have their sympathies aroused and their hearts wrung for nothing."

"My dear Mrs. Ramsay, only forgive me this time, and you may be sure I'll never do the like again," pleaded Gitsie, with mortification. "I had no thought of making you ill, and am dreadfully sorry about it."

"I'm not ill, dear, and you are quite forgiven," Mrs. Ramsay said, kindly.

"How well you did it; I never once suspected you, and I'm sure the others didn't either," said Elena, indulging in a merry laugh, now that she found her mother recovering from the shock. "There's Fred," as a step sounded near the door, and flying to it, she called him in.

"Allow me to introduce to you your nameless *protégée*," she cried, taking the arm of Gitsie, who had risen to her feet, and drawing her towards him.

"Miss Ertel!" he exclaimed, in astonishment, not unmingled with disgust at the trick played upon him.

"Yes," she said, laughing and blushing; "didn't I cheat you well?"

"I acknowledge it; but do you think the ability to do that, something for a lady to exult over?"

The jesting tone scarcely covered the implied

reproof, and bridling with vexation and chagrin, she answered pertly: "A man never enjoys owning that he has been outwitted, especially by a woman. But there," she added, recovering her gay good-humor; "I forgive your ungallant speech, in consideration of the wound inflicted on your vanity,—and acknowledge, too, that I've learned that you have one of the kindest and noblest of hearts."

"Fred smiled, in spite of himself. "So you think I am to be appeased by flattery. Not very complimentary, that."

"Incorrigible man!" she cried, gayly. "But I must hurry home, or I shall be missed, and, perhaps, called to account for this freak. Good-bye, dear Mrs. Ramsay. Please don't lay this up against me, or think I'll contaminate your daughter."

Fred saw her safely to her own door. Returning, he found Elena in the drawing-room telling the tale to Albert and Ercurius.

"Wouldn't she make a good actress, Fred?" she queried, turning to him as he entered.

"I dare say; but actresses are not precisely the companions I should choose for my sister."

"Nonsense, Fred! she's a wild piece, but that's not going to hurt me. And she has plenty of good qualities to overbalance what you consider objectionable."

"Evil communications"—

"No, Fred; that doesn't apply here, for I haven't the talent to imitate her, if I would."

"I'm not sorry you haven't, for—"

"Miss Ertel is a charming young lady, I think!" interrupted Albert, half defiantly. "I admire her

extremely, and it isn't reasonable, Fred, for you to expect everybody to be modelled after the one pattern you admire."

Fred laughed and clapping him affectionately on the shoulder, said, "I'm not quite so unreasonable as that, Al, indeed. But I hate these practical jokes; especially when to carry them out successfully untruths must be told."

"O Fred, Fred, you're only a common mortal after all, and don't like to feel that you've been taken in," laughed his sister, giving him a mischievous look.

"Possibly there may be some truth in that," he said, smiling; then more gravely, "but do you really think it quite right?"

"I'm not sure, not able to decide exactly how far we may lawfully carry a jest," she answered, catching his serious tone; "and for that very reason, should avoid taking part in anything of the kind."

"That's a good child," he said, playfully pinching her cheek as she leaned over the back of his chair. "I hope, as you are to be so constantly together, you will improve her, instead of letting her spoil you."

"Yes, grandfather, I'll try," she returned, merrily, as the tea-bell rang and he rose and gave her his arm.

The Ertels were old friends and clients of Mr. Ramsay, had welcomed his family to their new home immediately upon their arrival, showing them every attention in their power, and as a natural result a close intimacy had sprung up between Elena and Gitsie who were nearly of an age, and though very unlike found themselves congenial in many respects.

CHAPTER III.

After the Holidays.

THURSTON Seminary stood upon the summit of a hill overlooking a little village of the same name in the valley below, and commanding a fine prospect of the surrounding country ; the view taking in many miles of beautiful and picturesque scenery. It was a large square building, five stories in height : the male department occupying one end, the female the other ; while a wide entrance-hall, reception rooms and refectory, on the first floor, and recitation-rooms on those above formed the line of separation between. Beside the main entrance, each department had its own, opening into a hall bisecting that end of the edifice. The arrangement on each floor was the same—hall over hall, with student's rooms opening into them on both sides. The apartments of the professors and teachers were at the heads of the stairways, being taken off the ends of the halls.

The theory of government adopted by the faculty of the institution was not to trust at all to the honor of their students, but to keep them under constant watch and ward. A vigilant oversight was kept up by professors and teachers during the day, and at

night the halls were patrolled by a watchman carrying a dark lantern, and shod with India rubbers or moccasins ; that no ray of light or echo of a foot-fall might give a clue to his whereabouts, or warn any culprit of his approach. The man's patronymic was Broadax joined to the fanciful prefix of Peter ; but among the students he was ordinarily spoken of as Cerberus, and regarded as a nuisance to be abated by fair means or foul.

Dr. Gorwick, the president of the institution, who might otherwise have been popular with those under him, was disliked for his parsimony which was extreme. His dwelling was within a few hundred yards of the Seminary, a hedge the boundary line between its campus and his garden. The latter held a number of fine fruit trees, currant and raspberry-bushes, and strawberry-beds ; but not a taste of their luscious products ever fell to the share of a student ; unless he helped himself surreptitiously.

This was Gitsie's second, and Burns' third year at Thurston, and they had treated Albert and Elena to more than one sprightly and amusing sketch of the doctor's character, and of those of two other members of the faculty—Profs. Pettibone and Jewell ; the former a weak creature whose lack of manliness exposed him to much contempt and ridicule ; the latter so strict and stern a disciplinarian that there were few subject to his rule who did not hate him.

Board was provided for the students ; but a few who preferred it from motives of economy, were allowed to cater and cook for themselves in their own

rooms. It was required that each dormitory and study should be kept in order by its occupants.

The bell in the cupola on top of the building roused pupils and instructors from their slumbers at half-past five in summer, and at six in winter; and the hour between that and a second ringing for prayers in the chapel—followed fifteen minutes later by the summons to breakfast—was expected to suffice for all necessary attention to person and apartment. In the evening the bell called them to study, afterward to prayers again, and lastly gave three sharp taps, at half past ten, as a signal for every light to be put out.

Our New York friends left for Thurston early Wednesday morning. They were a merry party on the journey. Elena had shed a few tears, just at the last, over the parting with mother and home, but soon consoled herself with the thought that a few months would restore them to each other; and by the time they were all seated in the cars her spirits had risen to more than their ordinary height, under the combined influence of Fred's brotherly attention—to say nothing of those of the other two—and Gitsie's lively sallies.

Frank and warm-hearted as she was wild and giddy, there was no malice in Gitsie's nature, but a strong sense of the ludicrous and a decided talent for mimicry, joined to an inordinate love of fun sometimes led her to do and say things she would afterward have given much to recall. She had felt keenly Fred's evident disapproval of her late escapade—which had seemed to her harmless enough when

first undertaken—and was a little shy of him this morning. But his kind, courteous, and perfectly gentlemanly bearing soon banished the feeling of constraint and set her at ease with him as with the others

They had taken an early start and the fainter shadows of the past night yet lingered over the wintry landscape as the train, leaving the stir and bustle of the awakening city far behind, went thundering on its way through the open country.

“I thought we’d find some o’ the fellows aboard,” remarked Burns, glancing up and down the car as the light grew clearer. “Why yes, to be sure, there’s Hop o’ my Thumb, large as life and twice as natural, Rudolph too, alongside and Gump in the rear.”

He sprang up, hurried to the farther end of the car, and exchanged a hearty hand-shake with the two seated together, while he nodded good-humoredly to the other—a fellow with a pompous, conceited air, a fiery red head, freckled face and snub nose.

“How are you, Burns? I never saw you looking better,” said Rudolph, a tall handsome, well-dressed, gentlemanly youth of aristocratic birth and breeding. “We’ve been watching your party for some time and had only just made out who *you* were; the rest appear to be strangers.”

“Don’t you know Miss Ertel?” queried his companion, whom Burns had called “Hop o’ my Thumb.” He had a good head, a pleasant intelligent countenance and was well proportioned, but of diminutive stature. He was Burns’ chum and when seen together—and they were seldom apart—they were

usually spoken of by their mates, as "the Long and the Short of it."

"Why, yes, it's she, Tommy, sure enough," said Rudolph, looking again. "But who's the other lady, Burns?"

"Miss Landon."

"I say, old fellow, were you sent out as recruiting sergeant for the institution?" asked Tom; you seem to have raised quite a company.

"Only two, Ake; the other is merely his sister's escort."

"Which?"

"The one beside her."

"A good looking chap; and she's pretty, too. Can't you introduce us, Er?"

The request was complied with at the next station where the train paused for a brief space, and the two youths were added to the party; a vacant seat being found close at hand.

They picked up others as they travelled onward; among them Albert's room mate, Mark Hurst, and an odd looking girl whom Elena recognized at once from Gitsie's graphic description:—a tall, angular figure, chalky complexion, hair, brows and eyelashes merely a shade darker, and whitey-blue eyes, from which color and expression seemed to have been nearly washed out.

A glance of intelligence was exchanged between our two maidens, and Gitsie whispered in Elena's ear.

"Yes, that's Jerusha Arabela O'Flarity."

"I knew it"

"Did I do her justice?"

"Hardly."

"Just wait till you see her, pen in hand, over that novel. She's in her glory then."

Miss O'Flarity was always writing a novel whose characters and incidents ordinarily formed the staple of her conversation.

Both girls laughed, and Gitsie remarked, "Now you have seen our greatest oddity, unless it be Prof. Pettibone, who is every bit as queer in his own way."

The sun was setting as they steamed into the little village of Thurston, and hurrying from the cars, crowded into the omnibus that was to carry them the remaining half mile, through the town and up the winding ascent to the Seminary.

Burns was very active in assisting the ladies and attending to their baggage, and only at the last moment sprang upon the step of the vehicle, where he stood, holding on to keep himself from falling, every seat being already filled.

"Won't you come in out of the cold, Er?" shouted Tom, as they rattled onward. "Here's a capital seat for a little lad like you," facetiously indicating his own knee.

"Thanks, Tommy, but I'd have to fold up my legs into too small a compass."

"Awful proud Er is of those long pedestals of his," laughed Gump, sneeringly. "Do let him stay where he can show them off to the best advantage."

"And well he may be," simpered Miss O'Flarity. "I admire to see a tall man. My heroes are all tall, strong, brave men."

“Mind is the measure of the man, Miss Jerusha Arabella,” returned our short friend, drawing up his small person with a comical air of dignity.

“Gump, seated nearly opposite Elena, was staring at her in impudent admiration. “Confounded pretty girl, that!” he exclaimed, in a loud whisper to Rudolph.

“For shame! have you no manners?” reproved the latter, while a quick, vivid blush overspread the fair girl’s face, and Fred, who also had overheard the remark, gave the insolent fellow a look that caused him to turn his eyes in another direction. He did not venture to repeat the offence during the ride.

The girls found the furniture neatly arranged, and a bright fire burning in their study. Fred had their luggage carried up, unstrapped their trunks, admired the view from their windows, the pictures on the walls, the carpets, curtains, etc.; asked if all their wants were supplied, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, withdrew and went over to the other end of the building to show the same interest in Albert’s surroundings.

But he had not many minutes to spend there before the ringing of a bell summoned them all to the refectory for their evening meal.

Tables were set for the young ladies on the side of the room nearest their own department, and for the young men at the opposite side, nearest their’s.

Our two young girls were seated together, and talking in an undertone, Gitsie, from time to time, gave her friend bits of information in regard to those present, both teachers and students.

“Who is that?” asked Elena, as a shabbily dressed young man crossed the room and disappeared through the door leading into the lowest hall of the male department.

“Oh, that’s Stephen Guthrie, a poor student who pays for his tuition by sweeping the halls and recitation-rooms, making fires, and doing other odd jobs about the building. He works very hard, is always perfect in his recitations and the professors say has a splendid mind: more talent I believe than any other fellow here. He doesn’t mix much with the others though; most of them look down on him because of his poverty and don’t care to hide it either.”

“Poor fellow! Well, perhaps the tables may be turned some day,” said Elena. “I saw him helping with the baggage, and noticed what a noble, intellectual face he has.”

“Yes, so he has; he’d be almost handsome if he were well dressed; but he’s so very shabby, his pants and coat sleeves are so short that one might suppose them originally intended for Tom Ake, who is several sizes smaller than he.”

“There, that’s Prof. Pettibone! that tall, thin, nervous looking man; nearly opposite us, gold specs and a little bald. He’s a hypochondriac, and always imagining there’s something terrible afflicting him. Thinks he has no appetite, declines everything offered him, then helps himself and finally eats about as much as the rest. He’s dreadfully nervous too, and of course the fellows delight in annoying him. They let drop a book or a desk lid, or slam a door—quite accidentally of course—and give him a start that

upsets his nerves for the rest of the day. One fellow fired off a pistol close to his ear, and he didn't get over it for a week."

"Is he harsh and severe?"

"No, only peevish and unreasonable at times."

On leaving the table the company in general repaired to the large reception-room where the evening was enlivened by music and conversation, while teachers and students made or renewed acquaintance with each other. Fred was present with the rest and by his agreeable manners, and entertaining talk, won golden opinions from old and young. He was to leave in the morning

A **LITTLE** attic room, the moonbeams shining coldly in at the curtainless window, lying in silver bars on the bare rough boards of the uncarpeted floor, and sending their soft radiance into every nook and cranny, making distinctly visible the nakedness of the old walls and all the poverty of the scant furnishing;—only a rude bedstead in the far corner, with hard pallet and bolster of straw, its one thin, worn blanket and quilt giving small promise of warmth and comfort, in this bitter winter weather;—near the centre a diminutive stove, both cracked and dusty; on top of it an iron pot; beside the window a broken chair and pine table; on the latter an unlighted lamp and a few well worn books.

The door opened and a young man entered and closed it after him. With folded arms and bent head he paced slowly back and forth, sighing heavily once or twice. He was weary with hard work, depressed by neglect and contempt from some of his superiors in wealth and position, yet far beneath him in intellect and moral worth, also. The coldness and lack of comfort here too were in unpleasant contrast with the warmth

and plenty below. The appetizing odor of the steaming tea and coffee, the tempting look of the bread and butter, meat and fruit on the tables he had passed a moment since, on his way through the dining-room, were with him still, and it was no easy matter just now to reconcile himself to his circumstances and take with thankfulness his own meagre fare.

But he was hungry, and food of any kind was better than none. Stopping before the little crooked stove he struck a match and lighted the fire ; then lifted the lid of the pot to see that there was water there, replaced it, and resumed his walk and his gloomy thoughts.

What a hard, hard struggle life seemed ! it had been such with him almost since his earliest recollection ; would it ever be anything else ? Why was the road made so smooth and easy to some, so rough and toilsome to him ? He felt that it was hardly just.

There was Gump, for instance, a conceited, brainless fellow, with his pockets full of money, and on the strength of that, treating him with a contempt that occasionally amounted to insolence. To be sure, as he told himself, he need not care for that, coming from such a source ; and he would be by no means willing to change places in all respects with Silas Gump ; intellect was of better worth than gold.

But there were others who had both ; there was Paul Rudolph—wealthy, handsome, aristocratic, every inch a gentleman, and no less richly endowed with mental gifts than himself ! There were Bob Lenox, Mark Hurst and one or two others who were not far behind in these things, perhaps not at all if they cared

to put forth their utmost strength—yet were apparently troubled with no lack of means, and they all evidently looked upon him as an inferior ; and that solely because of his poverty ; treating him politely but as one whom they would never think of admitting to a footing of equality with themselves.

He looked about upon his cheerless surroundings, shivered in his threadbare coat, thought of their warm clothing, their comfortably-furnished rooms; of the bountiful meal spread for them three times every day, the scanty and poor fare his slender purse brought within his reach ; the feasting and jollity to them, of the past holidays, the toil and self denial to him. Ah, yes, there was certainly a very unequal distribution of the good things of this life ; and to him the lines had fallen in hard and rough places.

He opened the door of a little cupboard in the wall, took from it an iron spoon, a pan of cornmeal and an old cracked teacup half filled with salt. But the pot was not boiling yet. He threw some salt into the water, and covered it again, set the cup back on the shelf, and the pan on the hearth, put a few chips into the stove, pulled the chair up beside it, and sat down with his feet on the hearth, his elbows on his knees, and his head in his hands, crouching over the fire as if he would gather into his shivering frame all the little warmth radiating from it.

Would life always be so hard? prospects always look so dark? With what bright and happy faces his more fortunate companions—or rather fellow-students—had come trooping back! how gay their spirits, how lively their chat? He had overheard some of

them comparing notes in regard to the pleasures of their visit, and the number and value of the gifts bestowed upon them by relatives and friends.

Well, he had received one,—a pair of warm mittens from his mother knit by her own hands. Not a costly gift, if measured by its moneyed value, but worth a great deal to him as a token of the tender-enduring love which was the one great earthly blessing that crowned his life.

A mist gathered over his eyes as he seemed to see her now,—a tall thin woman, with a pale careworn, but patient face, sad eyes, the dark hair plentifully sprinkled with gray; poorly-dressed and seated before a little table, in a poorly furnished room, while with toil-worn fingers, she stitched, stitched, at that never ending sewing.

“How she has toiled for me year after year, wearing her poor fingers almost to the bone,” he said, half aloud. “Shall I ever be able to make life easy and comfortable to her?”

Then bethinking him of a letter received that afternoon and merely glanced over in the hurry of attending to some commissions entrusted to him by the matron Mrs. Weir, he drew it from his pocket.

But the water in the pot was beginning to boil, he hastily stirred in his cornmeal, and leaving it over the fire, lighted his lamp and unfolded the letter. It said:—

“MY DEAR BOY

“Don’t fret or worry about me. It makes my heart glad to know that my son loves me so dearly, and that I am so often in his thoughts (not

so constantly as he is in mine though, I am quite sure), but I don't want to be a care or burden to you. When I have grown too old to work, and you are done studying and able to earn enough to support us both, I will let you take care of me. But it is impossible for you to do it now, and to allow yourself to be anxious and troubled on my account; will only hinder your progress. My wants are few and I have plenty of work engaged for weeks ahead. As to your fear that my strength or sight may not hold out, we must just trust the Lord for that. I try to trust him for you as well as myself, and you must do the same. My heart often grows heavy over the thought of all you have to do and endure, but it isn't right; because 'tis he who chooses our lot for us and he knows best. He never makes a mistake, and he loves each of us, far better than we love each other."

"He never makes a mistake," repeated the lad softly to himself, as he rested his folded arms on the table and laid his face down on them; "how true it is! how one forgets. Ah yes, it is, it *must* be all right, hard as it seems. But what a mean, selfish spirit, Stephen Guthrie! to think your lot the harder because others are more favored: and perhaps that is more in seeming, than in reality. The tree that's most fiercely shaken by the winds takes the deepest roots. I'll try to be brave and struggle on harder than ever, trusting God more fully. But *she* shall never know *all* about it."

He rose up, took a brown earthen-ware bowl from the little cupboard, filled it from the pot over the fire

and set it on the table ; back to the cupboard again for a pewter spoon, and a tin cup containing a few cents' worth of skim-milk, and seating himself, he bowed his head over the food for a moment, then began his meal.

Hunger is said to be the best of sauce, and vigorous health and much exercise having given Stephen a plentiful supply of it, he ate with a keen relish, though this had been almost his sole article of diet for the last two months. The sameness was something objectionable, only the fine sauce kept it from palling upon his appetite ; but its cheapness suited his purse, the readiness with which it might be prepared and eaten, his scant allowance of time.

In a few moments the dishes had been returned to their shelf, writing-materials taken from a drawer in the table, and a pen was passing rapidly over a sheet of coarse note-paper :—

“DEAR MOTHER :—

“I have just been reading what you wrote yesterday. It did me good as your letters always do. You are right ; and I will not worry or fret about you more than is unavoidable. I cannot quite help it sometimes, though I know you are in safe hands, loving, tender hands that will never let you go. And it is the same with me. Ah, if I could only trust them always for us both ! I think you may feel quite bright and cheerful about me. I'm doing famously. The work I told you I had got to do in the house pays my tuition, and for my lodging, I have a room entirely to myself, so that there is no one

to disturb me at my studies. I wish you could see the beautiful prospect from my window. 'Tis a feast to the eyes. I have a little stove which cost but a trifle—and I can cook my own meals on it ; which is a great saving. Then I pay in work for my washing and mending too—by cutting wood and sometimes milking in stormy weather, for a woman at the foot of the hill, who sells milk and does laundry work, principally for this establishment. She also gives me a pint of milk night and morning—sometimes a very large one—as part pay for my services. And so my living costs very little and I think I shall be able to make my funds hold out ; perhaps to find some way of adding to them. But there is the bell for prayers, and I must say good-bye for the present. I may find time to add a little more before the three sharp taps at half-past ten tell me my light must go out. I ring in the morning, but the doctor's manservant takes the duty at night, that I may not be hindered at my studies by having to watch the time. I believe he has a particular fancy for the job."

CHAPTER V.

A Sneak.

THE next morning Fred and his sister had a few minutes alone together in the reception-room. Then the omnibus drove up to the door and Fred must go.

“O dear, so soon!” cried Elena; “I thought we had a full quarter of an hour yet.”

“The best of friends must part, and the sooner it’s done, the sooner it will be over,” said Fred, jesting to keep up her spirits. Good-bye, Lena, dear, I feel like staying to take care of my little pet sister; but that can’t be. We’ll think of you at home every hour in the day, and you must write at least once a week to mother or me; and we’ll answer promptly.”

“Yes, yes indeed,” and I don’t mean to be homesick—if I can help it. Good-bye.”

He hurried away; she walked to the window and stood looking out till she saw him join a group of students gathered about the door, shake hands with Albert and Burns, and get into the omnibus. He seated himself glanced towards the house, caught her eye, smiled affectionately, and kissed his hand to her.

She returned the salute, and stood watching the

vehicle as it wound down the hill till it was lost to view. She had not meant to be homesick, but certainly some feeling very nearly akin to that came over her as she turned to leave the large, lonely room that seemed to have grown so empty and desolate now, that Fred was no longer there.

She met Stephen Guthrie in the hall. He had been sweeping the snow from the steps and pavements and had the broom still in his hand.

"It is a sharp morning, but very clear and bright," she remarked, in a pleasant tone.

"Yes, but we have had some that were much colder," he answered, coloring slightly, and glancing admiringly after her as she passed on and went slowly up the stairs.

Gitsie was very busy over her books, and scarcely looked up as Elena entered their cosy little study. But presently she spoke.

"You don't recite to-day, *mon cher*, of course, but will go in with me to the recitation, won't you? I think it will be expected."

"Yes, Dr. Gerwick directed me to do so."

"You sound solemnholly my dear child," Gitsie said, facetiously, facing round upon her; "Now don't go and get homesick. I can't think of allowing it."

Elena smiled faintly.

"I'm all ready for old Bony, as we irreverently call him," cried Gitsie, shutting her book and jumping up; "so can treat my tongue to a bit of wagging; an exercise it's remarkably fond of, as you know to your cost. Bony is a cross old bach, that's a fact; but there's some excuse, the lads and lasses persecute him

with such an amount of tricks and teasing. But he has had almost a reprieve of late; that Gump has been a real windfall to the old professor in the way of supplying the fellows with a new butt for their practical jokes and witticisms."

"Gump? which is he?"

"That goose—or rather gander—with the red hair curled up almost as tight as a darkey's wool; you must have noticed him, for he stared at you in the 'bus, till I could have boxed his ears for his impudence. He's three parts a fool, if it isn't wicked to say it. I suppose he can't help his lack of brains, but he's so conceited with it all, that one can't help despising him. He really thinks he's both smart and handsome, while everybody else's opinion is, that he's about as ugly and silly as they make 'em."

"And he's the laughing-stock of the others? I should think that would soon take the conceit out of him."

"You innocent child! he mistakes it all for admiration—can't understand irony or inuendo, or—anything else for that matter, I believe."

"We don't have much to do with each other, I suppose?"

"We?"

"We lads and lasses."

"Oh! we are together quite frequently, but always in the presence of one or more of the professors or teachers."

"I was consoling myself that I should see but little of the red-headed individual you've been complimenting so highly. His manners are by no means

agreeable. I wish he had selected some other institution to honor with his patronage."

"So do I. But I find there are disagreeable people everywhere. It takes all sorts to make a world, they say. Yes, we're together a good deal, but with the authorities always on the alert to prevent anything like flirting or love-making. We're in the same classes, you know, then there's the skating party once in a while, and our fortnightly Friday evening sociable. All the students of both sexes may be present at that if they like; and each may invite a friend or acquaintance from the town."

"And you spend the time as we did last night?"

"Yes, talking, walking about or sitting still, as we fancy, some o' the girls play and sing, and if we choose to pay for them, we have refreshments. Never otherwise; for Dr. Gerwick would never think of going to such an expense."

There was often a good deal of noise on the stairway and in the halls and rooms of Thurston Seminary, especially on the male side—but just now quiet reigned throughout the building, except on the lowest floor—in the kitchen where there was some rattling of dishes and pots and pans; and in the dining-room which was receiving a thorough sweeping at the hands of Stephen Guthrie, the dragging of tables and chairs over the bare floor now and then, making no inconsiderable racket.

Almost every student was busy—or pretending to be so—with book or pen. Ercurius Burns sat in his study with his chair tipped back, his heels on the navel-piece, one hand in his pantaloons pocket, the

other holding a book which seemed to absorb his whole attention.

Tom, whose legs were too short to allow him to follow suit precisely, had assumed an almost equally elegant position, by propping his feet up on the table. He too, held an open volume, but the fingers of the free hand were constantly running through his brown curly hair, making it stand out in a perfect brush-heap about his head. It was a trick he had of which mother and sisters had tried in vain to break him.

Presently he shut his book, bringing his chair simultaneously to the floor with a loud thump, sprang up, darted into his bedroom, out again, and thrusting something under his room mate's nose, exclaimed gleefully, "see there, old fellow! what d'ye think o' that?"

"Splendid, my boy, but contraband of war, you know."

"Of course; all the more enjoyable for that though, eh, my dear Longlegs?"

"Certainly my precious hop Hop o' my Thumb; stolen pleasures are sweet; but our Jewell has a keen scent for such as these."

"Yes, we'll have to be wise as serpents in the matter of these little indulgences, taking a whiff only now and then when Jewell's nostrils are sure to be at a safe distance. What an everlasting old spooney it is!"

"Tom, Tom, my lad, respect your superiors!" cried Burns paternally. "Who knows but what you may be a professor yourself some day. Eh, and what now? as Tom having stowed the cigars in his trunk

again and locked it up with care, proceeded to search his pockets in turn, at length pulled out an old jack-knife, glanced at it with a nod of satisfaction, picked up a book and started for the door. "Ah, lad, lad, there'll be a sudden downfall one o' these days that'll be apt to bring somebody to grief!"

"P'raps with Bony or Jewell in a red hot temper. But who cares? anything for fun, say I."

"Tom, Tom! and after all my very paternal exhortations?"

But Tom was already gone, closing the door softly behind him.

Five minutes later, when the bell tapped to call the class together, he was busily at work with his jack-knife, upon the professor's desk. The knife and something else went into his pocket as the class-room door opened to the first one obeying the summons.

"Eh Ake, my lad, 'twont stand much more o' that. We'd better leave off now!" remarked the new comer, shaking his head and laughing.

"Let's have the fun first, Bob," returned Tom, stepping to his seat as the rest of the class filed in; the young men entering from one side, the young ladies from the other.

"With the exception of Stephen Guthrie, who came in hastily at the last moment, they were already in their places when the professor entered and took his seat at the desk.

The class was a large one and nearly all were well prepared for the recitation. It proceeded in an orderly and satisfactory manner till scarcely three minutes remained of the half hour allotted to it, when sud

denly the desk collapsed and fell to the floor with a crash that startled every one present, and fairly took the professor off his chair.

He sprang up with a startled exclamation, "What? what! what's all this? Who did it?" Then passion instantly succeeding the first shock of surprise and alarm. "How dare you? I'll have no such scandalous doings! Who is the author of this piece of most malicious mischief?"

He was very angry, his weak nerves had received a shock that made them quiver again; and there lay the desk a heap of ruins, a black stream from a broken ink bottle flowing over his books and papers, while sharing their fate was a paper bag of ginger nuts, half its contents scattered here and there among the debris.

It was one of the professor's idiosyncrasies—consequent upon his hypochondriacal condition—that he had a very small appetite; lived almost without eating, which he was wont to style a "vulgar occupation;" therefore it was extremely mortifying to have the fact made patent to his pupils that he was in the habit of solacing himself thus in private.

How those impertinent boys and mischievous girls would jest about it behind his back, making themselves merry at his expense! He could imagine how they would laugh at him; and ridicule was what he did not know how to endure.

"Speak!" he thundered; "Whose work is this?"

Profound silence succeeded the angry demand. You might have heard a pin drop. Some of the girls looked half frightened, others amused. No danger

of suspicion falling upon them ; it was not the sort of prank one of the gentler sex would be likely to play, and it was along the line of male faces the professor's wrathful glance was sweeping, as he stood there, book in hand, trembling with excitement, his face alternately flushing and paling.

Silas Gump was fidgeting in his seat, his rubicund countenance growing redder and redder every moment; there was a twinkle of fun in Tom Ake's roguish eye, but the other faces expressed nothing but a mixture of deep gravity and calm wonderment.

A pause of anxious suspense, and again the professor spoke ; this time with more calmness and dignity.

" If the guilty party does not instantly step forward and acknowledge his guilt, the whole class—the male portion of it I mean—excepting the new students, will have to suffer. I impose a hundred lines upon each of you."

" That's not fair ; 'twasn't none o' my doings," muttered Gump, who hated study, and whose grammar was apt to fail in moments of excitement.

" Mr. Gump, I shall appoint you an additional task in the English grammar," said the professor sarcastically. " It is time you learned that two negatives are equivalent to an affirmative."

But Tom Ake had risen to his feet. " I take the blame of the accident, professor," he said ; " I drew out a nail this morning ; have drawn out several at different times, so I hope you will recall your sentence as regards the rest of the class, and let the disgrace and punishment fall upon me alone."

“Very well, sir, on you then it shall fall. You should have spoken sooner, and would if you had possessed sufficient generosity and manliness—hardly to be expected, however, in one who could be guilty of so scurvy a trick as this—but better late than never.”

He was dismissing the class with a wave of his hand, but several students—Paul Rudolph, Robert Lenox, Mark Hurst, Benjamin Rowley, and Joe Sparks,—rose simultaneously.

“Tom mustn’t bear all the blame, sir; I had a hand in it.”

“And I.”

“I too, sir; one is about as much in fault as another.”

“Then the imposition rests upon each one of you five,” replied the professor, sternly. “Mr. Gump will attend to the lesson in English grammar. The class is dismissed.”

They filed out, Gump looking very sheepish.

“Much you made by that dodge,” remarked Mark Hurst scornfully, giving him a contemptuous look.

“I never pulled out but one nail, and that was ages ago,” returned Gump. “If it had been let alone since it wouldn’t have thought of tumbling down.”

“Oh, it wouldn’t, wouldn’t it? and if you’d left that nail in, it might have held together dear knows how much longer. But if a fellow’s a mind to be a sneak he can always find a hole to creep out at.”

“That’s so!” growled several other voices, among which Tom Akes was loudest and most emphatic.

CHAPTER VI

**“ Handsomest nigger in de county oh
Looked in de glass and found it so.”**

“ UPON my seconds !” cried Gitsie, who had a rather unladylike fondness for odd expletives, **“What a crash that was! Pins and needles seemed to go right through my system.”**

“Yes,” sighed Miss O’Flarity, with a languishing look; **“it gave me *such* a turn! I shan’t get over it in a month. I had actually forgotten where I was; Celestia Sophronisba had just rejected the suit of Frederic Augusta Fitzsimmons and he was bidding her a heart-broken farewell—I could hear the very words—I could see his look of despair—when down came that horrid desk and knocked it all out of my head; and I don’t believe I shall ever be able to recall the scene perfectly.”**

The girls were promenading the hall during the few moments allowed them for recreation between the recitations.

“Oh, Jerusha what a loss!” cried Gitsie, in a tone of the deepest commiseration, **“You suffer more from the accident than the wicked fellows who caused it.”**

“That’s true; unless the thing should come back to me. If one could only always set down an

idea before it slips away, 'twould be no task to write a book."

"But wasn't it as good as a play to see old Bony!" said Gitsie, bracing her back against the wall and holding her sides while she shook with half-suppressed mirth. "He doesn't eat anything, does he? the dear invalid!"

"But wasn't he mad, though!" cried another girlish voice. "I think he'd have enjoyed caning somebody."

"To be sure; or making them eat those ink-soaked gingernuts. Wouldn't that be a pill?" And Gitsie's mirth broke out afresh.

"But is he not really an invalid?" asked Elena, her soft voice taking a pitying tone.

"Oh, he's hypped, that's all."

"But hypochondria is a real disease, and those who suffer from it have a claim upon our sympathy."

"Well, yes, I s'pose that's so; but I can't for the life of me help making fun of poor old Bony—so full of whims, fancies and *nerves* as he is. But there's the bell. We go up to Mr. Jewell, this time. A jewel of a man he is too. We all have to mind our P's and Q's in his presence. Shall I take you under my wing, Miss Landon?"

They mounted the stairs to the story above and entered the class-room with quiet movement and in decorous silence.

Mr. Jewell was a man with whom the most daring student seldom ventured to trifle; strict, stern, and uncompromising, he ruled them with a firm and steady hand, and a never sleeping vigilance. No

shrink, cheating, or cribbing might be prosperously carried on under his jurisdiction, no practical joke attempted without bringing down condign punishment upon its author.

He was very neat in his person and habits, had no mercy for anything that savored of dirt or slovenliness and carried his aversion to tobacco to such an extent that he had succeeded in having it made a law of the institution that the noxious weed should not be used within its walls, in any form whatever. Of course he was unpopular and duly anathematized as an unfeeling despot.

The class was nearly the same as that which had assembled an hour previous in the lower room. Nearly all acquitted themselves well. Elena was as before, merely a listener, and finding Gump staring impertinently, and ogling her whenever he could do so without attracting Mr. Jewell's attention, she cast down her eyes, and did not lift them again till the recitation was over, and she rose with the others to leave the room.

To her excessive annoyance, the same thing was repeated every time that day that she came within the range of Gump's vision. She expressed indignation to Miss Ertel as they found themselves alone in their study just after tea.

"He actually looks and behaves as if he thought I admired him, and desired a return of the sentiment," she concluded, in a tone of mingled anger and amusement.

"I presume he does," replied Gitsie, coolly, "he's entirely made up of impudence, folly and conceit."

I know just how you feel ; for he treated me in precisely the same way, when I first came."

"And how did you stop it?"

"Just stared back at him as hard as I could, and with the most ferocious expression possible. He took the hint at last and withdrew his amorous glances. The ninny! my fingers sometimes fairly itched to knock his fiery pate against the wall," she added, with a laugh. "He's Gump by name, and gump by nature! and you know Solomon says, though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

At that precise moment the object of these very complimentary remarks was standing, brush in hand, before the mirror in his bed-chamber. There was a smirk of satisfied vanity on his ugly phiz as he contemplated it in the glass.

"If I'd only had black hair, or brown, there isn't a better lookin' chap in these minary," he said, half aloud.

"What's that, Sile? What d'you say?" asked Joe Sparks, his room-mate, putting his head in at the door.

"Oh," laughed Gump, laying aside his brush and turning toward the querist ; "I was just thinkin' that I'd not be so bad lookin' if this mop o' mine was a different color."

"It *is* of a rather a sanguinary hue that's a fact," returned the other, eyeing it not admiringly.

"Gump winced a little.

"Well, one can't have everything you know, Joe.

and except the color, it's as handsome a crop as any body need ask, thick and curly. I'll warrant now old Bony'd give something to have his bald pate as well covered, eh?"

"Maybe."

"And if I do say it, that shouldn't, I'm a right good lookin' fellow, otherwise."

Ye-es," drawled Joe, taking a critical survey of the other's face; "if your eyes, lashes, and brows were a bit darker, forehead not so receding, nose less aspiring, mouth, chin and expression more intellectual."

"That's you, Joe Sparks, always pokin' your fun at me, ha, ha!"

Joe pushed the door open a little wider, stepped in and looked about him with a low whistle.

"And you're a fine housekeeper too, aren't you? That bed's not been touched since you crawled out of it this morning. How often do you make it? once a month?"

"No regular rule, Joe; what's the use?"

"Just let that precious Jewell get his nose in here once, and he'll soon show you what's the use."

"Call this a free country and not leave a fellow at liberty to choose whether he'll make his bed, or sleep in it unmade. I say it's—it's downright despotism!"

"Well, tyranny or no tyranny, despotism or no despotism, that's Jewell's way and we can't help ourselves. But there's the tap, tap, for study hour to begin. So come along."

These two were not hard students, nor was either

of them too honorable to lighten his labor by the use of what in college and school-boy parlance is called a crib, when he thought himself safe from detection. By such aid their tasks were this evening speedily accomplished, and pushing their books aside they fell into a desultory chat.

Gump was of low birth and breeding, the son of a man who had grown suddenly rich during the war. Silas was never weary of boasting of his father's wealth, nor could he talk five minutes without showing his overweening conceit and egotism. In his own opinion he was the flower of his family and of Thurston Seminary; an ornament to society, and worthy of the unbounded admiration of every man, woman and child who had the honor of his acquaintance.

Joe Sparks had less of self-conceit, and more common sense. His parents were in moderate circumstances, and he envied Silas his full purse, at the same time that he despised him for his folly, vanity and coxcombry.

Silas began in his usual self-laudatory strain, and Joe, weary of the uninteresting and worn-out theme, and desirous to "take the boaster down a peg,"—to use his own elegant expression in relating the conversation afterward, looked steadily at him and remarked carelessly.

"Yes, Si, your hair *is* fearfully red. I don't know how you stand it; I'd be e'namost ready to jerk it out by the roots if 'twas mine."

"If you don't like the looks of it, you can turn your eyes 'tother way and welcome," replied Gump, angrily, his face rivaling the hair in fieriness of hue.

"Now what's the use o' gettin' mad. I wouldn't have said a word about it if you hadn't spoken first."

"Well, yours may be a better color than mine, but it's as straight as a stick and coarse as—as—I don't know what."

"The thread a spider spins," suggested Joe.

But Gump went on with a lofty disdain of the interruption. "And the ladies always like curly hair, and as I am not a bad lookin' chap otherwise, and have got a pocket full of tin, I'm not a bit afraid but what I can get any girl I want."

Joe's only reply to that was a contemptuous sniff. The next minute he rose and went into his bedroom. "The conceited jackanapes," he muttered, as he slammed the door to behind him.

Silas rose also, went into his room and took another survey of himself in the glass. "Confound it!" he muttered; "I say it's a burning shame to have a fellow's good looks spoiled this way. I'll try oiling it. There, I'll bet that's a capital idea. Why didn't I think of it before?"

Animated by this new hope he might have been seen, some ten minutes later, sallying forth from the institution well wrapped up in fur cap, muffler and overcoat buttoned up to the chin—the night being very cold—and taking his way toward the town.

He came back with a bottle of pomade in his pocket and applied it liberally before he slept. He continued its use for weeks, finding the effect favorable, but far too slight to satisfy him; his hair was a shade or two darker, yet still undeniably and extremely red.

Joe observed his efforts with much quiet amusement, and at length remarked, "Oils and pomades 'll never do the business in so desperate a case as yours, my lad ; but why don't you dye?"

"Die, man ! No, thank you ; I ain't ready to kill myself yet to get rid of the color of my hair."

"You *are* a Gump, sure enough," returned his plain-spoken chum. "Did you never hear of coloring the hair?"

"Oh, *that* kind o' dyeing ! Yes, yes ; of course, haw, haw. Well, how's it done?"

"I don't know anything about the process, never had any occasion to practice the art myself," sneered Sparks. "But ask Longlegs. He can tell you."

"Er Burns? What ! Does *he* dye his hair? Such a splendid dark brown as it is too." And Silas looked as if a gold mine had opened at his feet.

"No, he *don't* dye his hair ; but his moustache grows out reddish—not half so red as your pate though—and he uses something that makes it match his hair. Perhaps he'd let you into the secret."

"If he refuses at first I'll worm it out of him, somehow ; I'll go this minute and ask him. Why didn't I never think of dyeing before—such a capital idea !"

He rushed away in search of Burns and found him and Tom preparing for a walk to the town.

"What, going out, eh?" cried Gump, bursting in upon them without the ceremony of knocking. "Just wait one minute, Er ; I want to ask you a question."

"Out with it in a hurry then, for Hop o' my Thumb and I have an engagement."

"Why, man, its slushy and slippery as can be, and blowing and snowing away like anything."

"Well, what of that? We're neither sugar nor salt to melt in the snow, nor glass nor china to break if we catch a fall," said Tom, thrusting his arms into his overcoat and pulling it on with a jerk.

"Question, question!" cried Ercurius.

"I hear you dye your moustache, and I see it's a splendid color, just the shade I'd like my hair to be—and I want to know how you do it," Gump blurted out.

"Whew! Who told you that?"

"Joe Sparks. Come now, Er, do as you'd be done by and tell me your secret."

"Well," said Burns slowly; "I don't like to tell, but I hate to disoblige a fellow-student; so I'll let you into the secret on condition that you never tell where you got it."

"Oh certainly, certainly, that's all fair and right; you don't like to have it known that you dye your moustache, but I'll not tell; you'll find I can keep a secret."

"Well then, buy a box of common shoe blacking, and an egg. Take only the yelk of the egg, mind—not a particle of the white with it—beat it up well and mix it with the blacking; when you've got it well mixed apply it with a brush just as you do to your boots, taking particular care to polish it well."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"You're hoaxing me, or trying to; but I'm not so easy sold," cried Gump, walking off in a huff, while

Alc clapped his hands and shouted with merriment. "Good for you, Longlegs, you'll do for a dyer. What an *original* receipt!"

"No time for talking, old boy; let's git, before the bad penny comes back," said Burns, hastily buttoning up his overcoat, seizing hat and umbrella, and turning off the gas.

Away he rushed like a young whirlwind, as was his custom, Tom following in his wake, but quite unable to keep up; though exerting himself to the utmost; taking several of the short steps his morsels of legs could compass, to one of the flying leaps made by the longer limbs of his chum.

They reached the outer door and Tom, actually panting for breath, was calling, "Stay, stay a bit, Er; hold on there for I'm blown already," as Burns darted through, putting up his umbrella as he ran. Out into the storm, over the slippery slushy pavement he went, with small slackening of speed, but calling to Tom not to be a snail. Then "Ho, halloo!" he shouted, and Tom was just in time to see him fall prostrate on his face, his hat rolling away in one direction, his umbrella catching the wind and flying off in another, while the icy surface and sloping nature of the ground, added to the great impetus of his headlong career, sent him far down the hill, ere he could stop himself or make an effort to rise.

"Hi, ho, stop there!" cried Tom; "Not so fast. That's a new way of going down-hill, isn't it? latest style, I suppose, ha, ha, ha!" Laughing uproariously he descended at a much more moderate pace.

The moon being at the full and the ground white with sleet and snow, there was sufficient light, in spite of the storm, for a pretty distinct view of the long dark figure as it slid headforemost down the declivity.

Its progress had been stayed at a distance of a hundred yards or so from the brow of the hill ; but it still lay prone upon the earth, and Tom's mirth was checked by the sudden fear that Burns had received some serious injury.

"Halloo ! 'Er, can't you get up ?" he called.

"No, I'm fast ; come and give me a lift, old fellow."

"All right, I'm coming ! Glad you're able to speak. Well, what's wrong ? Are you hurt ?"

"No, none to speak of ; but—my coat's caught on a root or something and I can't get at it."

"Ah, ha ! and I'm the mouse to gnaw the net that's caught the lion and let him loose," returned Tom, gayly, bracing his foot against a stone and bending down to his task ; a rather difficult one, as he found, by reason of his insecure footing, the imperfect light, and the wind and sleet.

"Hold on there !" he cried, addressing his umbrella, which seemed to be making a vigorous effort to escape from his grasp. "You obstreperous old thing. I'll have to let you down and take the storm, I 'spose," he continued, lowering and laying it aside. "Now Longlegs, I've both hands free for your little job. And a nice one it is : the lining's torn, and the root pretty well twisted up into it, but 'patience and perseverance conquer all things.' There we've got you loose ; and now for the hat and umbrella."

"Thanks, mouse," and Burns gathered himself up slowly, as though somewhat stiff from his fall.

"What's the matter there? Anybody hurt?" The voice was Stephen Guthrie's and near at hand. He was coming up the hill, while another dark figure could be perceived in his rear. This latter proved to be Albert Rush returning from the village, carrying a covered tin bucket in one hand, and of course, an umbrella in the other.

The mishap was explained amid a good deal of laughter. Guthrie had Burns's hat which he had picked up at the foot of the hill, the umbrella was presently found lodged against a tree; but alas! the mere wreck of its former self.

Our friends abandoned their expedition for that night, and returned with the others to the friendly shelter of the seminary.

"Boys," said Albert; "I invite you all to an oyster-supper, to come off instanter in my study. I've a hundred here in this bucket, good big fellows, fat and fresh, and we'll have a treat. What do you say?"

Stephen was silent, hardly thinking Albert could have meant to include him in the invitation, but the others cried out in a breath that Rush was a brick, and they'd come of course.

"Guthrie you are never going to refuse?" Albert said, in a kindly, cordial tone. "Don't suppose I ask any of you out of mere politeness; I have a real desire for your company."

"Thank you, Rush; but I ought not to accept attentions that I'm unable to return," Stephen answered in a cold proud tone.

They had just entered the lighted hall, Burns and Ake rushed on and up to their rooms, but the other two passed underneath the gas-light and turned toward each other.

“Albert was struck as he had never been before with the tall manly form, and noble intellectual countenance of the poor student, and felt his heart drawn out in strong sympathy for him, as he noted the coarse threadbare coat, buttoned to the chin, the pale pinched features and hollow eyes.

“He is only half clothed and fed,” he thought, with a pang of regret that he had not sooner tried to lend a helping hand.

“Come Guthrie,” he said, with still greater cordiality; “join us for once at least; don’t let ugly pride stand in the way. Why should you be above accepting so trifling a kindness from a chum? Why, old fellow, I take greater favors from a friend of mine every day I live.”

“From God? yes, we must all take from him without hope of ever repaying any part of the debt.” The tone was low and reverent, and the sentence ended with a sigh.

“True; but ’twas of an earthly friend I spoke. Come you need something warm after your cold walk, and a hot oyster-stew will be just the thing. Your clothes too are wet and need drying and I shouldn’t wonder if your fire had gone out in your absence; and I know Mark has been keeping up a famous one in our study. No, I’ll not take a denial. Come, they’ll be waiting for us.”

They moved on together, Stephen still hanging

back a little, debating in his own mind whether to accept Albert's invitation or go on to his own room. The lad was wet, cold, and hungry; how hungry Albert little suspected or he would have marvelled at the reluctance still shown in his whole air and manner.

"No, Rush; a thousand thanks for your kindness, but I'd better not go in; my presence might not be agreeable to the others," Stephen said, as they neared Albert's study door.

"Tut, man! I don't believe it. Come along and see if they don't give you a welcome."

Just then the door flew open and Tom's roguish face looked out. "Come, we're waiting: where are those bivalves?"

"Here. Come, Guthrie; you're not to be let off." And Tom having snatched the bucket, Albert linked his arm in Stephen's and drew him into the room almost by main force.

"Lads, here's another of our chums come to sup with us."

"Glad to see you, old boy," said Burns, from behind the stove, where he sat drying himself.

"How d'ye do?" said Mark, offering a chair.

"Give us your paw, lad," cried Tom, setting down the bucket and grasping Guthrie's hand, warmly.

The latter saw no reason to doubt his welcome; he was made to take the warmest seat by the fire until his damp clothing had become thoroughly dry, and there was presently such a feast spread before him as he had not tasted for many a day.

Mark produced a pot of fresh butter and a dozen

of eggs, Albert brought out from his stores, crackers, condensed milk, and ground coffee. He and Burns boiled the coffee, stewed the oysters, and poached the eggs, while Mark and Tom set the table ; he and Burns contributing their quota of cups, plates, and spoons.

The four were in a merry mood, and Stephen, though at first shy and quiet, soon found his reserve melting away under the combined influence of the light and warmth, the good cheer and the lively chat.

"I wish we could invite two or three of the young ladies in," said Albert as he helped the oysters; "such an addition to the party is all we need to make our enjoyment quite complete."

"That pretty cousin of yours, for instance," said Tom; "I wish we could !"

"Sister," corrected Burns.

"Tush, Landon !" cried Tom, elevating his eyebrows; "You've missed it for once, Longlegs."

"Have I, Albert? Convince this gainsayer."

"Miss Landon is my step-sister," replied Albert; "so you are both partly right and partly wrong ; for there is no actual relationship."

"Just the sort I'd like to hold to her," said Mark; "she's a lovely girl in every respect."

"Did you observe how Gump annoyed her the first week she was here ?" asked Tom.

"No," said Albert, angrily; "it would have been the worse for him if I had. How was it ?"

"Impudent staring and ogling ; but he's stopped it now. She looked annoyed, blushed, and dropped her eyes at first ; but after a little changed her tactics

and stared back at him with such a world of scorn and indignation in those soft eyes of hers that even his conceit couldn't misunderstand it; so he speedily transferred his affections to chalky."

"Who's that?"

"Miss Jerusha Arabella O'Flarity; who else? I say, lads, that fellow, Gump, ought to be served out; such a lazy, impertinent, sneaking dog. Always ready to take a hand in any mischief that's up, but sure to shirk his share of the blame."

"Gently, gently, Hop o' my Thumb, the creature's not worth minding," interposed Burns; "we'll just let him alone severe!"

"He is terribly lazy," remarked Guthrie; "Sparks says his bed isn't made from one week's end to another; he crawls out in the morning and tumbles back into the same hollow again at night."

"Kindly consideration for his health should lead us to cure him of that," put in Mark, facetiously; "desperate diseases require desperate remedies sometimes you know."

Tom burst into a laugh and told of Gump's errand to Burns that evening.

"A gook joke," said Mark, as all joined in the merriment; "how nicely the red brows and lashes would contrast with the black hair. But you ought to take out a patent for that receipt, Er."

CHAPTER VII.

"Turning Out."

"SAY, boys, got any oil?"

"Oil, man? what sort?" asked Ake, starting up and going to the door, which Hurst had opened just far enough to be able to put in his head.

"Kerosene; it has such a good smell," answered Mark laughing. "I knew you used a lamp to study by, and thought you might have a little in your can."

"Guess there is; about half a pint. So that's your game?"

"Yes, get your can and come along; now's our time; he's up in Spang's study; safe to stay there for an hour at least."

"Good! capital!" cried Tom, rushing to the cupboard for his can.

"What's up, lads?" asked Burns, suddenly lifting his head from a book, over which he had been intently poring, and stretching out his long limbs; "some mischief on foot, eh?"

"Serving out Gump. Come along and bear a hand, won't you?"

"I don't care if I do; a bit of fun wouldn't come amiss."

They hastened with stealthy steps to the study of Gump and Sparks, where they found the latter and two or three others awaiting their coming.

"Here's the oil," said Mark, pointing triumphantly to Tom's can.

"Good!" cried Sparks, catching up a sand-box from the table, and leading the way to Gump's bedroom. "Come on, lads, and let's do the thing up brown before Redtop gets wind of our purpose."

A more disorderly place than the small apartment the conspirators now crowded into, it would be hard to find; collars, neckties, studs and gloves, hair-brushes, combs, and bottles of cologne, of ink and blacking, boxes of dentifrice and jars of pomade, were heaped promiscuously on the toilet-table; the floor was strewn with boots, shoes, and all the other articles of male attire, and the bed had evidently escaped a shaking up and smoothing out for days or perhaps weeks. The clothes were huddled together at the foot; in the centre was a deep hollow of the length of Gump's body; at its upper end the pillow deeply indented by a greasy head.

Into the larger hollow Tom's can was speedily emptied, the contents of the sand-box followed, and with some chuckling and a few jokes and witticisms at the expense of their intended victim, the young men scattered each to his own quarters, leaving Sparks in undisturbed possession of his study.

He was already in bed when Silas returned, which was not till a minute or two after the bell had tapped for the lights to be put out. Sparks had purposely left his door on the latch.

He rose softly, set it wide open then crept back into bed, as he heard Gump stumbling along in the darkness, uttering a sullen growl as he struck against a chair and nearly fell over it.

"Ah ha, my hearty, you don't like that, eh? But you haven't come to the worst of it yet," muttered Joe, shaking with laughter at the thought of the plunge Gump would presently take into the bath of oil and sand, so kindly prepared for him.

To pull off his boots, fling them into a corner, tear off the rest of his outer clothing, dropping it where he stood, was a short process, occupying scarcely three minutes, and with one bound Silas was on the bed; then with a grunt of satisfaction that charmed Joe's listening ears, he rolled over into his nest.

"Halloo! What's wrong here?" he exclaimed; and Joe stuffed the sheet into his mouth to stifle his laughter. "Sold! the good-for-nothing rascals, but I'll be even with them one o' these days," muttered Silas, moving uneasily and grinding his teeth with rage.

The oil and sand did not make his couch softer and easier to his limbs, nor was the scent of the former agreeable to his nostrils. But the night was intensely cold, and Silas, always lazy, had never felt more loath to rise. He lay still for some time, but the discomfort was too great to be borne and at length he turned over, with a heavy sigh, crawled out into the cold and darkness, dragged off his one garment, a large portion of which was completely saturated with the oil, rolled it up and threw it from him, groped his way to the washstand and with towels, soap and ice-cold water tried to rid himself of what had adhered to his

person, groaning and muttering angrily the while in a way that almost convulsed his listener, who could hear the sounds though unable to distinguish the words.

His ablutions finished at last, Silas fumbled about in search of a clean shirt, but could not find one, and finally crept back into bed without ; carefully avoiding the hollow, and in his anxiety to do so, laying himself down on the very edge. But the smell of the oil was still too strong to be endured, and creeping out once more, he tore off the under sheet, used its dry parts in rubbing the oil from the ticking underneath, threw the sheet as far as he could send it, turned the feather-bed over, giving it a thorough shaking up, replaced the clothes and the pillows and again tumbled in.

It was more tolerable now, but he had become thoroughly chilled and rose the next morning with a very bad cold in the head. He greeted his roommate with a scowl and an angry exclamation ; " I say, Joe, that was a real bead trick to play a fellow ! Od, such a cold bight too."

" A bead trick and a cold bite," laughed Joe, " what d'ye mean boy ?"

" Dow dote pretend to bisunderstand be ; you doe well edough what I'b talkid about," fumed Silas with a fierce scowl, and growing very red in the face. " I'b so stopped up I cad hardly talk, and all owid to the scadalous bead trick you fellows played with by bed. Dear be ! Codfoud it, I cad't talk at all !"

" That's so, Si," said Joe, bursting into a loud laugh " I'd give it up if I were you ; 'specially the

words with those plaguey ugly, troublesome *ms* and *ns* in 'em."

"Dow you just hode your togue, sir ! I'd pay you all off wud o' these days. Ad you'd better dot laugh at be or you bay catch such a basty code yourself."

May be old fellow, but if I do, I'll take that opportunity to follow your polite advice in regard to a certain little unruly member, apt to be very unruly and obstreperous indeed when closely connected with hair of a sanguinary hue."

Silas was furious and rightfully so, he thought, as an innocent and much persecuted individual ; but Joe's banter was, as he soon discovered, a mere tithe of what he had to endure in the course of the day.

It was the regular time for the Seminary Sociable, and early in the evening the large reception-room was filled with its members and invited guests.

Gump who was fond of convivial scenes—also of the sound of his own voice—could not resist the temptation to be present and to talk. He was too conceited and obtuse to be fully aware how much amusement he unintentionally afforded ; yet occasionally perceived that there was a laugh at the expense of his peculiarly nasal pronunciation.

He was doing the agreeable to a knot of young girls—Miss Ertel, Miss Landon and several others—and could not fail to see the suppressed mirth that twinkled in their eyes, and played about the corners of their lips as he let fall a sentence unusually full of the consonants he found it so difficult—under existing circumstances—to enunciate.

"I've got a codfouded idfluedza," he exclaimed.

reddening with mortification ; ' ad all id codsequecde of a bead shabby trick sub o' the fellows played be las' bight."

"Indeed ! Why, what is it, Mr. Gump ?" asked Gitsie, in a tone of commiseration.

"They poured a lot of horrid basty kerosede oil idto by bed, Biss, and sob sad od top o' that, and I was cobpelled to jubp out a'd strip off byself ad the bed all id the cold, ad the dark ; the sbell was so horrid bad, you see, that I couldn't stad it ; ad so I caught this idfluedza."

The girls could hardly suppress a titter. "What a shame !" said one. "Too bad !" cried another. "It was real mean !" remarked a third.

"You ought to take something for it, Mr. Gump," said Gitsie ; "it's dangerous to neglect a cold ; especially such a bad one."

"Oh it'll wear off id tibe. I do't like bed'-cide."

"Ah, you'd have learned to take it like a good child if you'd been blest with the training my mother gave us."

"What was that, Biss Ertell ?"

"She used to get the dose all ready, seat herself with an orange on one knee and a slipper on the other, call the little patient to her and say, 'Now, you must take this, and you can have either the slipper or the orange with it, whichever you like.' We generally preferred the orange."

There was a general laugh.

"Quite ad original idea, Biss ; your bother bust be a sbart wobad."

“ I think she is a very smart woman,” returned Gitsie, shaking with suppressed mirth.

“ Lena,” said Albert Rush, drawing near the group ; “ the doctor requests that you will favor us with some music, allow me to conduct you to the piano.”

“ What am I to play ? ” she asked, taking his offered arm.

“ Anything you like, I suppose. Give us one of those Scotch songs I like so much.”

Elena took her seat at the instrument, Albert standing beside her to turn her music.

She had a beautiful voice and played and sang with taste and skill. Several persons drew near to listen, among them, though standing a little apart from the others, was Stephen Guthrie. He had placed himself in a position to see as well as hear, and happening to turn her eyes in that direction Elena met a look of intense appreciation and enjoyment, more flattering to her than any words of praise or admiration could have been. She blushed and smiled. Her song had come to an end.

“ You are fond of music, Mr. Guthrie ? ” she said.

“ Yes, very. Won't you give us some more ? ” he answered, eagerly.

“ Rush,” said Paul Rudolph, coming up, “ you are wanted. Guthrie, can't you take his place here ? ”

“ Willingly, if that arrangement will suit Miss Landon.”

“ I'm willing to give you a trial,” she said, playfully ; “ and if you turn the leaves at the right moment you may retain the situation for the present.”

"I'm wanted, eh? Where and by whom?" asked A bert.

"Come on and you shall see and hear," answered Paul, winding his way in and out among the groups of talkers; Albert following close to his heels, till having passed into and across the hall and entered a cloak-room on its opposite side, they found themselves in the midst of a knot of students gathered there seemingly in earnest consultation on some matter of the last importance. Burns, Ake, Lenox, Hurst, Sparks and several others composed the group.

"Won't it be a jolly lark!" cried Hurst.

"Lucky dog! he'll have a dozen or so of doctors and nurses, all without a cent of pay," said Sparks.

Every face expressed amusement, several were shaking with half-suppressed mirth, and Tom was dancing up and down, throwing his arms about and laughing uproariously.

"Easy, easy, Hop o' my Thumb! you'll betray us," said Ercurius, laying a hand on his arm. "This isn't the place where the laugh comes in."

"What's up?" asked Rush.

"We're all greatly concerned about Gump's influ-
edza," said Sparks, in exact imitation of that worthy's nasal pronunciation.

'And are arranging for his speedy cure," said Hurst.

"How?"

"It's a prescription of Dr. Burns," said Paul, bowing low to the newly created M. D.; "a remedy he has frequently seen tried with entire success."

"Something that is really to benefit him?"

“Him? Yes, whether the pronoun refer to patient or doctor in fact we all expect to be benefited; since nothing is more conducive to health than fun and laughter.”

Burns explained their *modus operandi*. Albert listened, laughed, and readily consented to take a share in the sport.

A part in the affair was assigned to each and they scattered; Burns remarking that “they had no time to lose; it was already quarter past nine.”

At half-past the bell rang for prayers, the invited guests took their departure, and the students flocked into the chapel. Some signals were exchanged among the conspirators as they filed out again.

“Come, Si, with such an awful cold as you’ve got, you’d better be getting to bed,” said Sparks, linking his arm in that of his chum and hurrying him along; “it’s the best place for you by all odds.”

“What’s cub over you to be so codfounded careful of be, Joe?” asked Gump, with a laugh. “It’s a dew streak, old fellow.”

“Oh, you never were in need of my care till now. Come I’ve a rousing fire in our study and you’ll just have time to get well warmed up and to bed before the curfew sounds.”

They had passed through the lower hall and were racing up the stairs.

“Now for it, lads,” cried Burns, in an under tone to his coadjutors, he and they having entered the hall a little in the rear of the other two, and halted there for a moment.

Rush and Hurst hastened away in the direction

of the kitchen, while the others rushed tumultuously after Sparks and his convoy, tearing into their study with a hoop and halloo, almost at their heels, and without the ceremony of knocking.

They seized upon the astonished Gump and began stripping off his clothes without so much as saying by your leave. They pushed him into a chair, one caught hold of his necktie another of his coat, while two others were down on the floor tugging at his boots.

"Let be alode! What do you bead, you scoundrels?" he cried, struggling fiercely but in vain to shake them off.

"Softly, softly lad! It's all for your good," said Burns, holding him down as he made a desperate effort to rise.

"We won't hurt you, dear," said Tom, patting and stroking the fiery pate with one hand, as he drew off the necktie with the other.

"Not a bit of it darling; we only want to cure him of his nasty cold!" chimed in Paul, pulling off the second coat-sleeve and throwing the garment over a chair-back.

"It's awful sick he is, poor little chap and he must be 'tended to!" cried another, jerking off a boot, flinging it from him, and tugging at the stocking.

"I say, I won't stad it! you'll bake by cold worse. Just let be alode will you? and get out o' this, every wud of you!" yelled the victim, kicking, striking and wrestling with his tormentors with all his might.

The door opened and Hurst and Rush came in bearing a large bucket of boiling water between them.

At sight of it Gump gave a terrific yell. "Are you goid to scald be, you codfouded wretches? you idhubed brutes!" he cried, wresting himself free for an instant, terror lending him unnatural strength.

The only answer was a shout of laughter from half-a-dozen throats while he was again seized by as many pairs of hands, and thrown down upon the floor where, spite of his struggles, they presently succeeded in finishing the work of denuding him of his clothing.

"Now for it!" they cried, lifting him up and dragging him toward the bucket which had been set down near the stove.

"Pitch him in, head-foremost or any how at all," added Tom, almost bursting with laughter.

"Burder, hel—" screeched Gump; but a hand was clapped upon his mouth, before the words were fairly out.

"The chair and the blanket, quick Joe!" cried Burns.

"All right! Here they are!" answered Sparks, catching up a cane-seated chair from behind the stove, placing it over the bucket, then darting into his bedroom and out again, bringing a large thick blanket.

Gump was already seated upon the chair; both he and it were speedily enveloped in the folds of the blanket, which was instantly drawn closely about his neck and tucked carefully under and around his feet. A quilt was put outside of that and while three or four pairs of hands held them firmly in their places, Sparks, Hurst and Tom busied themselves in shaking up Gump's bed, bringing out the sheets to the stove and warming them thoroughly before spreading it up.

Silas seemed to have resigned himself to his fate, and sat still in sulky silence, unwilling to own the truth—that he found his impromptu steam-bath not unpleasant.

They kept him in it till he was in a profuse perspiration, then wrapped him up, carried him to his bed and tucked him carefully in, with many a laugh and jest.

The patient maintained a sullen silence through it all and made no response to their parting salutations.

"Good-night lad; no charge for this treatment," said Burns.

"Don't fret its little gizzard, it shall be all right in the morning," said Tom, with a parting stroke to the bright-hued hair.

"Git out!" growled the ungrateful recipient of the caress.

"Now don't be ugly little boy; he should be very grateful to his kind doctors and nurses," said Hurst, who was the last to make his exit, looking back from the door, then closing it quickly after him, to shut in the sound of the oath yelled out in reply.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bells and Belles.

THE morning found Gump relieved of his cold, yet not overburdened with gratitude toward those who had been instrumental in its cure. He was surly and taciturn, scarcely deigning to speak to any one, and returning to the good-humored banter of his chums only scowling and angry looks, with now and then a muttered oath. Sparks found him by no means an agreeable companion that day, and was not sorry to see him walk out of the room the moment the evening study hour was over.

There was a set of very wild fellows in the institution, with whom Silas occasionally consorted; being fond of a cigar and a game of cards; rich enough not to feel seriously disturbed by a small loss, and not too rich to enjoy winning when fortune favored him. Gambling was of course forbidden; cards were not allowed even though played without stakes; but to this clique, stolen pleasures were very sweet.

Several of them roomed in the fifth story, and it was there that the gaming was carried on; (always in one or the other of two studies occupied by members of the club); and not only gaming, but smoking chewing and sometimes drinking:—something stronger

than water, which had been cunningly smuggled into the house.

It was with these boon companions Silas spent the remainder of that evening. They were in the midst of the second or third game when the bell rang for prayers.

The sound was greeted with a variety of exclamations of anger and impatience.

“Too bad, I declare!” cried one.

“Drat the old thing! I wish it was tongue-tied,” cried another.

“I’d like to hammer it to pieces!” remarked a third.

“Wish ’twould freeze up as everything else does in this abominable weather—cold as Greenland;” grumbled Silas.

“Freeze up? that’s not a bad idea Gump,” said the first speaker. “Wonder if we couldn’t manage it, somehow or other?”

“I’ll lend a hand if you’re for trying it, Ben.”
“And I.” “And I.” “And I.”

“Well then, lads, say we meet here again directly we come in from chapel,” answered Ben Rowley, joint occupant with Jack Snead of the study they were leaving.

“Yes, let’s.”

“So we will.” “Agreed.” “Agreed!”

They all rushed back again the moment they were at liberty, and instantly resolved themselves into a committee of ways and means, Rowley taking the chair

“Order! attention!” he cried, striking the table

with a ruler. "The object of the meeting as you all know, gents, is to concert a plan, by which we may be rid of the unpleasant sound of that bell, the sharp tap, tapping of which annoys us and wounds the tympanums of our ears, morning, noon and night."

"Yes, confoundedly early these dark cold mornings," muttered Gump.

"Order! order! the gentleman will please not to interrupt. Is there any motion before the house? Mr. Snead has the floor."

Snead was on his feet. "I have a plan which may perhaps meet the approval of the gentlemen present," he remarked, with a bow and smile directed to the company generally. "It is this," lowering his tone and glancing toward the door. "Let us pick the lock of the belfry door immediately; then, providing ourselves with a bucket or pitcher of water, let us remain in hiding near at hand, and the instant the bell has done tapping for the lights to be extinguished, rush up—in our stocking feet, that we may make no noise—turn the bell upside down, pour in the water and leave it."

"Good!" assented several voices; "'twill be frozen hard as a rock long before morning."

"And suppose old Broadax catches us as we come down," suggested Gump, with a dubious shake of the head.

"That's the risk we have to take," said Snead. "Nothing venture, nothing have"

"I'd not like to be the fellow to be caught by him," and again Gump's red head moved slowly from side

to side. "There's the faculty to back him up afterwards, you know."

"Of course: but have you anything better to suggest?"

"Don't know as I have."

"Has any one else?"

No one had, and it was unanimously voted that Mr. Snead's plan be carried out, and the danger and responsibility divided among them.

"Who will volunteer to pick the lock?" queried the chairman.

"I!" said a fellow named Ward; "it won't be my maiden effort in that line, ha! ha!"

"And I'll assist you, Jerry," added Snead.

"All right!" said Rowley; "and Gump and I'll undertake the bell. I'll turn it up and hold it while he pours in the water. The rest of you may be on the watch to give timely notice of approaching danger."

"Come on, Jerry;" said Snead, jumping up; "we must hunt up our tools and to work; for 'time and tide wait for no man.'"

"Come back and report as soon as you're done," said Rowley, as they were hurrying from the room; "and Gump and I'll be ready for our part. But quiet, boys, quiet!"

"Of course, teach your grandfather," returned Snead contemptuously as he closed the door.

Rowley and Gump were left alone.

"I say, isn't this a precious jolly lark, though? There won't be any wonderment in the morning, will there? not a bit of it," laughed the former, bringing

a pitcher of water from his bed-room and setting it beside the stove.

"I should say," returned Gump, chuckling; "and if we don't any of us stumble upon old Broadax, what a sweet time the faculty will have trying to ferret out the offenders, ha! ha! ha!" And he threw himself back, tilting his chair on to its hind legs, and with his hands in his pockets and his feet upon the stove hearth, indulged in a prolonged fit of laughter.

"Come, be quiet! Mum's the word at present," said Rowley. "Pull off your boots; we'll have to go in our stocking feet."

"I'll catch another nasty cold," growled Silas, complying with a very bad grace.

"Well, that's better than letting Broadax and the faculty catch you," answered Rowley, remorselessly.

After that they sat almost in silence, till Snead returned, entering on tiptoe.

"It's done," he said in a loud whisper; "the door's open, and you'd better come on at once. It lacks only ten minutes to tap, tapping time, and you'd best be on the spot to turn up the bell and douse in the water the instant that's over."

"Yes, *you* teach your grandfather!" retorted Rowley, taking up his pitcher; "as if I hadn't gump-tion enough to know all that."

"Come on then, I'm going with you; for I've been up in the belfry, and I can tell you it'll take two of us to turn that heavy thing over in a hurry. We'll about freeze our fingers off, too; for my! how the wind whistles through there, and cuts your face and hands as if it came from the North Pole. Ugh!"

They crept cautiously down the hall and up the steep and narrow stairway leading to the belfry, in single file, Gump bringing up the rear.

They found it quite as bleak a spot as Snead had represented; an icy wind swept freely through from side to side, meeting no greater impediment to its progress than that presented by venetian shutters. They were in the dark too, for they dared not venture to carry up a light.

They crouched down upon the floor, shivering and shaking, and their teeth chattering with the cold.

"Whew! But it's awful cold here! I begin to think it doesn't pay," muttered Gump.

"Be quiet, will you! or"—Snead was interrupted by the sudden, sharp clang of the bell so close at hand and so loud, that Gump started back, lost his balance, and would have fallen headforemost down the stairs if Rowley had not clutched him by the leg just in time to prevent the catastrophe. As it was he scrambled back to his former position with some difficulty, as the third and last stroke thundered in their ears.

"Now for it! Quick! Here's the pitcher. Good luck I didn't give it to you before, you blundering ninny!" cried Rowley, putting the pitcher into Gump's hands and instantly seizing the bell on one side, Snead doing the same on the other, having first taken the precaution to get a firm grasp of the clapper.

Two or three minutes were sufficient for the accomplishment of their purpose, and they stole down, secured the door, and with a whispered word or so of

mutual congratulation upon the success of their scheme, hurried noiselessly away each to his own rooms, and each on his safe arrival, heartily felicitating himself on his lucky escape from an encounter with the dreaded Broadax.

“That you, Gump?” queried Sparks, from under his blankets.

“Yes.”

“You must be fond of going to bed in the dark. Where have you been all this time?”

“None o’ your business.” The tone was surly and defiant.

“Oh, ho! It ain’t, aint’t it? Well, it’s precious little I care.” And Joe turned over and went to sleep again. * * * * *

Stephen Guthrie had a hard life in the seminary—enduring not only cold and hunger, but much fatigue also in his efforts to keep pace with his classes, and attend to his numerous other duties. One of the most important of these was the ringing of the bell. He was always waked precisely at five o’clock by the watchman, who then took his departure from the building.

The rap of Broadax on Stephen’s door was his signal for rising; giving him half an hour to attend to his own private matters, before rousing the rest of the household and beginning his public duties.

The night of Gump and Co’s visit to the belfry had been a very cold one, and the air of early morning even within doors, when there was no fire to temper it, was stinging.

Stephen shivered as he thrust his arms into the

sleeves of his coat, then drew the garment close about him and buttoned it to the chin. "What terrible weather," he said, half aloud. "I must afford myself a little fire and something warm for breakfast. I wish my unknown friend could guess what a comfort his gifts have been to me. I do think I should have frozen last night without those blankets."

There had been some very mysterious doings in Guthrie's room of late. Too proud to willingly allow any one to learn how poor were his accommodations, and how scanty was his fare, he always locked his door carefully on going out, and took the key with him. But only three nights ago on returning to it he had found his bed furnished with two thick, warm blankets, and his cupboard with coffee, tea and sugar, eggs, butter, bread, cold ham and fresh sausages.

His astonishment was unbounded, and his pride somewhat hurt. The latter would not allow him to proclaim the thing, and make bold inquiry as to the donor of all these comforts, and his manner of ingress and egress; but he cautiously sounded the matron and others who it would seem likely might be privy to the affair; yet without eliciting the slightest clue to the mystery. So seeing it was impossible to return the gifts, he was fain to enjoy them, thanking, in his heart, both God and the unknown giver, and hoping at some future day to discover the latter's identity and make a suitable return.

He kindled a fire, boiled some coffee, cooked a bit of the sausage, and made a royal breakfast.

It was now time to ring the bell; indeed he feared it might be a minute or two past the time, and rush

ing out, he hurried down the hall, seized the rope and gave a vigorous pull.

Not a sound.

Another and yet more determined effort, but with a like result.

“What on earth ails the old thing!” he cried, impatiently. “I should say it was frozen up if there was anything about it that could freeze.”

He hastened back to his room for his lamp, and the key of the belfry door. The sound of his returning footsteps roused Snead who lifted his head and listened, then laughed low and gleefully to himself as he heard the key turn in the lock and Stephen’s quick, springing step climbing the steep and narrow stairs.

It came down again almost instantly, kept on toward the lower part of the house, and Snead composed himself for another nap.

Stephen made his way straight to the kitchen, took possession of a large-sized hand-bell which was kept there, and returning, passed up and down the halls from story to story, his lamp in one hand, the bell in the other, swinging it to and fro with a clang that might almost have roused the seven sleepers.

Doors were thrown open here and there and heads popped out with questions and exclamations. “What’s up, now?” “Stop that infernal noise, will you?” “Is the house a-fire?” “Why don’t you ring the belfry bell?”

These from the young men, Stephen keeping on his way, occasionally shouting back, “Time to get up and the other bell’s out of order.”

Some of the girls too opened their doors and asked the cause of the unusual proceeding, but in gentler and more timid fashion. Elena Landon, in hastily-donned dressing-gown and slippers, softly undid the fastenings of her study door and peeped cautiously out.

The light of Stephen's lamp flashed full upon her face. Stephen caught sight of her, and thought he had never seen anything so pretty as she was at that moment with her hair hanging over her shoulders, her eyes bright and cheeks slightly flushed with surprise and excitement.

As her glance met his, she drew back, coloring still more deeply, conscious of her dishabille and never dreaming how well it became her.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, ceasing his clang for an instant ; " the belfry bell won't work this morning and this is its substitute. "

She smiled, and Gitsie, peering over her shoulder, cried out, "Well upon my seconds ! What a racket ! I declare it seemed to me that pins and needles went right through my system with that startling clang, clang, clang."

Stephen laughed and began again ; when another door was thrown open and out popped a nightcapped head, while the girls, exchanging a mirthful glance, hastily but softly closed their door and stood listening ; they knew the head belonged to Professor Pettibone whose room was next to theirs.

"What's the meaning of this infernal racket ?" he cried, in a tone of mingled anger and querulousness. You've given me such a shock as I shall not get over

in a month. What is it for? Who told you to come to my door—or anybody's door with a hand-bell—a harsh-toned, cracked, deafening thing that sets one's nerves all on edge. Who was it? I ask. Will you answer me?"

"No one, sir," said Stephen, respectfully; "but the other bell won't work this morning, and I knew I was expected to wake up the students."

"Well, I'm not a student, and I don't choose to be roused suddenly out of my morning nap—the only refreshing sleep I get—by such a noise as this."

"I'm very sorry, sir; but what could I do?"

"Knock on the doors as you pass up and down leaving mine alone; if you had a grain of common sense, you could think of such measures without requiring to have them pointed out to you. I shall positively be good for nothing all day in consequence of this—hardly able to hear a recitation."

"I'm very sorry, sir," repeated Stephen; "but"—

"That doesn't mend matters in the least," interrupted the professor testily. "But have you done? or do you intend to go racking my nerves with that horrible din."

"I am just done, sir; I began at the top of the building and this is the last story."

"And broke my slumbers with the first stroke, and went on with your everlasting ding dong, till you've got my poor, distracted nerves into such a state that you could almost knock me down with a feather." With these words the head was drawn back and the door hastily shut and bolted.

The girls secured theirs and indulged in a hearty, though not very loud laugh.

“Dear old Bony, he’s *so* lovely and amiable!” cried Gitsie; “Hewey Jones! but won’t we have a sweet time in class to-day!”

“We’ll have to be extremely circumspect,” said Elena. “We must make allowance for him; for I dare say he does suffer a good deal.”

“Yes, I s’pose so. As a good old auntie of mine—the kindest-hearted creature in the world—often says, ‘If everybody knew everything about everybody, nobody would wonder at anything that anybody does.’”

CHAPTER IX

Puzzled.

IT was a cold, stormy night; the wind made a great roaring and groaning through the leafless branches of the trees, and sent the sleet dashing against the windows; but within the cosy study where our two young girls were busy over their books, all was bright and cheery: the curtains were drawn, shutting out every breath of the keen, biting wind, a shaded lamp on the table shed a soft and beautiful light over everything, and the fire in the grate was one glowing mass of coals. Warmth, light, comfort, luxury were here.

Was Elena thinking of that, and picturing to herself the contrast presented by an attic room in the other end of the building, as she turned her eyes from her book and looking thoughtfully into the fire, sighed softly to herself? True, she had never seen that bare and comfortless apartment, but Mrs. Weir, their kind hearted and ladylike matron, had once given her a graphic description of it.

The bell tapped—the signal for the close of the study hour, and Gitsie tossed away her book with an exclamation of relief and pleasure.

“What’s the matter, *mon cher*? you look as sober as a judge, and don’t seem to have heard the bell;—sitting there with your book still open before you. A penny for your thoughts.”

“Hardly worth it, Gitsie,” Elena answered, with a quiet smile, as she rose and placed her books carefully in her desk.

“What a splendid fire!” yawned Gitsie, lazily, stretching out her feet to catch the pleasant warmth. “Tell you what, Lena, nobody in this institution fares better than we do.”

“No; how much we have to be thankful for!”

“True enough. But why don’t you come and sit down?”

“I’m going to bed.”

“To bed, already?”

“Yes; I’m tired and sleepy; and besides, I like to lie cosily in bed and listen to the wind and sleet.”

“Oh nonsense! It would be very much better and more sociable to sit here with me, beside this glorious fire.”

But Elena was not to be persuaded; she retired to her bedroom, and the sound of her soft, regular breathing coming through the half open door, presently told Gitsie that she was fast asleep.

Gitsie listened, smiled oddly to herself, sat a moment with her elbow on the table and her chin on her hand in deep cogitation, then rose, stole softly into her own room and closed the door, taking care to make no noise.

The signal for putting out the lights woke Elena. She just roused herself sufficiently to notice that the

lamp was no longer burning in the study, and to think that Gitsie must have followed her example in retiring early, and was dropping off to sleep again when a strange sound, coming from the study, caused her to open her eyes and start up in the bed, listening intently to catch it again. It was repeated—something between a sigh and a groan—and springing out upon the floor, trembling in every limb with the fear that her friend had been taken suddenly and violently ill, she thrust her feet into her slippers, threw on a warm dressing-gown, and hurried to her aid.

The lamp was out, but the fire still burned brightly enough to make every object in the room distinctly visible. One quick glance told her that Gitsie was not there; but crouching over the grate was the bent form of an old woman dressed in a dark stuff gown, a little black shawl about her shoulders, and on her head a white muslin cap with a deep ruffle that half hid her shrunken features.

“Is it you, honey darlint?” she asked, in a rich Irish brogue, turning her head to look at Elena, as she stood gazing at her, spell-bound with astonishment. “Niver mind the likes o’ me dear, but jist go on wid ye’re slapin’!

“Who—who are you?” stammered Elena, rubbing her eyes to convince herself that she was not still asleep and dreaming.

“Mary Malony, Miss, at at your service,” replied the person addressed, rising and dropping a low courtesy.

“And—what do you want here?”

“Jist to warrum meself be this illegant fire, Miss,

that's wastin' it's swateness on the desert air, as you may say—you and 'tother young lady bein' fast aslape under the good thick blankets o' yer beds, an' niver carin' for it at all, at all."

"But how did you get in?"

"Through the door, Miss, sure; how ilse honey?"

"Was Miss Ertel here when you came? Did she let you in?"

"I jist opened the door an' walked right in, Miss, an' there's been niver a sowl wid me since, till you come yersilf."

Elena was greatly puzzled and perplexed. They always kept the door from their study into the hall carefully locked and bolted at night, locking it in the daytime also, when both went out. She had secured the fastenings herself before going to her own room, and felt sure that Gitsie would never have opened to this stranger and left her there alone.

Nor would she leave her there. She seated herself on the opposite side of the fire and waited, hoping the woman would soon go.

"It's a cowld night, Miss, a bitter cowld night, as ye'd know better than I could tell ye, if ye'd come up the hill yonder wid me, an' the wind blowin' the sleet right in yer face," she said, bending still lower over the grate.

"I wonder you should venture out in such weather, and so late at night too," said Elena.

"An' what for wouldn't ye, if ye were bid to go an' hadn't so much as a roof to cover your head, or a pillow to put under it?" exclaimed the woman, rocking herself to and fro, and sobbing viole tly.

"Are you really in such distress?" asked Elena.

"Yes, Miss," and she poured out a tale of poverty and distress, loss of husband, children, and home, of being forced to take refuge with a drunken nephew, and turned out by him that night into the darkness and storm.

An emotion of strong compassion swelled in Elena's heart as she listened. She glanced around the room again. There was the sofa; could not the poor creature rest there for a few hours, and in the morning Mrs. Weir might be consulted about finding her employment and a home.

But there were valuable articles in the room that might be carried off, and how could she know who or what the woman was, or whether there was a word of truth in her story? And how could she have got into that room or even into the house? Elena grew more and more perplexed; then greatly alarmed as the thought flashed into her mind that her mysterious visitor might be an escaped lunatic who had somehow cunningly entered and hidden herself there during the day. "Oh, if Gitsie would but overhear them and come to her assistance! But she was probably asleep as no sound came from her room.

The fire was dying down, and darkness deepening about them every moment. The woman lifted her head, looking Elena full in the face, and surely there was the glare of insanity in her eyes.

Elena had great presence of mind, and did not start up or scream, though her heart almost ceased to beat, and every hair on her head seemed to stand on end with terror.

“It is lonesome for us two to sit here by ourselves,” she said, carefully steadying her voice. “I’ll call my friend to keep us company.”

How she reached Gitsie’s door she hardly knew, but once there she sprang in, closed and locked it, then sank trembling upon the bed. In an instant she was conscious that the bed had not been touched, that Gitsie was not in it, nor in the room ; for all was still as death.

“Oh, what has become of her ?” she cried, half aloud. “Gitsie ! Gitsie !”

“Here, Lena dear. I’m a wretch to frighten you so. Mary Malony’s a myth. I thought you’d have found me out directly.” It was Gitsie’s own voice on the other side of the door.

Elena’s first emotion was certainly one of intense relief ; the second one of righteous indignation, as she unfastened the door and confronted her roommate ; but it passed in a moment ; for her temper was of the sweetest.

“I’m a wretch,” repeated Gitsie, repentantly ; “a wicked imposter ; but I never thought to frighten you so. An old Irish dame is surely a harmless sort of creature.”

“Not if she’s an escaped lunatic,” said Elena, laughing, yet trembling still from the shock to her nerves.

Then Gitsie went off into fits of laughter. “Well, well ; did you ever ! so *that’s* what you took me for ? Well, you were a deal braver than I should have been, and kept your wits about you, wonderfully.”

“You’re a wonderful actress,” returned Elena.

"I believe you'd make your fortune on the stage. But hark! isn't that old Cerberus coming?"

"I heard nothing, but we'd better take to our heels," returned Gitsie, almost under her breath; and quaking with fright, yet shaking with suppressed laughter they ran on tiptoe each to her own room.

CHAPTER X.

Tit for Tat.

HUMAN nature is a contrary thing, and Prof. Pettibone's excessive anger and annoyance, because of the trick played upon the solitary tenant of the belfry, and the consequent use made of the (to him) obnoxious hand-bell—which he displayed upon all occasions through the day—inclined the rest of the faculty to make rather light of the offence.

Still an effort was made to discover the perpetrators, and proving unsuccessful all were held in some measure accountable, and as a punishment were deprived of certain pleasures and privileges.

Among these was a sleigh-ride to which the whole seminary had been looking forward for weeks past, with pleasing anticipations. Several omnibus sleighs were to have been chartered for a ride of some eight or ten miles to another town, where a sumptuous feast would be partaken of, and an hour or two spent in social enjoyment, after which the return ride would be made by the light of the moon and stars.

The sleighing was very fine, the moon nearly full, and by the second day after the temporary quieting of the voice in the cupola, the weather had moderated

just enough to make such an expedition as comfortable as possible without spoiling the roads.

The students immediately set about their preparations, and applied for the necessary permission, through a committee of two, Lenox and Hurst—appointed to wait upon the president with the request.

It was refused. The committee—inwardly burning with rage—respectfully submitted that the excursion had been promised them long since, merely leaving the question of time unsettled; and that fine sleighing, moonlight and comparatively mild weather all combined to render the present a most fitting season.

The doctor's refusal was repeated with added peremptoriness and decision. "Such promises were always understood to be conditional. There had been a flagrant breach of discipline in the wanton attack upon the bell, and so long as the actual offenders were not given up to justice, the whole seminary, or, at least the male portion of it, must suffer in consequence." With these words and an imperative wave of the hand they were dismissed from the presence.

"Wouldn't I like to throttle him!" muttered Hurst, as soon as they were fairly out of the house; "we had no more to do with that silly trick than he had."

"Horrid old wretch," chimed in his companion; "I vote we pay him off for this. If we are treated as mischief-doers we may as well deserve it, eh?"

"Yes, that's the talk, say I."

The interview had taken place in the doctor's study which was in his own room. The young men

were now walking rapidly toward the seminary, not many yards distant. In another moment they had reached the campus and joined a group of their chums who seemed to have been waiting there to receive their report.

It was listened to with hisses and cries of "Shameful!" "Downright tyranny!" "Abominable despotism!" "The rankest injustice!"

"That it is!" cried Hurst. "I tell you I felt my choler rise so—"

"Then put your collar down, sir," exclaimed a merry voice accompanied by a silvery laugh, a little in the rear of the group.

"Ah, is that you, Miss Gitsie?" said Hurst, turning round with a bow and smile, as he spoke; while the others lifted their hats to the ladies; for Elena was with her friend.

"Indade, yes, an' it's jist meself an nobody else," she answered, curtsying and smiling, her dark eyes sparkling with mirth. "An' what for, sure, was your honor's collar risin' up so high?"

"Oh," he said, laughing; "we're not to have our sleigh-ride; and all because of that silly trick of some numskull with the bell. We've been waiting upon the doctor, and that's the answer we got."

"Of course; I could have foretold it. I appeal to Miss Landon if I didn't say this morning that he'd refuse to let us have it, and for that very reason."

Elena assented.

"You know the old cove?"

"Yes, like several books, Mr. Hurst. But that could hardly be called a respectful title," she

answered demurely. "Come, Miss Landon, let us hasten on our way before our morals are further contaminated. Good-evening, gentlemen."

The hats were again lifted, and the girls tripped away, passing round the corner of the building and so gaining the entrance which was exclusively theirs.

"Isn't it too mean," exclaimed Gitsie, making energetic use of scraper and mat. "I was looking forward to no end of fun, and I'd like to pull his ears or his whiskers for him. Wouldn't you?"

"Set the example and I'll follow suit," said Elena, laughing. "I do think it is too bad to punish us all for what we'd no hand in; and such a trifle too; for the old bell will be all right when the thaw comes."

Ill news flies fast, and by the time the summons to supper came, scarcely half an hour after the return of the committee, nearly every one in the house knew the result of their application.

In consequence very few bright faces appeared at the table; the large majority were scowling, indignant, or sullen; and the few muttered words that passed from one to another, sounded very much like the growling and snarling of so many angry dogs. But for the most part they were silent.

"I'm going down town, Hop o' my Thumb," said Burns, springing up and hurrying on hat and overcoat at the first stroke of Guthrie's hand-bell announcing the close of study hour; will you come along?"

"Thanks, no, Longlegs. I've a letter to write. I'll be coming down to post it though, in half an hour or so. Where'll I find you?"

“At Lindsay’s.” And with the words *Ercurius* was off at his usual headlong pace.

Tom wrote his letter, folded and thrust it into an envelope, which he directed, stamped and sealed. Then consigning it to his pocket and donning overcoat and cap, he took a bit of twine from the table drawer and with it in his hand hurried from the room.

As he stepped out upon the pavement the moon was shining dimly through a cloud, thus giving light enough for his purpose, and not enough to expose him to detection by any unsuspected observer.

It was the work of scarcely more than a moment to tie one end of the twine to a limb of a young tree near by, and stretching it across the pavement secure the other to the wall by means of a hook which had probably found a lodgement there months or years before, through the instrumentality of some brother student as fond of practical jokes as himself. This done our hero went whistling on his way to the town.

An hour later he returned in company with Burns and Rush.

“Who’d ’a thought that was what I bought it for !” cried Tom, as the three reached the top of the hill.

“What now, Hop o’ my Thumb?” asked Burns. “*Quid hoc sibi vult?*”

“Just hold on, and you’ll see returned Tom; taking a small paper package from his pocket, and tearing off the string that secured it. I invested two cents in salt, thinking it was to season our oysters and eggs ; but the wisest are sometimes mistaken

I see now 'twas meant for Sukey, yonder. Come on, lads ; here's a jolly lark."

"The doctor's cow," said Burns, following ; "why waste your investment upon her ?"

"Why, indeed ?" echoed Albert, keeping close in their wake as they hastened with quick but cautious movements towards a cow which was creeping along the path with head down, as if searching the crust of snow for something to satisfy hunger or thirst.

"He don't half feed the poor crittur," muttered Ake, opening his little paper bag and pouring a portion of its contents into the palm of his hand.

"Sprinkle a little on the ground right before her nose," said Albert, beginning to have an inkling of Tom's scheme.

Ercurius dipped his fingers into the bag and carried out the suggestion. Sukey licked up the salt with avidity and sniffed eagerly about in search of more. Tom stooped and held his hand before her very eyes, she got one taste, he drew the hand away but still held it toward her, while moving slowly in the direction of their entrance to the seminary.

Burns and Rush laughingly fell into the rear and urged her on from behind. Suddenly something caught the former just under the nose, while the hat of the latter flew off his head and rolled away over the snow, the wind taking and carrying it to some distance

There was an outcry from both, not overloud, and the one started off in pursuit of his hat, while the other stepped quickly back and stood rubbing his upper lip.

Tom turned his head. "Halloo!" he said in a suppressed voice, brimming over with fun; "that wasn't meant for you."

"Who then?" asked Ercurius, putting out his hand to feel the string, then stooping to pass under it, while the laughing Albert came running up, asking:

"Is this some of your work, Tom?"

"Yes; the doctor's apt to pass this way towards bed-time. And he's about your size, Rush. So I see I've made a good guess."

They had now reached the door and with the last word Ake pushed it open and stepped in, still moving backwards and inviting the cow to follow.

She hesitated and seemed inclined to turn away, but he gave her another slight taste, and his companions guarded her on flank and rear, to prevent an escape. Thus by little and little they led her on down the hall and up the first flight of stairs. Here the clatter of her hoofs and a slight sound of impatience and perplexity from her vocal organs, brought a dozen or more laughing coadjutors to their aid, the number increasing with every story as they went on up to the attic.

"Throw up that sash, some of you," said Tom, as the procession arrived at the lower end of this last hall which had a dormer window.

The mandate was instantly obeyed, two or three pairs of hands volunteering their prompt and willing services.

Tom held his hand outside, Sukey's head followed he threw some salt on the roof, and while she bent

her head to lick it up, stepped back and let the sash gently down till it rested on her neck.

At the same instant the bell tapped for prayers, and with a few low-breathed exclamations of mirth and delight, and much half-suppressed laughter, they hurried to the chapel, each careful to compose his features to a becoming expression of gravity before entering and taking his seat.

But the service had scarcely begun when there arose such a noise of lowing, stamping and bellowing, seemingly very near at hand, and almost overhead, as well nigh drowned the voice of the doctor, who was reading a psalm.

He paused, glanced about him in wonder and surprise, then looked meaningly at Guthrie. The latter as much in the dark as to the cause of the din as the doctor himself, instantly rose and went out.

Prof. Pettibone who was fidgeting uneasily in his seat, apparently in a high state of nervous irritability, seemed inclined to follow, but restrained himself and remained where he was, sending angry and inquiring glances from side to side; glances which said as plainly as words, "This is your doing, young men, and I would like to see you well punished."

Guided by the sounds, Stephen was not long in discovering the source of the disturbance. Brought up in the country he had been accustomed to cattle all his life. It was the work of but a few minutes to release the cow, then with the help of a wisp of hay he soon coaxed her down the stairs and put her out of the house. He saw her beyond the bounds of the

campus, and then—not till then—indulged in a hearty laugh at her expense.

He was in his place again in time for the closing prayer, with face grave enough for a judge, though there was an almost imperceptible twinkle in his large dark gray eye. It increased somewhat as the others trooped by him in passing out, and he caught the quizzical expression in the eyes of Burns, Ake and one or two more. He perceived that they had had a hand in Sukey's escapade, but was not going to betray them, if it could be avoided without an untruth.

"Well, Guthrie?" The doctor spoke interrogatively. Hat in hand he had paused before Stephen, and was looking searchingly into his face.

Every one else had gone now except Prof's. Jewell and Pettibone who were standing together a little in the rear of their superior, and listening interestedly for the lad's reply.

"It was only a cow, sir."

"A cow? Where was she? and what was the cause of that furious stamping and bellowing?"

"Furious indeed; perfectly rasping to one's nerves; enough to upset them for weeks or months to come," growled Mr. Pettibone.

"Nerves as weak as yours or a woman's, perhaps," sneered Jewell.

"If you will have the goodness not to interrupt, gentlemen," said the doctor, with dignity. "Guthrie, I wait an answer to my queries."

"She was in the hall, sir, and probably wanted to get out. I drove her out and across the campus and she walked off quiet enough."

"But how did she get in?"

"That I cannot tell, sir; since all I know is that I found her there. Perhaps some one may have inadvertently left the hall door open."

"Just as inadvertently as some one else, or the same person, stretched a string across the sidewalk at precisely the right height to knock off my hat. These inadvertencies must cease, or I may just as inadvertently expel somebody. You may as well let that be known."

"Yes, sir."

Thereupon the magnates withdrew and Stephen hastened to his work of extinguishing lights and locking up for the night.

Out in the doctor's carriage-house, situated back of his dwelling and considerably lower down the hill, something unusual was going forward; dark forms were standing here and there, or moving quietly about; while two or three were in a stooping posture—one holding a dark lantern so that its light streamed full and strong upon some object at which another was hard at work with a screw-driver.

"There," he whispered pantingly; "shut off your light, now, Hurst, quick; it's out and it's the last one." Then rising to his feet, "Come on now, lads, every fellow holding tight to his piece, and making no noise."

"Yes," returned another voice, which we recognize as that of our friend Tom Ake; "now's our time, before old Cerberus begins his rounds. He might take it into his head to commence with the lower class-room."

"Of course, it's a mighty onreglar old codger that, no knowing when he'll turn up," giggled a third.

"Be quiet, Gump," commanded the first speaker, "haste and no noise, or we'll be caught in the very act."

It was the first night dark enough for their purpose after the affair of the cow. Guthrie had repeated the doctor's warning but with little effect; the love of fun and the desire to avenge the loss of their promised sleighing frolic were stronger than their fear of punishment.

Rowley was the leader in this, as he had been in the affair of the bell. "Hist!" he said, as they crept out, the last one securing the door behind them. "Now for it, Tom!" And Ake, who was very fleet of foot, scoured away up and along the hillside, and across the campus, the others following somewhat more slowly and stealthily.

Reaching the seminary, Tom entered quietly, ascertaining to his satisfaction that there was no one in either the first or second hall, set wide the classroom door opening into the latter, turned off the gas there and in the lower hall, opened the outside door and mewed so exactly like a cat that it would have taken a very acute and practised ear to detect the counterfeit.

The others who had just come up and ranged themselves in single file close along the outer wall of the building, instantly obeyed the signal, creeping in one at a time and hastening on tiptoe to the classroom aforesaid.

As the last one entered, Tom gently closed the

door, some one fastened it on the inside ; he relighted the gas, then came back and stood guard at the door, leaning against its frame with his hands in his pockets as in a meditative mood, but really on the alert to prevent any one from trying the door, and to turn down the light when the conspirators were ready to retire from the room.

Inside they were hard at work again—carefully, though hastily and with as little noise as possible, putting together what they had so recently taken apart. The blinds had all been closed and they had no light but what the dark lantern afforded. Their work was scarcely done when the bell tapped for the extinguishing of lights.

“Barely in time !” muttered Rowley, giving a final turn to his screw-driver. “Now for a scamper—swift but noiseless.”

They had need of haste; for Guthrie had already turned off the gas below, and was half way up the stairs as the last one came out and shut the door.

“Tom, Tom, my lad, you’re growing terribly dissipated,” grunted Ercurius, in a drowsy tone, roused from his first nap by the entrance of his chum.

“Never a bit, Longlegs, I’m as sober as a judge. Shut your door when preparing to fall into the arms of Morpheus, if you don’t want to be disturbed.”

A loud and prolonged snore was the only answer.

It was to hear a lecture from the doctor himself that the students assembled in the lower class-room the next morning. It so happened that no one had entered or passed through it until the appointed hour

when Guthrie hurried in, barely in time to throw open the shutters before the rest came trooping after him. The room was warmed from below and he had swept and dusted it early on the previous evening.

As he turned from the last window a buzz of astonishment and inquiry had suddenly filled the room. All eyes were directed to the doctor's desk. What was that looming up behind it and filling the whole platform? Stephen rubbed his eyes and looked again. No, they had not deceived him; incredible as it seemed, there stood the doctor's carriage whole and entire looking as if it had walked in and taken the position of its own accord; though not even the outer door of the lower hall was wide enough to admit it; much less that of the class-room.

Stephen gazed for an instant in silent wonder, smiled faintly, then turned towards the others with a grave look of disapproval, and was just opening his lips to speak, when seeing Dr. Gerwick coming in at the door he refrained, passed on and took his seat.

The doctor who was sometimes absent minded, walked up the room as if lost in thought, and did not seem to observe that anything was amiss till he reached the desk, and was about to set his foot upon the platform. Then he started back with an exclamation of mingled anger and amazement.

"Whose work is this?" he asked, turning toward the class with stern countenance and flashing eyes.

A dead silence.

He repeated his query with added anger and determination, "Whose work is this? The culprit

will do wisely to confess at once ; for otherwise I shall ferret it out and punish them with tenfold severity."

Still only utter silence, while the faces of some of the girls grew white with excitement and alarm, and the color faded on the cheek of more than one among the young men.

"I see I must put my question individually," said the doctor, with severity ; "and woe to the student who may be so lost to all sense of honor and manliness as to venture to tell me a direct falsehood. Burns, is this your work, sir ?"

"No, sir," answered Ercurius, promptly and emphatically.

"Do you know whose it is ?"

"No, sir."

"Nor any reason to suspect any one ?"

"That, sir, is a question I must beg to decline answering." The tone was firm, but respectful, and the doctor passed on to the next.

"Have you had a hand in this piece of outrageous mischief, Mr. Rudolph ?"

"No, sir," returned that young gentleman, with an air of contempt and disgust, "*such* practical jokes are not in my line."

"No, I believe not. Rush had you ?"

"No, sir, not I, and I know nothing about it."

"Guthrie ?"

"No, sir."

"Neither actively, nor by connivance ?"

"No, sir."

Some of the real culprits were beginning to fidget

on their seats and to steal uneasy glances at each other ; the question was coming close.

The doctor paused. "I will give the guilty parties one more chance to merit some degree of levity by a voluntary confession."

Again a moment's hush, and Tom Ake jumped up with a face that grew red and pale by turns. "I've a decided talent for mischief, sir," said he bluntly ; "there's seldom any going on that I haven't a hand in, and this is no exception to the general rule."

The doctor smiled in spite of himself, and Tom dropped into his seat again with his eyes on the floor, and drew out his handkerchief to wipe his hot face.

"Sneak, coward," came in a low hiss from the lips of Gump, who sat directly behind him.

But Lenox and Hurst had risen and were acknowledging their share in the misdemeanor.

"You too, sirs," said the doctor, sternly ; "I should hardly have expected it, especially of you, Lenox. But you and Ake could hardly have managed the job alone. Who were your accomplices ?"

"That I can never tell, sir," said Hurst.

"I confess no one's sins but my own," replied Lenox.

The others waited to be questioned and only admitted their culpability at the last moment ; Gump not even then ; he stoutly denied all knowledge of the affair, but his guilty countenance and the sneering contemptuous looks cast upon him by his comrades betrayed him.

Disgusted with his pusillanimity and cowardice

the doctor assured him his punishment should exceed that of any of the others: he then lectured them all severely telling them they should be summoned before the faculty to receive such sentence as their misconduct called for, and finally wound up his discourse by ordering them to undo the mischief they had done, by once more taking the carriage to pieces, returning it to the coach-house and there putting it together again.

The class was then dismissed; the innocent retired to their studies and the guilty proceeded to their allotted task.

When the doctor's anger had had time to cool, he was disposed to pass the affair over rather lightly as a practical joke, involving no very serious or lasting consequences; but his colleagues, particularly Prof. Jewell, took a different view of the matter, thought it was time to make an example, and persuaded him that the wiser course would be to suspend Gump, Rowley and Snead—the first named for two weeks, the others for one, adding a threat of expulsion; and to give the rest heavy impositions; which was accordingly done. The sentence was thought very severe and caused a sore feeling in the minds of the students toward the professors; almost amounting to hatred in the case of Prof. Jewell.

CHAPTER XI.

Tom's Explosion.

“ I can’t stand this, I say, Longlegs ; I’m actually afraid I’ll explode if I try it on much longer.”

“ Eh, Hop o’ my Thumb ! What’s all that you’re saying, old fellow ? ” And Burns looked up from his book with an absent air, as if his mind were still too intent upon it to take in the full sense of Tom’s remark.

“ I’ve been so awful good for this last fortnight—sober as a judge and exemplary as a deacon—” replied the latter, tilting his chair back, and running his fingers through his hair ; “ talent for mischief all running to waste—never the least bit o’ fun to relieve the unnatural strain. But it can’t last, I tell you ; I’m so chuckfull of pent-up mischief that if it don’t soon find a vent—I—I can’t answer for the consequences.”

“ Pity your talent runs so much in that line, Tom, my boy. You couldn’t make a safety valve of me, could you ? ”

“ There’s a stretch of friendship for you,” said Tom, laughing.

The door opened and Rowley put in his head
“ Boys, do you like mush ? ”

"Yes, when it's got up in style," answered Tom, bringing his chair down to the floor. "Who's the cook?"

"I: it's over the fire now; I left Snead stirring, and I've got a bucket here with two quarts of rich, sweet milk. So come on, both of you."

"Thanks, in five minutes," said Burns, returning to his book.

"That's the talk, Benny, and I'll provide the after-clap," said Tom, jumping up and running into his bedroom, while Rowley, closing the door, went on to repeat his invitation at other doors.

He found Sparks alone in his study.

"Where's your chum?" he asked, when his overture had been made and accepted.

"Don't know and don't care," growled Joe; "he's taken himself off:—down town, I presume."

"All right; his room's better than his company. But you'll be up?"

"Yes, thank you, Ben, a bowl of good hot mush and milk, ain't to be sneezed at."

Tom issued from his sudden retirement, cigar-box in hand. "A good time to try the flavor of these, eh, Long of it?"

"Never a better, Short of it," returned Ercurius, pushing away his books and springing up with alacrity. "Come on lad, and mayhap we'll find a vent for some of that pent-up mischief."

They found quite a party assembled, Snead busied in dealing out the mush, Rowley the milk, amid a hubbub of voices in various keys.

"There's the long and the short of it!" cried

Hurst. "Glad to see you lads; mush enough for all; help yourselves to bowls, and seats, if you can find 'em, and make yourselves at home."

"Do," said Rowley. Much obliged to you, Mark, for saving my breath. This is a standing party, chums, too many of us to sit round the table."

"What's that, Tommy?" asked Snead, as Ake set his box on the table.

"Forbidden fruit."

"Ah! that's the kind for me," laughed Snead.

The mush proved so palatable, and the appetites so keen, that the pot was speedily emptied and put over the fire again, in order to the furnishing of a fresh supply.

"Let's have a game while we wait for our hasty-pudding," said Snead, taking out a pack of cards.

"Burns, do you play?"

"Never, thank you: in fact Jack, I'm so opposed to gambling that if it's begun I shall feel compelled to decamp instanter."

"Oh, we won't put up any stakes," said Rowley.

"No, no; and where's the harm if we play without?" asked several voices.

"If you get a fondness for the game, you'll be very likely to yield to the temptation when stakes are set up. Besides it's forbidden here, as we all know."

"Tut, man! Who cares for that 'Stolen pleasures are sweet.'"

"Let Longlegs alone, he'll not play," said Ake; "no use asking him; but he'll have a smoke if he's got his fill of mush. How about that Er?" And Tom he'd out his box.

“I’ve had all I want. Yes, I’ll take one of those, and thank you.”

“Forbidden fruit, Burns!” cried several voices.

“Consistency, consistency! It’s a jewel, man.”

“True, lads, but one I don’t possess on all occasions, and jewels are at discount with us at present.”

“That’s a fact!” from several voices.

“I can see the harm of gaming, but not of tobacco; for my good old father, one of the salt of the earth consumes a power of it.”

Ake’s box was passed round to the company generally; some declined from principle or a dislike for the weed; others because they wanted another bowl of mush first. Some few who wanted neither, and found the room uncomfortably crowded went away.

Spite of a look of mingled warning and entreaty from Ercurius, Tom seated himself at the table where the cards were already being dealt out. “Gaming’s a thing I couldn’t reconcile my conscience to,” said he, in a loud jovial tone, “but I must have a bit of fun to-night, or I’ll split.”

Ercurius lighted his cigar and paced slowly to and fro through the rooms, while the cards were dealt out and the game began. Nearly all at the table were smoking, Hurst and one or two others also, who stood looking on, and Rowley while over the fire busily stirring the mush.

Presently a dispute arose; Ake, said Snead was cheating and the latter denied the accusation almost fiercely; others took part in the altercation, and voices grew loud, excited and angry.

“Lads, lads,” remonstrated Burns, pausing in his

walk, and removing the cigar from his lips for a moment ; " you've no idea what a row you're making, you'll have the professors down on us presently."

" That you will ! " cried Rowley ; " have you taken leave of your senses, to be making such a to do about nothing ? Hist ! I hear footsteps now."

Every voice was instantly hushed, no one moved or spoke and every ear listened intently. Men's footsteps were coming up the stairs at the other end of the hall.

" The cards ! Hide them ! Quick, quick ! " cried Rowley, dropping his mushstick to spring to the door and lock it. " No, no, not in your pockets ; they'll dive into them first thing."

" Then fill 'em with mush and let them burn their fingers ? " cried Tom, setting the example as he spoke, one or two others laughingly following it, while several hastily gathered up the cards and Tom's cigar box, rushed into his bedroom and hid them between the mattresses ; and Ercurius threw up a window and sent the end of his cigar flying down into the snow banked up on the farther side of the campus.

Those of the others speedily kept it company, and as fast as the pockets were filled, the boys resumed their seats at the table, books, papers and pencils were scattered over it in a trice, and at that instant there was a rap upon the door, accompanied by the voice of Prof. Jewell demanding instant admittance.

" Yes, sir," answered Rowley, cheerfully, and stepping to the door, mushstick in hand, he threw it open, bowed respectfully and asked what was wanted.

" You are breaking rules here, young gentlemen."

said the professor, sternly, as he walked in, closely followed by his colleague Pettibone; "you are gambling and smoking. Where are those cards and cigars?"

"You have been misinformed, sir," said Rowley.

"We have not been gambling, sir," cried several voices. "Rowley invited us up to eat mush and milk."

"Don't try lying; it won't go down with me," answered the professor, angrily. "Deliver up those cards, instantly!"

"You wouldn't be so unreasonable as to require us to deliver up what we haven't got, sir?"

"Such contumacy and effrontery will not help your cause, Mr. Snead. I suppose you have not been smoking either, though the room is full of the smell of it. It is my firm belief that those cards are in your pockets at this moment, young gentlemen; and unless you produce them without more ado, we shall feel compelled to search you."

"I never gambled in my life, sirs, or hid a card 'n my pocket," remarked Ake, in a tone of injured innocence; "but if you think it your duty to search me, I stand ready to submit to the indignity."

"And I."

"And I," chimed in one after another, with becoming meekness and docility.

Mr. Jewell thought they had the cards about them, and that this seeming willingness was a ruse to throw him off the scent. He gave his colleague a meaning look, and each laid hold of a student with one hand and plunged the other deep into his pocket.

Prof. Pettibone's hand was instantly withdrawn

with almost a howl of pain and rage, and he rushed from the room in search of remedies.

Prof. Jewell's came out as promptly, but in stern and dignified silence. He stepped quickly to Rowley's washstand, plunged the wounded member into a basin of cold water, held it there till the pain was relieved in some measure, then wrapping it in his handkerchief, strode back again.

There had been an exchange of winks, nods and smiles while his back was turned, but now every countenance assumed a becoming gravity.

"This is outrageous conduct, young gentlemen," began the professor, with stern severity.

"What, sir?" asked Snead, with respectful surprise, and a touch of indignation in his tones.

"Don't pretend ignorance, young men. You have not been setting traps to burn the fingers of your superiors, I suppose?"

"No, sir, there you are quite right; we've done nothing of the kind."

"Do you dare to deny it to my very face, while I stand here before you with my scalded hand?" cried the professor, almost losing his self-command in astonishment and indignation.

"Sir, Mr. Jewell," said Snead; "did we request you or Mr. Pettibone to put your hands into our pockets?"

"What business had you with mush there?" returned the incensed professor, evading the question.

"I would respectfully submit whether there is any law of the institution dictating what the students shall or shall not put into their pockets," retorted Snead,

who seemed to have constituted himself spokesman for the whole party.

The professor could not say that there was, but ignoring the query, ordered a general emptying of pockets.

With some grumbling, and more black looks, the mandate was obeyed, revealing more or less mush in one or both pockets of several present,—Burns and Rowley being among the exceptions—and bringing to light a miscellaneous assortment of pencils, pens, jack-knives, twines, chalk, port-monnaies, note-books, etc., etc.; also a few visiting cards, but not one of the prohibited kind, nor a single cigar.

A thorough examination of the room proved equally unproductive of evidence, and with an angry threat, the baffled professor withdrew.

“*Sic semper tyrannis!*” ejaculated Burns, as the sound of his retreating footsteps died away in the distance.

“Amen!” cried Tom, taking a flying leap over a chair, and “Amen,” echoed the others, bursting into a hearty laugh.

“Alas for the hopes of unsatisfied lovers of mush!” laughed Hurst, trying to rid his pockets of the residuum still clinging to them. “I’d rather this was down their throats than where it is; but wasn’t it a capital joke, lads? Ha! ha! ha!”

“Be quiet, will you! there’s somebody at the door again!” said Sparks.

Some one was fumbling at the lock, and a familiar voice said, “Halloo! let me in will you? You’ll not be sorry.”

“Gump!” said Rowley, opening the door, “What brings him?” Silas walked in and laid a large paper parcel on the table. No one spoke, no one seemed pleased to see him; but he was not surprised; he knew he had been in very bad odor with his mates ever since his pusillanimous conduct in denying his share in the raid upon the doctor’s carriage.

But not easily abashed he glanced about him with an almost triumphant air, and rubbed his hands together in excessive satisfaction. “Come,” he said; ‘I’ve brought you a treat, boys; been all the way down town a purpose to get it; ’tisn’t everybody would have taken the trouble; but I’m always the chap for that; never think of myself you know. Come, here’s a plenty for all,” he went on, opening his package, while his tongue continued its wagging, and displaying several pounds of fine candies. “I’m the generous fellow, as mother always said. Here I’ve paid out three dollars to-night on these, just to give you all a regular treat.”

There were looks of contempt and aversion, of disgust at his self-laudation and egotism, but the temptation of such sweets was not to be resisted; they drew around him and partook of his dainties with the gusto hungry students and school-boys are won’t to bring to such a feast.

CHAPTER XII.

Mischief brewing.

THE night was dark and cold—no moon, stars hidden behind thick clouds, and a cold biting wind, blowing in from the north, bringing with it an occasional flurry of snow and sleet.

Stephen Guthrie shivered as he stepped out into the darkness and the storm, carefully closing the great hall door behind him. The wind seemed to penetrate to his very bones, showing an utter contempt for the slight barrier to its progress set up by the poor, threadbare garments. The lad pulled his coat collar up about his ears, and set off upon a run across the campus toward the rear of the building.

Reaching the brow of the hill he found himself compelled by the narrowness of the path and the descending nature of the ground to proceed with more deliberation : he slackened his speed to a walk, as he did so noting with thankfulness that the force of the wind was here much broken by the trees on the declivity to the north, for the path was a winding one between two hills.

Presently he heard voices coming from below and dimly perceived several dark forms approaching.

Some of his fellow-students had doubtless shirked study hour, going out on some errand of their own, when according to the rules they should have been engaged with their books. He did not want to know who they were, so stepped aside to let them pass.

"Confounded heavy to lug up hill. There, I've dropped it! Catch her, some of you. Good luck she didn't strike on my toes, or they'd have been mashed flat as a pancake."

The voice was Gump's, and Rowley's answered: "You're the clumsiest fellow alive! If I hadn't been behind you to stop it, 'twould have rolled to the bottom and been lost in the snow."

"Carry it yourself another time, then," growled Gump. "If it hadn't been for me coaxing and bribing the old chap to lend it, you'd never have got hold of it."

"Yes; all the credit of the thing belongs to you; and yet if we get into any trouble you'll lie out of it if you can."

"Come, come, don't spoil all the fun with your quarrelling," said a third voice, which Stephen recognized as that of Snead.

They had passed him now, and he stepped back into the path and went on his way.

"It's as bad as if I had seen them," he said, to himself. "I hope I'll not be called on to testify to their whereabouts at this hour."

Just at the foot of the hill, within an enclosure surrounded by a rail fence, stood a small frame house. Reaching it, Stephen opened the gate that led into the narrow front yard, and passing round to the rear

where a light shone in the window, he knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried a loud, brisk voice. "Ah, I thought I knowed your step, Mr. Guthrie. Just take a chair and draw up to the stove. I've a good hot fire to heat up my irons, and it's amazin' cold out. You look half perished."

"It is very cold," assented Stephen, accepting her invitation, and alternately rubbing his hands together and holding them out to catch the warmth of the fire.

There was no one in the room but himself and the woman, a tall, stout, middle-aged person; who stood before a table ironing a shirt. She went on with her work without a moment's pause.

"So, you've come for your clothes?" she said. "Well, I'm sorry they ain't ready. They'd ought to be, to be sure; but you see, I went off to a funeral this afternoon. I'd ruther a stayed to hum, for I knowed if I went I'd have to stay up till midnight to get this job done; but I don't like to get any body's ill will, and when folks in this town dies, they're sure to be mortally affronted if you don't go to their funeral."

Stephen smiled. "When will you have them done, Mrs. Day?" he asked.

"Oh, I'll finish 'em to-night afore I go to bed; you may depend on that," she answered, coming to the stove to change her iron.

"Well, that will do; I can come down again to-morrow night," he said, rising.

"No, don't go yet; sit and warm a bit and eat an

apple, won't you? I got a present of a basket full o' real Rhode Island greenings, the nicest ever you see." And setting down the iron she had been vigorously wiping, she darted into the next room and out again, bringing a plate with a couple of apples and a knife on it.

"Thank you, Mrs. Day; but I'm afraid you are robbing yourself," he said, taking it rather unwillingly.

"No, I ain't, not a bit of it. You've done many a good turn for me, Mr. Guthrie, that wasn't in the bargain, and I only wish I was able to do something worth while for you."

She had gone back to her ironing, and while he pared and ate his apples she continued to work and talk with unabated energy.

"You must let me bring you in an armful or two of wood before I go," said Stephen. "I see you have but a few sticks here now."

"Yes, I'll be obliged if you will," she answered, readily; "it'll help me along a good bit. I guess you've been used to waitin' on the women folks to hum, hain't you?"

"I always carried in wood and water and picked up chips for my mother from the time I was six years old."

"She must miss you, dreadful. Or did you leave a younger brother to hum to fill your place?"

"No, I am an only child."

"La sakes! It's just like me and my 'Bijah. He was awful good 'bout waitin' on me; 'specially after his father died; but he wasn't hardly growed up when

he got the Kansas fever so bad that nothing wouldn't do but he must go out there and take up a track of land (you know they give a man a good farm—I don't just mind how many acres 'tis—just for settlin' on it). He was sure 'twould be the makin' o' him, and says he, 'Mother,' says he; 'I'll make a home for you out there—a real good one—and then I'll send for you to come out too.' I'd a heap ruther he'd staid here where we knowed folks and they knowed us, but 'twan't no use to talk; not a mite. I tell you, Mr. Guthrie, there ain't a truer word in Scripture than that, Train up a child and away he goes."

A faint smile played about the corners of Stephen's lips as he rose and set his plate of parings on the dresser.

"The apples were very nice, Mrs. Day," he said. "But hadn't you better look for that text again? I don't think you have it exactly right. Now I'll bring in the wood, and then I must hurry back to the seminary. Have you heard from your son since he went away?"

"Yes, I get a letter once in a while. He's doing right well and doesn't forget his old mother."

As Stephen toiled up the hill again his thoughts were full of another woman; older, more toilworn and weary, yet in his eyes lovelier, sweeter, dearer beyond compare. He seemed to see her going out into the cold and storm to draw water and gather in fuel; then seated at her lonely fireside, busied with that never ending stitching by which she must earn her daily bread. Ah, how he longed to fly to her relief! But years must roll their weary round ere he could hope to ease her

burdens—so heavy, yet so patiently and cheerfully borne.

The lad sighed deeply at the thought, and a low murmur, "Mother, my poor mother!" fell from his lips as he hastily dashed his hand across his eyes to clear away the blinding mist. At that moment he felt almost ready to resign his long cherished aspirations after the learning that he thirsted for, for its own sake, and for the distinction, influence, and power to do and be, it might enable him to attain, and instead, seek some immediately remunerative employment.

But no! she was even more ambitious for him, than he for himself; she was entitled to his obedience, and it was her will that he should remain where he was and go on with his studies. Remembering this he hastened to his room, lighted his lamp and sat down to his books, concentrating his thoughts upon his work by a determinate effort of will.

On the other side of the hall Rowley, Snead, Gump, Ake, and two or three others were very differently engaged. They had gathered about a stove where a fierce fire was burning. Now and then one or another would open the door for an instant and peering eagerly in, laughing'y report to the rest, "It's heating up, lads." "Begins to look rosy." "We'll have it fine and hot before old Cerberus begins his rounds."

The bell rang for prayers. They closed their stove door, Stephen his books, and all resorted to the chapel.

The service over, they returned to their mischief,

while he went his rounds, fastening doors and shutters, and attending to various other duties devolving upon him in his capacity of custodian of the building.

CHAPTER XIII.

Burnt Fingers.

“**A**LL right, lads,” said Rowley, with a chuckle as he took another peep into the stove. “She’s red hot, looks like a live coal.”

“It’ll be a sort o’ ticklish job to handle her, won’t it?” queried Gump.

“I’ll undertake that,” said Snead, producing an immense pair of tongs. “Is it time, Ren?”

“Yes, come on.”

The stove door was thrown wide open displaying to the beholders a red-hot cannon ball. Snead seized it with his tongs, while the others set the room door open, then sprang nimbly aside out of his path.

Holding it firmly he hurried into the hall, dropped it at the stair head, gave it a vigorous blow with his tongs and sent it rolling down with an impetus that carried it on from flight to flight with a noise that brought every body rushing out to learn its cause.

The house had been very quiet, it being the hour in which nearly every one was engaged in preparations for retiring, and the noise of the heavy rolling body passing over the bare floors and coming down with a great thump on each step in turn, resembled the sound of thunder.

“What is it?” “What’s up now?” queried one student and another.

“Stop it, stop it this instant?” cried Professors Pettibone and Jewell in a breath, rushing out of the lower class-room, where they had been consulting together about some business affair, ever since their return from chapel.

The missile was now descending the last flight, having lost its redness by the way, so that one could not tell from its appearance that it was hot.

“Guthrie, stop that ball!” repeated Jewell, authoritatively, catching sight of the poor student, who, on his way to his room, had just set foot upon the lowest step.

“Yes, sir,” he answered; and bending forward with outstretched hands, he caught it between his open palms, but dropped it instantly with a cry of pain, and staggered back against the wall.

Professors and students hurried down pell-mell and gathered about him in great excitement, questioning, exclaiming, sympathizing with him, anathematizing the authors of the mischief and suggesting remedies.

There were cries of “Run for the doctor!” “Call the Matron!” “Call Mrs. Weir!” “He’s terribly burned!”

And so he was, poor fellow, but bearing the agony like a hero. They led him to the infirmary. Ake and Rowley were already speeding toward the town for a physician, both heartily repenting now of the mad prank that had brought about such sad results.

“I declare, I’m awfully sorry!” cried Tom. “I’d

give a hundred dollars to undo the mischief to poor Guthrie, almost as much not to have had a hand in it."

"So would I," said Rowley; "but if it had been that old Jewell, I would not have cared."

Meanwhile Mrs. Weir who kept simple remedies for such accidents always at hand, was engaged in tenderly dressing the sufferer's wound.

The rolling and thumping of the cannon-ball had been heard on the female side of the house also and caused great excitement there. The girls opened their doors and called to each other in tones of surprise and apprehension, asking what was the matter; and some ran out, half dressed, into the hall, where they stood listening in wonder and alarm.

Jerusha Arabella was terrified. "Oh, girls!" she cried, rushing into the study of Gitsie and Elena, "Isn't it an earthquake? I feel the house shake, I'm sure. What if the walls should tumble in and bury us in their ruins."

"'Twould be quite marrantic, wouldn't it?" laughed Gitsie, one of whose jests was the transposition of words; "quite equal to anything in that novel of yours. By the way, it may furnish you with an idea; you might finish up with an earthquake, and get rid of some obnoxious character by its means."

"Oh, my manuscript! I must save that if I lose all else but life," shrieked Jerusha, rushing back to her own room, just as the fearful sounds ceased.

"What do you think it was?" asked Elena, turning to her friend as they both stood listening in their doorway.

“Some mischievous prank of those mischief-loving boys. But hark! What a running, racing and talking. Upon my seconds! there must be something remarkable going on, and I declare I can't sleep till I know what it is. Oh, I hear Bony's step, I'll ask him as he passes to his rooms. Girls, girls,” to the half-dressed damsels scattered here and there along the hall — “run, or you'll be caught!”

There was a rustle of skirts in hurried flight, a sudden slamming of doors, and Professor Pettibone, coming up the stairs found only an empty hall, with Gitsie, looking quite presentable in her pretty and becoming dressing-gown, standing peering out from her half-open study door.

“What's the meaning of all this noise of running and slamming of doors?” he asked, angrily. “Really one need have nerves of iron to live with comfort in such an institution as this.”

“Oh,” answered Gitsie, lightly; “it was only the girls running away because they were too modest to let a gentleman catch them in dishabille. You ought to take something for your nerves, professor. It's a real shame you should suffer so—just as if you were a weak woman. That thundering noise on the other side a few minutes ago must have given them a severe shock; didn't it? What in the world was it?”

“There is nothing of the woman about me, I would have you to understand, Miss Ertel,” he answered in a tone of vexation and pique; “and as those mischief-loving rascals shall presently find out to their cost. They rolled a red hot cannon-ball all the way

down from the attic and Guthrie has burned his hands terribly in trying to stop it."

"Oh, poor *fellow!*" cried Gitsie, in accents of pity and distress; "Why that's awful! Good-night, sir."

She stepped back, closed the door and turned toward Elena with something very like a tear glistening in her roguish black eye.

Elena's were full too; for she had overheard what was said and felt keen sympathy for the wounded lad for whom—ever since her first knowledge of his circumstances, her gentle heart had been moved with pity, on account of his hard hand-to-hand fight with poverty.

"Isn't it dreadful!" said Gitsie, dropping into a chair and shuddering. "Just to think of his catching a red-hot cannon-ball in his bare hands! Upon my seconds, pins and needles go right through my system at the bare thought! and I'd like to flog every mother's son of the rascals that heated it!"

"And now he won't be able to go on with the work that paid his tuition," sighed Elena; "and he was so anxious to push on with his studies as rapidly as possible. He has told me so several times. I wish we could find some way to help him."

"We must, we will!" exclaimed Gitsie, with energy and determination. "But there's the bell and we'll have to go to bed in the dark."

It was the thought Elena had just expressed, which at that very moment lay heavy upon Stephen's heart, causing him keener suffering than the really terrible smarting and burning of his wounds.

Of all the sympathizing throng gathered about

him none other showed such pity for his misfortune as Rush and Burns. They remained and assisted him to bed after the rest had retired. He was assigned a room in a part of the building appropriated to the use of any student who might be sick or disabled, and in need of medical treatment and nursing.

His friends would have remained in attendance upon him through the night ; but he steadily declined the kind offer. " He was not likely to need anything, and Mrs. Weir would occupy the adjoining room, and come to him if he called."

So with a kind good-night and the hope that he would soon find relief and be able to sleep, they left him.

It was after half past ten, Broadax had begun his rounds, and the halls and stairs were very dark. But they groped their way without much difficulty to the door of Burns' and Ake's study. Tom opened it and admitted them, with an eager inquiry as to what the doctor had said.

"Not a great deal," replied Ercurius ; " he's one of the close-mouthed sort."

"Well, the injury won't—won't be lasting, will it?" Tom asked, in a shaking voice.

"Oh, no, I hope not. Tom, old fellow, *you* had no hand in this?"

"Yes, I did! I always have a hand in anything that's bad," he burst out, impetuously ; "but I'd no thought of hurting anybody, and I'd give all I'm worth to make poor Guthrie well, instanter. I can't do that, but I'll pay the doctor's bill if 't takes all my pocket money for a year to come."

"Tom, you're a noble fellow, in spite of your talent for mischief," exclaimed Albert, grasping his hand. "I'm breaking the rules being in here at this hour, but I can't go to sleep till we've contrived some plan for helping the poor lad."

"Nor I," said Ercurius; "and if we keep dark and speak low, perhaps old Cerberus won't find us out."

There was a faint tap at the door, and on its being cautiously opened, Hurst stepped softly in, followed by Rowley, Snead, Sparks and Gump, quite filling the small room. Too full of excitement, and for their credit we will hope of regret also, to quiet down for the night, they had crept in to ask the latest news from Guthrie, and to consult how to make some reparation for the injury caused him by their thoughtless folly.

"I own up that I had a share in that neat little prank," said Rowley; "but I didn't mean to burn anybody. And now, boys, what can a fellow do to make amends to that unfortunate creature?"

"I move that we divide his work among us," said Albert; "so that he may go on with his studies, and feel that they are paid for."

"I'd rather hire somebody, I'm a gentleman and can't stoop to the employments of a scullion," said Gump, loftily.

"Very well, suppose you do so, then," said Snead. "It's no more than you ought, considering your share in making the mischief."

"Who carried out the red-hot ball and sent it rolling down?" asked Gump, angrily.

“And who first saw it in the possession of the old soldier, and coaxed and bribed him to lend it?” retorted Snead. “Who brought it to the house and suggested the use to be made of it?”

“Well, you all had a hand in it.”

“No, no; not so fast, if you please, neither Rush nor I knew a breath about it.”

“I didn’t mean you or Rush, Longlegs; but all the rest had a share in it, and I’d never have undertaken it alone,” returned Gump, sulkily.

“Come, now,” interposed Rowley; “what’s done’s done, and where’s the use of sparring about it? The only question now is, how to mend the matter?”

“I’ve said I’d pay the doctor’s bill,” said Tom; “and I’ll do my full share of the work, too, till Gump can hunt up his substitute.”

“Gump ought to take his share at the chores till then, and I venture to recommend that it be the ringing of the rousing-bell,” suggested Hurst, mischievously.

“You may ring it yourself, Mr. Hurst,” retorted Silas; “you’re quite as able as I.”

“Perhaps more so,” admitted Hurst with sauvity. “Well, boys, since Si declines the honor of becoming custodian of the bell, I assume it, unless some one else covets the place.”

A beginning had been made and Stephen’s work was speedily portioned out among them; then the last comers stole softly away to their own rooms.

Albert lingered behind for another five minutes, ere he followed their example.

“Boys,” he said, as the door closed on them, there’s

something more to be thought of ; we must provide his food or pay his board among us."

"So we must and will," assented his companions ; and Tom added ; "and help him with his studies. He can't hold a book or turn the leaves."

"That will be easily managed," said Ercurius ; "we'll take it day about to sit with him and read out the lessons so that he'll learn them too." . . . In the meantime, Stephen Guthrie, little dreaming of the practical form the sympathy of his fellow-students was taking, lay on his bed suffering much physical, and more mental pain. It had been a day of unusual depression with him, when clouds and darkness seemed to gather about his pathway ; his purse was empty, his larder almost so, for it contained only a quart of corn-meal and a few cents' worth of milk.

He had tried to keep his courage up with the remembrance of the promises to the diligent and to those whose trust is in the Lord, and with the hope of finding some way of earning enough to keep soul and body together, without resigning his beloved studies or allowing any one to suspect how wretchedly poor he was.

Doubtless there were those under that very roof who, if they knew his straits, would gladly come to his aid ; but his cheek burned at the bare thought of accepting charity ; he could not, he told himself, unless the only alternative were actual starvation.

And now this unforeseen calamity had cut off all hope of earning for weeks, or may bemoths to come ; the outlook was very, very dark, the clouds were thicker than his feeble faith could pierce, and

oppressed with grief, anxiety and care, he moved his head uneasily upon his pillow and groaned aloud.

Mrs. Weir, stepping softly about her room, making her preparations for retiring, heard the sound and came quickly to his side. "My poor boy, I'm afraid you are suffering very much," she said, in tender, motherly tones; setting her lamp down on a stand beside the bed and softly smoothing back the hair from his forehead.

"No, no; not more than I can bear; I was hardly thinking of my poor hands," he said, trying to smile, but with quivering lips and a tell-tale moisture in his large, lustrous eyes.

With a woman's quick intuition, aided by her knowledge of his circumstances, she instantly guessed the whole story.

"Mr. Guthrie," she said, bending over him, and speaking in low sympathizing tones; "this is a hard trial, because it seems to blight your cherished plans and prospects for a time; and I think you are feeling now as Jacob did, when he said; 'all these things are against me.' But it was not so in his case, and you will find, some day, that it has not been in yours. It hasn't happened by chance. 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God,' and he is able to bring good out of evil and light out of darkness. Try to trust him just as you did your mother when you were a very little child. Leave to-morrow with him and go to sleep trusting to his love and care; for 'like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. You believe it, don't you?'"

"I ought to, I will try to," he said, tremulously; "but I seem to have got into the Slough of Despond, and turn which way I will, I can't get out; the mire is deep and there is no light."

"'The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear.' 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' You know they are not my words. Now tell me is there anything more I can do for your comfort?"

"Nothing, thank you; you have already given me just what I needed most," he answered, gratefully, and with a faint smile. "I think I shall soon be able to sleep, and don't let me keep you up any longer."

It was Albert Rush who, the next morning took upon him the task of assisting Guthrie to rise and dress. He had not quite finished when a dog was heard scratching and whining at the door.

"There's a good friend of mine come to see after me," remarked Stephen, playfully. "Will you let him in Rush, please?"

Albert opened the door, and a large dog rushed in, wagging his tail, and dropped a note at Guthrie's feet, then looked up in his face as if expecting a word of thanks or praise. He was a remarkably intelligent animal, the property of Mrs. Weir and a special favorite with Stephen.

"So, you've turned postman, Conas, have you?" said he, smiling; "Rush will you lend me your fingers to pick this up and open it? I see it has my name on the outside."

"In print," remarked Albert, complying with the

request. "And Guthrie, there's an enclosure! A fifty dollar note!"

"Can't be for me then," returned Guthrie, flushing; "for I haven't a friend in the world who could or would send me half that sum."

"Read for yourself, and acknowledge your mistake!" cried Albert, as gleefully as though a fortune had just dropped into his own lap, and holding the note before the eyes of his chum.

It contained only a few words printed with a pen, so plainly, that Guthrie read them at a glance.

"Please accept the enclosed as a direct gift from your heavenly Father. 'The silver and the gold are his.'"

Stephen was almost overcome with contending emotions. His lips quivered and he flushed and paled alternately.

Albert's face was radiant. "My dear fellow," he said, clapping Stephen on the shoulder; "what a mistake you made just now! You certainly have a warm and very able friend near at hand."

"It seems that I have many kind friends beneath this very roof;" the young man answered with emotion; for Albert had already made known to him the plans of his comrades for dividing his work and expenses among themselves, and his heart was full to overflowing. "I—I am almost overwhelmed with a sense of my obligations to you and the others, and—and to the sender of this. But—I—I can't take it; it seems too much like—like living on charity." His voice broke, and he had much ado to retain command of himself.

"But you can't return it; you have no clue."

“No, surely!” and Guthrie looked confounded and distressed. “Rush, what *can* I do? Have you any idea who—?”

“Not the slightest; and its coming shall be a secret between you and me; a secret that I feel sure will be kept by the sender. Take it, my dear fellow, as what he tells you it is. You know we are told ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive,’ and you ought not to be too proud to allow this unknown friend to enjoy that blessedness. Let me put it into your purse; and then do try to take the relief and comfort of feeling that you are placed above want while disabled from work.”

“As you like. I suppose you are right, and I’ll—try to put down my wicked pride and feel nothing but the gratitude and happiness I ought.”

It was some weeks before Guthrie recovered the full use of his hands, but his chums persevered in their self-imposed tasks for his benefit, and he was thus freed from want and care, and enabled to keep up with his classes.

Mrs. Day, hearing of his injuries brought home his clothes and insisted on doing his washing gratis, until he should be again able to cut her wood, dig her garden, or milk her cow. Good had been brought out of evil, as he acknowledged to Mrs. Weir; since his misfortune had shown him he possessed more and kinder friends in and about the institution than he had ever dreamed; while the gift conveyed to him through Conas, had more than relieved the necessities that were pressing so heavily upon him at the time of the accident.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Braes.

“YOU will go, Gitsie, wont you?”

“Are you quite sure I'd be welcome?”

“Quite ; Aunt Silence is too sincere and straightforward a person to ask any one to her house, whom she would not really be glad to see. And I think we shall have a pleasant time ; though she and Ercurius are the only members of the family I have ever met.”

“Then you don't know what the rest are like?”

“Albert has told me something about them. Mr. Burns is a pious, excellent old man, an elder in the church, quite rich, kind-hearted and hospitable too ; but entirely uneducated. He makes many comical blunders in the way of mispronouncing and misplacing words.”

“Then I shall have to be on my guard or my strong sense of the ludicrous will get me into trouble. Yes, I'll go : I'd like to make that old chap's acquaintance.”

Elena smiled, slightly. “You don't think my bump of reverence can be very large, do you?” laughed Gitsie.

“Well, no ; it never occurred to me to suppose so,” returned Elena, laughing.

"You see the bad penny's back," remarked Jerusha Arabella, putting her head in at the door, then pushing it open, and walking in without ceremony, manuscript in hand. She had left the room scarcely five minutes before.

"What about the bad penny's back? Anything the matter with it?" asked Gitsie.

"Oh, you're always so funny! Gitsie Ertel, I wish I could say the sort o' things you do! exclaimed Miss O'Flarity, with a sentimental simper, dropping into Elena's rocking-chair, and leaning back with an air of languid grace.

"You needn't, shouldn't, covet *all* the talents I can not write books," returned Gitsie, sententiously.

"Ah, you have never tried, dear;" Miss O'Flarity answered, with patronizing sweetness. "Yes, I s'pose I ought to be content with such a talent, and not covet yours, but I always was of an inspiring c'isposition.

"You have come to read us something, haven't you?" asked Elena, resolutely maintaining her gravity, spite of the merry twinkle in Gitsie's eyes which were sparkling with fun.

"Yes, if you don't mind listening," said Jerusha, unfolding her paper, with a glance of pride and delight from one to the other, which said plainly that she knew she had a rich treat in store for them. "But I'm 'most afraid to read it before Miss Ertel, for fear she'll say, like she did once before, that it's hyperflutin'."

"I beg your pardon, but I couldn't have said that, Miss O'Flarity, because I never even heard the word before."

• • “Well, now, could my memory have been so deceivin’? I was right sure that was what you said. And didn’t you never hear that word before? Why I’ve used it many a time.

“I said highfalutin.”

“O, well; I guess it’s all the same; has the same meaning to it, hasn’t it? But I must hurry up and read, or the tea-bell will be ringin’ before I’m through.”

“Where are you in your story, now?” asked Elena.

“Pretty near the windin’ up,—the *denouement*—if I don’t conclude to go back and write some of it over. Now in this, poor Celestia Sophronisba, is a sayin’ sort o’ heart-breaken’ things to that old tyrant, her father; because you see he’s ordered off her lover, Frederic Augustus Fitzsimmons and forbid him the house. You’d better have your handkerchiefs handy now, girls, for you’ll be pretty sure to want ’em before I get through: I cried over it myself when I was writin’ it.”

“Mine’s in my pocket,” said Gitsie; “but I shan’t need it; I’m one of the hard-hearted sort.”

“But I thought she had rejected Frederic Augustus,” said Elena.

“Well, yes, just at first; so’s he shouldn’t think she was too easy caught.”

Miss O’Flarity cleared her throat, uttered an impressive “Ahem!” was about to begin, but alas! at that very instant, the tea-bell rang.

“There now, if that is’nt too bad!” she cried, in a tone of disappointment as she gathered up her papers.

‘Well, if you like, I’ll come in this evening.’”

“Thank you,” said Gitsie, but we expect to be extremely busy. We have a little packing to do, and must prepare our lessons for Monday.”

“Why this is only Thursday! And are you going off?”

“Yes, you know that tomorrow’s to be a holiday in honor of Dr. Gerwick’s birthday, fortunately for us, and Miss Landon and I have an invitation to spend the time till Monday with her aunt at the Braes; her country-seat.”

“My, but you’re fortunate!” cried Jerusha, lifting her hands in surprise and envy; going off to a grand place like that to have a splendid time, while the rest of us must stay here in the old seminary. But I don’t care, I’ll have a good time with my dramatic persons. Nobody can deprive me of their company, thank fortune!”

She hurried into her room to lay the precious manuscript safely away, while the others passed on down the stairs.

It was mild April weather and the hall doors stood wide open. The omnibus had that moment driven up and a young gentleman was in the act of alighting from it.

“There, who’s that, I wonder?” said Gitsie. “A real fine looking chap. But does he think he’s a lady, that he comes to our door?”

“Elena looked, uttered a little cry of joyful surprise. “Oh, it’s Fred!” and you pretending not to know him Gitsie,” and ran swiftly to meet him.

He had already crossed the threshold, and hastily setting down his valise, he caught her in his arms

"O Fred, Fred, how glad I am! I hadn't the least idea of your coming," she said, clinging about his neck and almost crying for joy.

"No, I meant to surprise you," he answered, hugging her close, then holding her off a little, and gazing with brotherly pride and affection at the blooming face.

"And how is the darling little mother?"

"Well, and happy, but longing, as we all are, for the time when a certain young lady shall return to her home."

"Ah, so here you are! coming in at this entrance as though you belonged among the ladies," cried a voice from the doorway behind them, in tones of joyous welcome.

"Ah, Albert, how d'ye do, old fellow?" said Fred, turning quickly at the words. "Yes, I suppose it was a mistake; but I was in great haste to see Lena."

The two shook hands cordially. Then Albert, taking possession of the valise, led the way into the dining-room, the others following.

"How happy you look!" remarked Gitsie, as Elena took her place at the table by her side.

"I am; I'm so delighted to see Fred, and to hear that he is to go with us to the Braes, and stay as long as we do."

"Is he? Oh, that's good! The more, the merrier."

Miss O'Flarity found but a small and inattentive audience that evening; for Elena spent the greater part of it in the parlor with her brother, and Gitsie's

thoughts were much taken up with her little jaunt and the necessary preparations for it.

Mr. Burns' homestead was scarce four miles distant from the seminary, yet to "Aunt Silence's" great disgust, all her efforts to get Elena there had till now proved abortive. Lessons, teachers, weather, had all been against her, and their only intercourse, since Miss Rush's marriage, had been carried on by letter.

But at last the fates seemed propitious, and arrangements had been made for a three days' visit from Elena, Gitsie, Fred, Albert, and Ercurius and his chum, the fun loving Tom Ake. Mr. Burns' family carriage, a large roomy, three-seated affair, was sent in that evening, and Ercurius was to drive the little party out in time for a seven o'clock breakfast.

They set off at six, in fine spirits, and enjoyed their drive extremely, arriving at their destination full ten minutes before the appointed breakfast hour.

The house—built of stone, with a wide porch in front, shaded by vines and a great elm tree—stood on the southern slope of a hill already carpeted with emerald green, dotted here and there with violets.

"What place is this?" asked Fred, as they came in sight of it.

"The Braes, sir," replied Ercurius, with a look of honest pride and satisfaction.

"Your father must be a good farmer; everything looks so neat and trim."

"Looks like Aunt Silence," remarked Albert, jocosely.

"The very picture of her," laughed Elena.

"She must be handsome, then," said Gitsie; "for

the place certainly is. What a pretty lawn! What a lovely orchard yonder, all in full bloom! and the house has such a well-to-do, substantial look of comfort about it!"

"Thank you, Miss Ertel," returned Ercurius; "I hope you will not find looks deceitful in this instance."

"I'm sure I shan't. But who's that perched on top of the gate-post?"

"That? why wee Davie, to be sure, my five year old brother; the pet lamb of the flock. On the look-out for us, no doubt. Halloo there, Davie, my bonny man!"

There was a joyous answering cry, "O Er!" a clapping of small hands, and the little fellow hastily descended, and rushed up the hill, shouting at the top of his lungs, "They've come, they've come, oh, they've come!"

This announcement brought out Mr. and Mrs. Burns, and a little girl a year or two older than Davie.

The travellers received a very cordial welcome, and speedily found themselves seated at a table where the display of tempting viands was most appetizing; especially so to a set of healthy young people after months of living upon boarding-school fare; to say nothing of their early morning drive.

"This looks like old times, Aunt Silence," remarked Fred. "It's quite a while since I last sat down to a meal of your preparing."

"Yes, I've been e'en a'most hurt to think you and Lena should be so long about paying me a visit, Fred.

And Lena so near, too. But there! I'm not goin' to scold and make you uncomfortable, now I've got you here at last."

"Indeed, Aunt Silence," protested Elena; "I assure you it was from no want of inclination to come, and now I'm here, I expect to enjoy myself extremely."

"I hope you will, child; you and all the rest, and it shan't be my fault if you don't."

"Nor mine," echoed her spouse. "It's a pleasure to me to have young folks about, and we'll all do our best to entertain you."

Breakfast over, and the lords of creation having walked out to view the land, as is usually their wont, Mrs. Burns directed Mysie, her little step-daughter, to take the young ladies into the parlor; adding to Elena, "You and Miss Ertel must excuse me for awhile. I'd like to be with you every minute of the time; but you know how it is with housekeepers."

"Yes, Aunt Silence, I remember all about it," said Elena gaily, lingering behind as Gitsie and the children went out as directed; "and I just wish you'd pretend we'd gone back to the old Wisconsin times and let me help you as I used to then."

"That's just like you, Lena; so kind and helpful as you always were," said Mrs. Burns, piling up the dishes, Elena assisting; "but la sakes! I've no need to impose upon you that way. I've got a good strong girl in the kitchen, and can put through a good bit of work in a day myself, as I guess you know."

"Yes, but instead of imposing on me, it would be

giving me a great pleasure. I feel that it would be quite delightful to try my hand again at cake or pastry, and at the same time enjoy a chat with you."

"You wouldn't enjoy it half so much as I should child; but then there's your friend, Miss Ertel; she ought to be entertained, and Er, Fred, and the others have all gone off, dear knows where!"

"Oh, she won't mind being left alone for awhile to the children, and the books and magazines on the parlor table."

"Well, then, Lena, if you've a mind to help me make some cake and a puddin' for dinner, I'll be mighty glad to have you," consented Mrs. Burns, leading the way to her neat kitchen and store-room, which she exhibited with some pride.

"You see I have everything full and plenty, and as handy as can be," she said. "I didn't make a bad bargain when I took my Sandy; and I don't believe he thinks I got all the best of it either," she added, drawing herself up with a satisfied smile.

"And I don't believe he does, Aunt Silence;" returned Elena; "judging from my knowledge of you and the appearance of things here. But do you like being a step-mother?"

"Yes, to Sandy's children. They're as good to me as they can be, Lena; every one o' them, from Er down to wee Davie. But I know I get along with them—'specially the little ones—a sight better'n I should if I hadn't had the privilege of living so long with sister Helen, and watching her cute and winning ways with Thad and Maggie and Albert. Not that I can begin to hold a candle to her—bless her sweet

face! But then I'm better than I would have been without that experience."

The color deepened on Elena's cheek and her eyes sparkled with pleasure at this praise bestowed upon her dearly loved mother.

"Of course," she said, smiling; "I don't believe there is anybody else in the world quite so sweet and lovely as mamma."

"And you like your step-father?"

"Yes, no; like is not a strong enough word. I have good reason to really love him, and I do. An own father could not be more full of thoughtful kindness to us all."

"I believe you, and I'll never forget his goodness to Ullman's children. Here, Lena, tie on this linen apron over your dress and we'll set to work and get through as soon as we can; so's not to leave your friend alone too long."

Gitsie had settled herself in the corner of a sofa, and wee Davie, seemingly anxious to entertain her, came and seated himself on the carpet at her feet. A pet puppy, plump and curly, was jumping and playing about, now tumbling over his young master's legs, now hugged up in his arms, and again scampering wildly around the room. Mysie had placed herself by Miss Ertel's side, with her hands folded demurely in her lap.

"Is that your dog, Davie?" asked Gitsie.

"Wee Davie's what folk calls me" said the little fellow.

"The lady asked you if that was your dog," observed his sister, reprovingly.

"Yes, he is."

"What's his name?"

"Uno."

"No, I don't know, how should I?"

"But that's his name, really," said Mysie.

"Er named him," pursued Davie; "and he got him for me down to Mr. Wells's. Did you ever kith a dog?"

"No, did you?"

"Yeth; and it don't tathte good," returned the child, with a grimace expressive of extreme disgust.

"Doesn't it?" asked Gitsie, laughing; "then you won't try it again, will you?"

"No, I gueth not."

"Davie," reproved Mysie again; "you ought to say ma'am to a lady. You know mother always tells you that."

"Oh, yeth, but I do forget the handle. Will you pleathe 'scuthe me, ma'am?"

"Did you evey get vacsitized, Miss Ertel?" inquired Mysie, thinking it her turn to contribute to the entertainment of the visitor.

"Vacsitized?" repeated Gitsie; "What is that?"

"Why, the doctor comes and scratches your arm and makes a sore place to keep you from gettin' the—the little—little-pox. He did it to mine and Davie's in the winter, and they got awful sore."

"Are they sore, still?" asked Gitsie, preserving her gravity with some difficulty.

"No, they've got well, now."

"Here comes Er," cried Davie, who was now perched on a chair and looking out of the window

"I wonder where father and the other boys are. Er, Er, what did you come back for without the other fellows?"

"Where's mother? I want to speak to her."

"In the store-room, or dining-room or kitchen, or somewheres," answered Mysie, with satisfactory definiteness, and he strode down the hall toward the rear of the dwelling; Davie observing, enviously; "Er's got big fiskers and such long legs he can go ever so fast."

"Never mind, yours will grow in time," said Gitsie, sympathizingly.

Ercurius opened his eyes with astonishment at finding Miss Landon in the store-room deep in the mysteries of cake-making, the rolled up sleeves showing the pretty plump white arms to great advantage.

She laughed gaily at his look of wonder and amazement. "Don't be frightened," she said; "it is not my maiden effort, and I hope I shall not spoil it."

"No, indeed, I am quite sure of that," he answered, gallantly. "But where is mother?"

"She just stepped into the kitchen."

"Thank you," and he passed on to the designated apartment, where he found Mrs. Burns overseeing her maid-servant. Beckoning her aside,

"Mother," he said; "can you manage to accommodate another guest?"

"Man, woman, or child?"

"A man; and an old friend of father's lately from the old country. He has come intending to stay over Sunday with us, and I don't know when I've seen father look so pleased."

“ Then I’m right down glad he’s come, and though we’re pretty full, I guess we’ll fix it somehow. I’ll have to give him your room, as that’s the only single bed, and put you four boys into the other two spare rooms—the girls of course, have the best one you know, and you won’t mind giving up your room and sleeping two in a bed—double beds—will you ? ”

“ No ; not a bit, thank you, mother ; and I’ll go and tell father we can accommodate Mr. Welsh just as well as not.”

Again passing the open door of the parlor, Ercurius paused and looking in remarked, “ I’m afraid you are having a very dull time of it, Miss Ertel.”

“ Oh, no ! ” thank you. “ I find these little folks extremely entertaining,” she said, with a smile and a merry twinkle in her eyes, as she stooped to pat Davie’s curly head.

“ Ah ! I’m glad to hear it.”

He hurried away, but was back again almost immediately.

“ Do you play chess, Miss Ertel ? ” he asked.

“ A little ; I’m not hard to beat,” she answered, laughingly.

“ Will you try a game with me ? ”

“ If you like. But I fear I shall be keeping you from sharing the out-door enjoyments of your mates.”

“ No ; I had some little matters to attend to for father ; so we got separated and I think they went off for a walk somewhere.”

He was moving about the room in his rapid fashion as he spoke, and had already placed two chairs and a light stand, with the board and men upon

It, in front of a window looking out on the orchard. They sat down and began their game, Mysie and Davie standing alongside and watching their movements.

The little girl was very quiet, the boy quite the reverse, keeping up a running fire of questions and remarks. "I wish you would let me play with them sometimes, Er; they're real pretty. What makes you move that un that way? Er, I just wish I was a big man like you wis fiskers and great long legs to run fast. That lady says mine'll grow but I'm tired o' waitin'!"

Ercurius smiled. "I'm tired hearing your tongue wag, Davie, and I'm afraid the lady is, too. It must be one of those that are hung in the middle and loose at both ends."

"No 'tain't."

"Then see if you can't hold it awhile."

"Wis my fingers?"

"No; just let it lie still in your mouth. See here," taking two bright new half dimes from his pocket, and laying them on the stand; "if you don't speak again for half an hour, I'll give you these."

Davie's eyes sparkled and he had almost uttered an exclamation of delight; but put his hand resolutely over his mouth, and remained silent.

For the next ten or fifteen minutes he stood there watching the moves, without uttering a sound, though now and then his face grew very red, and the little chubby hand went hastily up to the mouth again.

At length resolution could hold out no longer. Creeping up close to his brother's side, "Er," he

whispered; "I want 'em ever so bad—those five centses—but I—I'm afraid I'll bust if I don't talk."

"O, then talk by all means," answered the brother, with unmoved gravity; "for if you burst it might cause serious damage to the carpet."

"And won't you gi' me the two five centses? 'Cause I can't help talkin'."

"But you were to have them if you could help talking. A bargain's a bargain, Davie, and you haven't kept your part of it."

"But I want 'em; oh, Er, do give 'em to me!" The blue eyes filled with tears; an argument that Ercurius could not withstand.

"Well, my bonny man," he said; "I'll make you another offer. You may have them if you'll take your tongue away out of hearing for half-an-hour. You and Uno might go and have a race round the garden and orchard."

"Oh, yes, I'll do that!" cried the delighted child, holding out his hand for the coveted reward.

"Now stick to your part of the paction this time, wee Davie," said his brother, dropping the coins into the rosy palm.

"Yes, yes, I will," he cried, with a joyful shout as he raced out of the room, Uno barking at his heels.

Mysie had stolen quietly away some time before, and for more than the specified half hour the chess-players had the parlor to themselves. They had just finished their second game when wee Davie came running in again, the great blue eyes full to overflowing and the rosy, chubby face working with grief and

excitement. He rushed up to his brother, and clinging round his neck burst into sobs and tears.

“What is it, Davie, my man?” asked Ercurius, soothingly putting an arm round the little weeper and gently stroking his hair with the other hand; “What gone wrong with you? Has the greedy dog swallowe the precious five centses?”

“No, no, but—but Mysie’s got ’em.”

“How’s that? Mysie wouldn’t rob you, surely?”

“No, but she—said I—I wouldn’t never go to heaven if I didn’t give ’em to her,” sobbed Davie; “an—an’ so I did.”

“Sharp practice, that,” Ercurius remarked to Gitsie, who sat by an amused listener. “Come, Davie, my bonny man, dry up your tears, and we’ll set this matter straight,” he added, rising and leading the little fellow from the room.

“Where is Mysie?”

“Out there on the porch.”

“Mysie come here, lass,” called Ercurius from the doorway, and with slow, reluctant steps the little maiden came forward, her doll in her arms, and her head hanging sheepishly down.

“What’s all this I hear, my little lass?” he asked, seating himself, and drawing her to his side; “Have you been robbing wee Davie?”

“No, he gave ’em to me.”

“But not of his own free will, lass; you frightened him into it. How could you tell such an untruth as that? What do you think father will say or do if he hears it?”

“I didn’t tell a lee, Er; don’t tell father so!”

she said, beginning to cry violently. "I'm sure he's told me many times that folk that love money are like the heathens and canna go to heaven, if they dinna give it up and love God best of all."

"Then what's to become of you, lass? for I fear you love money better than truth or honesty."

"Oh, I'll give 'em up! I'll give 'em up! Here, Davie, take 'em," she cried, hastily thrusting the coins into her little brother's hand, and hurrying away, sobbing as she went.

"The love of money is the root of all evil; was there ever a truer word?" remarked *Ercurius* to *Git sie*, who was standing near.

CHAPTER XV.

Aunt Silence on Politics.

MR. BURNS brought his friend in at dinner-time and introduced him to wife, children and guests. He was an elderly man, rather short and thick set with a shrewd Scotch face and a bald head, slightly fringed with a mixture of gray and sandy hair.

“I understand you have not been long on this side the water, Mr. Welsh?” remarked his hostess, inquiringly, as she handed him a cup of tea.

“About a week, ma’am.”

“Are you only a visitor to America?”

“Oh, no, ma’am, no; I come a purpose to settle.”

Then turning to Fred Landon, who was his next neighbor, “How long’s a mon got to be here afore he can vote?”

“That depends upon when and where he settles. The naturalization laws vary in the different states.”

“Well, sir, I’ve not made up my mind precisely aboon that yet; but I rather expect to go out as far as Kanawsa or Nebarawska. I understand there’s danger of a finatical crissis just now, and that pollytics is runnin vara high.”

"Yes, the money market is very tight ; and there's a good deal of excitement over the coming presidential election."

"Which do you vote for, old friend?" The query was addressed to the elder Mr. Burns.

"Indeed, sir, I don't know. As far as I can learn neither o' them's a God fearin' man, and I'm no clear that I should help make any but a servant o' the Lord one o' the rulers o' the land."

"Now, Mr. Burns," exclaimed his wife; "I'd have given you credit for more sense than to talk that way, I really should. S'pose you've two candidates runnin' for office—neither of 'em a religious man, but one honest upright and capable, 'tother a scamp, who'll waste the people's money and help the rogues to escape justice ; and s'pose all the good men in the community act on your principle and stay away from the polls ; then the scamp gets the office, and the rogues have it all their own way. Scripture says, 'It is required of a man according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not,' and seems to me that applies here ; if you can't do what you would, do the best you can ; don't sit down and fold your hands and do nothing."

"I think she's got the richt o' it, Burns," remarked Welsh, with an admiring grin, and a knowing shake of the head.

"P'raps so," admitted her spouse ; "but, as I said just now, I haven't made up my mind yet. Silence, if I went in for woman's rights, as they call 'em, I'd like to hear you make a speech at the political meetin's ; you can argy so well," he added, with a proud glance

at her. Then turning to Fred, "What s your views, Mr. Landon?"

"I agree with Aunt Silence, sir. I think it is the duty of every good citizen to do his utmost for the welfare of his country, and not to refrain from doing a little because he cannot do more."

"Don't you think we should put Christian men into office?"

"Certainly, if possible."

"It seldom, if ever, will be while the nominations are left to those who care for nothing but party," observed Ercurius.

"The frequenters of rum-holes and gambling-hells," added Albert.

"How are you to help it?" queried Ake. "If bad men are in the majority, of course they'll have things their own way."

"Yes, lad, that's true," said Mr. Burns; "and as bad men always are in the majority, in this wicked world, I dinna see what can be done to mend matters."

"Folks never know how much they can do till they've tried their best," said Mrs. Burns, spiritedly, and if I was a man I wouldn't give it up so. I don't see why Christian men can't start a new party on Christian principles, and nominate real good, honest, God-fearing men for office, and vote for 'em too. I'm sure if such men were put in, the country would be better off than 'tis now, no matter what their politics might be. I say politicians have had these things left in their hands long enough, and it's high time good men shook off their indifference and woke up

to their duty to God, and the good and beautiful land he's given 'em."

"Yes," said Elena, her cheek flushing and her eye kindling; "if our national life was worth the hard struggle we made for it a very few years ago, when blood and treasure were poured out without stint, I'm sure it is worth persistent care and effort to preserve it. And I can't understand how men, who then were ready to sacrifice everything, even to their own lives, and the lives of their sons and brothers, in their love for their native land, now seem just as ready to leave her best interests to the control of those who care for nothing but their own aggrandizement and the accumulation of ill-gotten gains."

At this point, the young girl suddenly becoming aware that all eyes were fixed upon her, dropped hers upon her plate, while her cheek crimsoned with modest embarrassment.

"Bravo, Miss Landon!" cried Tom, clapping his hands in applause; "We'll have you on the rostrum right alongside of Mrs. Burns."

"She certainly wouldn't disgrace it," remarked Ercurius.

"Or herself, by mounting it," added Fred. "My sister is an ardent lover of her country, but is far from being what is commonly called a woman's rights woman."

"But what can be done, lass? Let's come now to the application," said Mr. Burns.

"I should say, let all Christians and all others who wish to see our laws made and administered by honest and upright men, unite and form a new party

who should nominate and vote for such and only such ;” replied Elena, in her gentle refined tones, and with an air of maidenly modesty, very sweet and becoming.

“ Ah yes, child, but you’re forgettin’ how few the good folk are ; sic a movement would be apt to come to naught, I doubt.” And Mr. Burns shook his head, incredulously.

“ I never was good at remembering figures,” remarked his wife ; “ but I mind that Fred used to be. Can’t you tell us now, Fred, about how many folks belong to the different denominations in this country ? ”

“ I saw a statement, recently,” he replied ; “ that our population might be estimated in round numbers, at forty millions ; of whom thirty millions are nominally or professedly Protestant, five millions Romanists, leaving five millions more for infidels, atheists and heathen, generally.”

“ But the nominal Protestants are not all voters,” said Miss Ertel.

“ Nor all good men,” added Mr. Burns.

“ No, I am sorry to have to admit that that is true,” said Fred ; “ yet I do believe, the vast majority of them are haters of bribery and corruption, desirous to have good laws enacted and to see them administered with impartiality and justice ; and might therefore be brought to unite with such a party as Aunt Silence advises should be gotten up. And, Miss Ertel,” he added, turning smilingly toward her ; “ if there are women and children among the nominal Protestants, so there are among the others and doubtless quite as large a proportion.”

"I think you are right, Fred," said Albert. "I presume it is the fact that real true Christians form but a small minority of our population, yet I do believe the vast majority are law-abiding and justice-loving people, and might in time be induced to join such a party as Aunt Silence proposes; if it were once started."

"And at any rate, there's nothing like trying," remarked Mrs. Burns, emphatically; "and if I was a man and a patriot, I'd never rest till the thing was set a going."

"I expect mebbe the hardest part o' the job after all, wad be to get the denominations to unite," observed Mr. Welsh. "Is there much union among 'em about here?"

"Well, there's some quarrelling now and then, I'm sorry to say," answered Mr. Burns. "You see there's folks in most churches that will be for tryin' their hand semi-occasionally at proselytizing, and that makes the others mad, and so they git to quarrelling. I can unite with any of 'em myself and enjoy worshipping with 'em; even the 'piscopals when they're not too bigoted to use subterraneous prayers."

Riding, walking, and croquet filled up the afternoon to the young people, and in the evening they gathered in the parlor and amused themselves with conversation, songs and charades; Mrs. Burns taking part, and with as keen an enjoyment as the youngest of them; while the master of the house and his friend promenaded the porch smoking their pipes and talking of o'd times and the mother country.

But at an early hour the household was called

together in the dining-room for evening worship. The chapter in course happened to be a genealogical one, and Mr. Burns made queer work of the Hebrew names. Ercurius fidgeted a little, and Tom and Gitsie found no small difficulty in controlling their risibility.

Directly upon the conclusion of the service the two elderly gentlemen bade good-night and retired.

"Are we expected or desired to follow suit, Aunt Silence?" asked Albert, as they left the room.

"I'd like you all to do just as you please," she answered; "but I'm sorry to say I can't give you the privilege of a morning nap. Mr. Burns is an early riser, has worship the first thing, and insists on everybody in the house being present."

"Yes," said Ercurius, "my father has very strict notions; thinks it wrong to taste food or anything before attending to the morning devotions of the family, and as he wants his tobacco the minute he's awake, he routs us all out of bed, and collects us for worship in the early gray dawn."

"Won't he even allow himself a quid of tobacco before prayers?" asked Ake, in surprise.

"Not the smallest taste," replied the son.

"Aunt Silence, you look tired," said Fred, 'don't let us keep you up."

Thereupon it was moved and carried that they should all retire immediately, and bidding good-night they dispersed to their rooms.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Learned Ghost.

MR. WELSH, as we have already learned, had been assigned the room usually occupied by Ercurius. It served the young man, when at home, as both sleeping apartment and study, and a table which stood near the bed was piled with books.

These presented no great attractions to the guest, who was not a man of education or literary tastes. He did not examine them, indeed scarcely noticed that they were there, but addressed himself at once to his preparations for bed, blew out the light and lay down.

For a time he slept soundly, then his slumbers grew lighter, until at length he was only dozing when he was roused out of that by a slight sound, and opening his eyes was horrified to perceive a tall figure arrayed in white glide in at the door, and move swiftly and noiselessly across the room in the direction of the bed.

Mr. Welsh was superstitious, a believer in ghosts and in second sight, and deemed the approaching figure,—which to his excited imagination seemed fully eight or ten feet high, a visitant from another

world. As it drew nearer and nearer he felt his hair bristling up with terror, and the cold perspiration bursting from every pore.

But it paused beside the table, took up a book and opening it seemed to read aloud something in an unknown tongue. It was Latin, but the words conveyed no meaning to the mind of the trembling listener.

That book was quickly laid aside, another taken up and the audience of one, treated to a passage from the Greek Testament ; the sounds still more uncouth to him, and quite as unintelligible as the others.

His fright increased every moment. What should he do? How escape from this terrible unearthly visitant? He began cautiously to raise himself and to move toward the foot of the bed, thinking he would creep out there, and slip under it, or rush from the room.

But before he had accomplished his purpose, the phantom dropped its book and with one bound leaped into the middle of the bed.

Terror lent the old man the agility of youth ; he instantly sprang over the foot-board and fled from the room, with the feeling that the phantom was pursuing close at his heels, and ready to grasp him by the hair.

It did, in fact, give chase. It was Ercurius, who was a sonnambulist, and rising in his sleep had come to his own room. His leap upon the bed, and Mr. Welsh's leap out of it, had waked him thoroughly ; and instantly comprehending what he had done, and the fright he had caused the stranger guest, he darted after him to explain, and relieve his fears.

But the faster he ran, the faster flew the terror-stricken man, till Ercurius, losing his footing at the top of the stair-case, fell forward against Welsh, who uttered a terrific yell as he received the blow, and felt himself thrown from his balance. Down, down they went to the foot of the stairs, Burns on top, the old man underneath, neither able to stop himself, till they had reached the floor below.

The scream had waked everybody in the house from Mr. Burns senior, down to wee Davie, and all heard with increasing wonder and alarm, the rushing, rolling, thumping sounds which followed.

"What was that?" cried Mrs. Burns, starting up in the bed. "Sandy, somebody's breaking into the house, and the girls will be frightened out o' their wits."

"Yes; I'll see to it Silence," he answered, jumping out upon the floor, hastily striking a match and holding it to the candle.

She was already out upon the other side, "You don't want a light," she said; opening the door " 'twould only help the rascals to see to shoot you down. Come on. They're in the front hall if my ears don't deceive me."

"You'd better stay here, wife; I don't want 'em to shoot you, and I must have a light to see what I'm about;" he answered, taking the candle in one hand and a double-barrelled shot gun in the other.

But she was already gone, and he hurried after while Mysie and Davie, creeping from their little bed in the next room, asking each other, in frightened whispers, what was the matter, followed on behind.

"Thieves! Robbers! Murderers!" cried Tom, springing from his bed with the first alarm. **"Er, where are you? We must fly to the rescue. Why—actually he's gone?"**

A door communicating with the next room, occupied by Fred and Albert, stood wide open, and he could hear their voices in low but excited colloquy.

He rushed in. **"Did you hear that awful yell? Er's gone; somebody's broken into the house, and he's having a tussle with 'em. Come, we must help, or they'll be too many for him."**

"Yes; I've a brace of loaded pistols here," said Fred, hastily thrusting one into Albert's hand, and taking the other himself.

"Wish I was as well equipped;" muttered Tom, seizing a stout walking-stick belonging to his host, and running after the others as they hastened from the room.

They reached the scene of the catastrophe at the same moment with the party from below; catching a glimpse as they passed down the stairs—of Gitsie and Elena in their white night-dresses, and with unbound hair streaming over their shoulders.

The girls were trembling with fright, yet determined to learn the cause of the alarm, had rushed from their room in the direction of the sounds; but pausing at the head of the stairway were looking down over the balusters.

Ercurius had scrambled to his feet, and was trying to assist Mr. Welsh to rise; his well-meant efforts, however, only increasing the terror of the old man, until the light from Mr. Burns' candle flashing upon

the lad's face, showed him his mistake, and relieved his fears.

Then anger quickly succeeded to fright. "An' is't you, ye gude for naething callent? You, an' na ghaist after a'? Heck, sir! but this is a scurvy trick, to be scarin' the wits oot o' an auld body like me; an' your fayther's guest too!" he said, in an exceedingly irate tone, rubbing his bruised shins, and shaking his head, which was adorned with a red woolen nightcap, more grotesque than becoming.

"What's the matter?" "Who's hurt?" "What's it all about?" "How came you here? you two."

Questions were pouring in upon them from all sides, as the alarmed and excited household came rushing to the spot.

"Heck, sirs! an' the leddies too, coomin' to look an' me in sic a plight," cried Welsh, catching sight of Mrs. Burns, the servant girl, and Mysie. "If there's ony thing I hate, it's ane thing mair than anither, an' I dinna like to be catched so," he added, with a dismayed downward glance at his scant and unseemly attire.

"I beg a thousand pardons, sir," stammered Ercurius. "I must have been walking in my sleep again, Mr. Welsh, I am extremely sorry to have disturbed your rest."

"An' for frightenin' me half oot o' me wits with your jabbering in that barbarous tongue, an' for jumpin' onto the bed, and chasin' me oot o' the room even to the varra stair-heed, when I fled frae ye, an' throwin' me doon the stair too? do ye repint o' a' thae ill doin's?" he asked, turning upon the youth

again in a half-savage manner, and pouring out his words in a perfect torrent of indignation.

"It was quite an accident—my throwing you down—I do assure you," replied Ercurius. "My foot slipped, and I couldn't save myself."

"But what for were you chasin' me?"

"I wanted to explain and relieve your fright—I—"

But his voice was drowned in a peal of laughter from all present; their excitement and alarm changing to overpowering merriment as they suddenly became aware of the cause of the disturbance.

"Oot upon ye a', you Sandy Burns in petickler, for makin' the misfortunes o' your auld friend and guest the subject o' sic untimely mirth!" exclaimed Welsh, in indignant anger, and sending a wrathful glance from side to side.

Then struck with a sudden sense of the ludicrousness of the whole affair, and the comical figure cut by all present, himself included, his "ha! ha!" was as loud and hearty as any, and repeated again and again, as he told the story of his fright, his flight, and the uncomfortable descent of the stairs which had followed.

"And are you hurted, Donald, mon?" asked his friend.

"No so bad, Sandy, no so bad as you might suppose; a few bit bruises is a' I hae to complain o'. That lad o' yours has great length o' limb, but fortunately for me, carries no great weight wi' it. Had it been yoursel noo, that fell atop o' me, I should na hae escapet so weel."

The two girls, looking and listening from their

station overhead, were almost convulsed with half suppressed laughter.

"I declare," whispered Gitsie, holding her sides, 'it's as good as a play; I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

"No, nor I," returned her friend, in a voice half choked with mirth; "it has fully paid for the fright, and that's saying a good deal. But look! there's Fred starting up the stairs; come, we must hurry back, or we'll be caught."

"Never mind; your night-gown and long streaming locks are very becoming," laughed Gitsie, as they flew back to their room. "If you'd only shown yourself in the crowd below, while listening to the fun, you might have captivated somebody, and so killed two flies mit one schmack. But wasn't it the beat-enest thing!—the scare and the tumble and all together?" And throwing herself on the bed, she rolled over and over laughing till the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Come, I think we'd better stop now," said Elena; "you know we've got our sleeping to do up in a hurry."

"Very sensible, Miss Landon, I'll set to work at once to practice what you have praught."

Praught?"

"Yes; present teach, imperfect taught; present preach, imperfect praught. I'm only talking analogically."

But after all that alarm and excitement, an instant return to the arms of Morpheus was not possible; it seemed to the girls that they had not slept ma

minutes when the summons came for them to rise ;— in the early gray dawn, as they had been forewarned.

“ Dear me what an ardent affection for that vile weed the old gent must have,” yawned Gitsie, sleepily. “ ‘ Pears kind o’ like makin’ a mockery o’ religion ;’ as the old woman said, when they pulled down a big old-fashioned chimney to modernize her house.”

“ How so ? ” laughed Elena, springing up and beginning a hasty toilet.

“ Saying prayers as a preparation for putting such vile poisonous stuff into his mouth,” returned Gitsie, following her example. “ If there’s one habit indulged in by the lords of creation that I detest more than another, it’s this tobacco-chewing, and spitting the filthy juice all around everywhere.”

“ Isn’t that rather strong ? Or do you really think it worse than drinking, swearing, gambling, etc ? ”

“ No, no ; that was too strong ; but it is *so* disgusting ; and they’re very apt to go together.”

“ But not in this case, I’m sure ; Mr. Burns is a most excellent old man.”

“ Yes, I don’t deny it ; a little too good for me ; for there’s his prayer-bell ringing now, and I only half dressed. I’m thinking anybody that practices private devotion will have to attend to it afterward. Come, let’s run down. My hair looks horrid, but it can’t be helped, and luckily there’s hardly light enough for anybody to see it.”

The religious services were conducted with all due solemnity, but at the breakfast-table the whole party made themselves very merry over their night alarm ; Mr. Burns good-humoredly rallying his old friend on

his learned ghost, and his own nimble movements in escaping from it; while Mr. Welsh in turn, complimented him on having a son so very attentive to his father's guests, that he "maun e'en ca' upo' them in the silent watches o' the nicht."

This set the table in a roar and called out some jests at Ercurius' expense, which he received and parried with the utmost good-tempered *sang-froid*.

"I was afraid you young ladies would be frightened half to death," remarked Mrs. Burns; "but you slept through it all, didn't you?"

"Oh, no, ma'am!" laughed Gitsie; "we were present at the denouement of the play; but took seats—or rather stands—in the gallery, where we could see to advantage without being seen."

At that, Ercurius shot a glance at Elena, and for the first time crimsoned with mortification; while Mr. Welsh held up his hands in dismay, crying, "Hech sirs! an' me in sic a plight! Night-cap an' a'. Leddies I hope ye hae gude forgeteries o' your ain, and did na look too sharp at the trappings o' an auld body."

There was a general laugh, in which Ercurius joined, but faintly. Turning hastily to Fred; "Hop o' My Thumb, and I have been talking of trying our hands at spearing sturgeon this morning," he remarked; "what do you and Albert say to it? Will you join us?"

Both consented with alacrity, Fred asking where the fish were to be found.

"Plenty of 'em in the river down yonder," said Mr. Burns; "and the brigg about a half mile frae here is as gude a spot for it as ye can find."

"That's where we're going father," said Ercuius.

"I hope we can persuade the ladies to go along," said Tom, gallantly. "Mrs. Burns, you won't be cruel enough to refuse?"

"I'm afraid if I don't you'll suffer for it to-morrow," Mr. Ake."

Tom's look was inquiring.

"You'd get no dessert."

"Do you expect us to consider that excuse all sufficient, preparing pie or pudding to the pleasure of your society, Aunt Silence?" asked Fred, laughing, while Tom put on a comically rueful face, crying, "I'm on the horns of a dilemma!" and Elena offered her services as pastry cook.

"What a grand arrangement that would be," said Mrs. Burns; "for the old housewife to go off on a spree and leave her young and pretty guests to do her work!"

"Spree, ma'am!" cried Tom; "Indeed I assure you it's to be a cold-water party."

"For thae fishes mair especially, eh, laddie?" laughed Mr. Welsh.

"No, sir; we purpose to make their native element too hot to hold 'em," retorted Tom.

"Tak care, lad, that you dinna fa' into it yersel; ye wad probably find the fishes' element nae better for you than yours for them."

The ladies meanwhile were engaged in a discussion of the dessert question, finally ending in a compromise, by the terms of which, the girls were to be allowed to assist their hostess in her culinary operations, and afterward to repair with her to the scene of the young men's piscatory sport.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Capsize.

“**I** CAN’T promise that all the help I can give will count for much,” said Gitsie, honestly; “for I’m ashamed to say, that part of my education has been sadly neglected so far; though ma’s a splendid housekeeper, and knows how to do everything under the sun that can come under that head. But she’s always said ’twould be time enough to teach me those things, after I’d done with school.”

They had repaired to the store-room, and Aunt Silence was buisied in collecting the materials for their work.

“Well,” she said; “I reckon you can sift flour, roll sugar, and beat eggs; and that will be considerable help.”

“While at the same time I shall be gaining some useful knowledge; so killing two flies mit one schmack,” returned the young lady jocosely; “and I’m thinking I shall get more than I give · killing the biggest fly for myself, as I may say.”

“A Dutch version of the old English proverb,” remarked Elena, laughing; “or is that original?”

“No, Miss Landon, I must own that I can’t claim

it as anything more than a quotation from an old char-woman who does an occasional day's work for ma. But how is it, *mon cher*, that you are going about this business as deftly as our good hostess herself?"

"Ah, she's an old pupil of mine, and I'd as soon trust her skill as my own," said Mrs. Burns, with a glance of pride and affection at her sister-in-law's child.

"Thank you, Aunt Silence; and I shall always be grateful for your kind instructions," returned Elena. "What shall I try my hand on this morning?"

"I'm going to make ice-cream and a pudding for dessert to-day, and some pies and boiled custard for to-morrow, and jelly-cake and sponge for tea."

"More than a day's work, I'm sure!" cried Gitsie, with a comical gesture of astonishment and despair, "What's to become of our ride?"

"We'll take care of that too; never fear," said Mrs. Burns. "You may break a dozen of these eggs, if you will, Miss Ertel; put the yolks into this bowl, and the whites into that deep dish."

Mrs. Burns set down a basket of eggs as she spoke, and without waiting for a reply hurried away to the kitchen.

"Never broke an egg in my life, except once in the country when I tumbled out of a hayloft with an apronful I'd just gathered from the nests," whispered Gitsie to her friend; "and doing it so, the whites and yolks were rather mixed."

"I'll show you a better way than that," laughed Elena, coming to her aid.

"Here, girls, is a stroke of economy," said Mrs.

Burns, returning. There was a festival in the village 'tother day, and Mr. Burns caught a loaf of fruit-cake that turned out to be too sad to be wholesome eating. Well, I set it in the oven till now it's thoroughly dried, and I'll break it into a bowl of rich milk, add another egg or two, and a little flour, beat it up right well, put it back into the oven and bake it, and I'm mightily mistaken if it doesn't turn out a pudding you'll all enjoy ; for I've tried the same experiment before. I never like to throw anything away than can be turned into good and wholesome victuals ; I don't think it's right, no matter how well you may think you can afford it. 'Waste not ; want not,' is an excellent motto."

"I declare you must have a genius for economy and cooking, Mrs. Burns," cried Gitsie, in wondering admiration. "I'll lay that up in my memory for future use ; and when I set up old maid's hall, it'll be of immense service."

"Or when you've a husband and children of your own ; which is more likely to come about," remarked her hostess, turning to take a bright tin pan from the hands of Mysie, who had that moment entered the room with it.

"Is it enough, mother ?" asked the child.

"Hardly, I think, but you and Davie can pick out a few more, can't you ?"

"Oh, yes ; there's more cracked, and it won't take long," said the child, cheerfully, as she skipped away again.

"Walnut kernels," said Mrs. Burns in answer to an inquiring look from Elena. "I use them some

times to flavor custard and ice-cream. They make a cheap and very good flavoring. I used to think it necessary to blanch 'em and found it very tedious and troublesome ; but I've discovered a better plan ; I just boil 'em in the milk and then strain it."

" Another item for me to treasure up," said Gitsie

" And I'll give you two more ;—the young and tender leaves off a peach tree, boiled up in your custard give an excellent flavor. One want's a variety you know. And in making ice-cream, use a little arrow-root, and boil only the yolks of eggs with the milk ; the whites should be beaten up well and stirred in the last thing before freezing to make it good and rich."

" Ah, you ladies have got to work before us," said Ercurius, putting his head in at the door.

" Yes," cried Gitsie ; " don't I look becoming in this large apron ? "

" Very. Well, we're just off. How soon shall we look for you ? "

" We'll drive over about ten o'clock, or maybe a bit earlier," answered Mrs. Burns, and with a hasty good-bye he hurried after his chums, who were already half-way down the path to the gate.

His long and rapid strides soon enabled him to overtake them, and they walked on in company, not hurrying themselves but enjoying the delicious air and the pleasant rural sights and sounds.

" What a glorious morning ! I declare it makes even an old fellow like me feel young and frisky ! " cried Tom, suddenly taking a flying leap across a little brook that lay in their way.

He cleared the water alighting on the farther bank, but his foot slipped and he came down upon his knees.

"There, I'm relieved!" he said, springing up again, instantly; "I knew I was bound to have a mishap of some sort, because I lost my tooth-pick yesterday, and had to borrow from Er, and misfortunes never come single; as the man said when his wife had twins."

"But mayn't you have a third?" asked Fred.

"Oh, yes, of course I *mout*; but then agin I *moutn't*; for I'm not *bound* to catch it more than twice."

The bridge was a rustic affair built of wood and at no great height above the water; the river being navigable to no larger craft than keel-boats, rafts and canoes. The young men took their station upon it, each with his spear in hand.

"This is new business to me," remarked Tom, gravely, taking a ball of stout cord from his pocket.

"What's that for?" asked Albert.

"To secure me against the probable loss of my spear, which might happen to be mishap number three," answered Tom, tying one end of the cord securely to his line, then letting it down into the water.

"What now?" asked Ercurius; "do you expect the fish to swallow it like a hook? Or to swim against the point and spear themselves?"

"Children and fools," remarked Tom, sententiously, "you know the old proverb."

"I see your game," said Fred; "better give yourself plenty of line, and look out that the fish doesn't catch you, my lad."

"I mean to," returned Tom, paying it out with sober dignity till satisfied it was of sufficient length, when he cut it loose from the ball and tied that end securely to his wrist.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, seeing that Ercurius regarded his movements with a smile of quiet amusement.

"Are you acquainted with the sturgeon?"

"Never had the honor of an introduction, or so much as a sight of his highness."

"I think you'd find him nearly a match for you in size and strength, especially in his native element."

"Ha! ha! that's a stunner, old fellow! But what if he is! I don't expect to tussle with him."

"Hope you won't, laddie. But I say, boys, I believe we'd manage better with a canoe, and I think I can get one by walking about half a mile farther down the river."

Fred volunteered to go along, and they set off at once, leaving the other two on the bridge. Returning, they found them still there, leaning over the low railing, and gazing down into the water, with spears ready poised for a strike.

"Halloo there! What success?" cried Fred.

"None," answered Albert.

"The fish are wise to-day, and the spearmen not expert," added Tom.

"Those two," said Ercurius; "wait till these have tried."

"Don't crow before you're out o' the woods," retorted Tom.

"I think we shall have the better chance," said Fred.

They took up their position a little above the bridge, and waited for the sturgeons. None were to be seen for some time; then a big fellow swam swiftly by. Both struck at but missed him, and he swam proudly on, passing under the bridge, escaping the spears of the other two, also.

"We're all in the same box and no room for boasting!" cried Tom.

"Better luck next time," said Burns, sending his spear into the second comer and securing him.

"Good for you, Longlegs!" cried Tom; "maybe my turn'll come next."

Another long waiting, then more unsuccessful efforts; after that an enormous fellow came sailing down, and steering clear of Ercurius and Fred, kept on his way toward the bridge.

"Now for it! Sic volo, sic jubeo!" said Tom, hurling his spear with energy and precision; then, as he saw it struck home, "Nil desperandum!" he cried, and with the words over he went head-foremost into the water. The fish was swimming on with the spear sticking in his body; and the line being fast to Tom's wrist, had jerked him off the bridge and was now dragging him down the stream.

Mr. Burns' carriage was just near enough for the ladies to see the headlong plunge without being able to tell which of the young men had made it.

Elena grew pale with terror as she thought perhaps it was her brother; but she uttered not a sound
Gitsie screamed.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Burns, sternly, **"You will frighten the horse and we'll need help, instead of being able to give it. Get up, Jack!"** and touching him with the whip, she drove on rapidly to the bridge where they met Albert hurrying toward them.

"Fred!" gasped Elena, springing out the instant the vehicle stood still.

"No, it was Tom," said Albert, catching her in his arms, thinking she was going to faint.

"Oh, I'm so thankful!"

"Yes, and he'll not drown; for they're after him with the canoe."

They ran down to the water's edge, and were just in time to see Ercurius seize Tom, and drag him by main force into the canoe.

"The fish! the fish! Don't let him go!" he spluttered with his mouth half full of water.

Fred caught the line, cut Tom loose, and hauled in the fish, Tom crying triumphantly, **"Isn't he a stunner? Whew! I—I tell you he can pull like two forty!"**

"Hold on till you get your breath, Tommy, my lad," said Ercurius, pulling lustily for the shore.

"Three cheers!" cried Fred, leaping out as the canoe touched the bank, and Albert laid hold of her; **"Three cheers for the lad and the fish who caught each other!"**

"Hurrah for my captive!" cried Tom, springing up, dragging a dripping handkerchief from his pocket and waving it about his head, from every hair of which the water was streaming, as from his clothes, also. **His hat was gone past recovery.**

"Hurrah!" chimed in the other three, as well as they could for laughing.

"You senseless creatures! He'll catch his death of cold!" cried Mrs. Burns, as soon as she could be heard. And running to her carriage, she seized a thick woollen afghan, and in a moment had Tom enveloped in it from top to toe.

"Now get right in and let me drive you straight to the Braes," she said, in a tone of command. "Come, Ercurius, Albert, Fred, all of you, put him in and tuck that well round him."

"Of course, of course, mother;" answered Ercurius, picking up his chum as if he had been a mere baby, and speedily bestowing him in the carriage.

Tom, in no wise depressed by his impromptu bath, but rather elated over his successful fishing, was going into fits of laughter, in which the rest of the young folks could not refrain from joining.

Even Mrs. Burns smiled grimly, while telling him she expected nothing better than having him sick on her hands for a week.

"Niver a *bit* of it, ma'am," said the incorrigible Tom. "I wouldn't be so ungrateful after all your kindness in staying at home to 'tend to that cooking you spoke of at breakfast."

"'Twon't do you any good if you're sick," she said. "Come, girls, get right in, and let me take this drowned rat home as quick as possible; and you boys hurry along too, for it's near dinner time."

"Awful complimentary," muttered Tom.

"Ercurius, you must jump in and come along with

us," continued Mrs. Burns; "you'll be wanted to 'tend to the nursing—"

"Of the drowned rat," interpolated Tom.

"The girls can do as they like about riding or walking," added Mrs. Burns, disdaining any notice of Tom's aside.

Ercurius obeyed, taking the reins. Elena preferred the walk home with her brothers, but Gitsie seated herself beside the hero of the hour and teased him all the way to the house.

Arrived there he was made to drink hot lemonade, take a hot bath, and a good rubbing after it, at the hands of Ercurius;—the patient indulging in roars of laughter during the operation—was then rolled in a blanket and stowed away in bed, with many covers heaped upon him.

Here he lay and slept till shortly before tea; when he was permitted to rise—resume his ordinary attire—which had in the meantime been thoroughly cleansed, dried, and pressed by his benevolent hostess—and join the family in the parlor.

He was looking quite fresh and declared he had never felt better in his life, and that the fish had certainly got much the worst of it.

"Miss Lena," he said, turning to her; "I feel greatly flattered by your distress at my calamity."

"So, Albert has told of me," she answered, flushing. "Well, you *needn't* flatter yourself."

"So I told him," laughed Gitsie; "and Lena, you must blame me, not Albert, for telling. And now Mr. Ake, I'll finish the story. When Albert told her it was you, she exclaimed, 'Oh, I'm so thankful!'"

“ I'm quenched ! I'm extinguished ! ” cried Tom, striking an attitude ; **“ Shall have conceit of myself— never more ”**

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Cat slips out of the Bag.

COMING into the parlor shortly after tea, Mrs. Burns found Fred sitting there alone, reading. Tom was on the porch amusing himself by quizzing Davie and his sister.

Fred looked up with a smile. "I hope your labors are at last ended for the day, Aunt Silence," he said, rising with his accustomed courtesy, to hand her a chair.

"Thank you, yes," she said, accepting his attention; "everything's done for to-night, except shutting up the house. I always see to things myself, and then I know they're done right; if I didn't wash and wipe my best china and silver with my own hands, the one would soon be broken up, and t'other all scratched and dented. You've got a book, I see. As fond of em as ever, are you?"

"Quite."

"How's Miss Nevins? I haven't had a chance to ask you before."

"She was in good health at last accounts, he answered, smiling and coloring slightly.

"Course of true love runs smooth so far, eh?"

Well, I'm glad of it, Fred. You'll be bringing her home before long, I 'spose?"

"Not till I have been admitted to the bar, Aunt Silence. I don't think a man ought to marry, till he's prepared to undertake the support of a family."

"No, nor I: you're right there, Fred."

"How do you enjoy married life?" he asked, with a smile.

"Right well, Fred; I've the best of husbands, an excellent home, and as good children as you'd find anywhere. I've never yet had occasion to regret saying 'yes' to my Sandy. But where are the rest?"

"I don't know, indeed; but it's my impression that they went into the garden."

"Well, I'll leave you to your book, and go hunt up the girls, I don't like to miss of their company while I can have it."

"Ah, Mrs. Burns, you're looking for the young ladies, I presume?" remarked Tom, inquiringly, as she stepped out upon the porch. "They and my two chums have strolled off together to parts unknown; leaving Landon and me in the lurch. Pretty doings, isn't it?" Then drawing nearer and speaking in a low, confidential tone, "I say, ma'am, I believe in my heart, my friend Longlegs—oh, I beg pardon, Burns—is getting very sweet upon Miss Landon."

"Ah?" she returned, with a satisfied smile; "Well! If she takes to him too, I don't apprehend any objection; not from his side o' the house, anyhow. Longlegs! Is that what you fellows at the seminary call Ercurius?"

"Yes, ma'am; no offence, I hope? It seems to fit"

“ So it does ; and I’m satisfied, if he is. What do they call you ? Short legs ? ”

“ Hop o’ me Thumb, ma’am at your service,” he answered, with a bow and a comical grimace. Or spoken of together, we’re the Long and the Short of it.”

Mrs. Burns was not ill pleased with the hint Ake had given her, and watching the young people narrowly through the evening, became convinced that he was not far astray in his conjectures.

And if Tom himself had any lingering doubts on the subject, they were dispelled by the events of the night.

He was waked by feeling himself taken into the long and strong arms of Ercurius, and hugged up to his breast in a most affectionate manner, while “ Lena, Lena, darling ! ” was breathed into his ear, in accents of tenderness.

Tom comprehended instantly that his chum was dreaming and of what, and whom. He of course was intensely amused, but controlled himself and remained perfectly quiet and passive, waiting for further developments.

He had not long to wait ; the next moment, Ercurius raised himself in the bed, and leaning over him imprinted a warm kiss full upon his lips.

As Tom was afterward wont to say in relating the incident, he “ couldn’t hold in any longer from bursting out,” and his shout of laughter woke not only Ercurius, but nearly everybody else in the house.

“ What now ? ” cried Fred and Albert, in a breath, springing from their bed and rushing to the door of communication between the two rooms.

"Don't you dare to tell, for your life!" whispered Ercurius, threateningly and clapping his hand upon Tom's mouth, while the latter convulsed with mirth, and almost suffocated with the effort to suppress it, rolled over and over in the bed, throwing his arms and legs about and trying to wrench himself free from the grasp of Burns; who was himself shaking with merriment.

"There's nothing wrong!" to the querists at the door; "only Tom here, seems to have had a funny dream."

"I should say!" gasped Tom, half under his breath, pushing the hand away from his mouth, and going off into another convulsion worse than the first. "Longlegs, you'll be the death o' me yet! Never had such an affectionate embrace in my life, 'cept from my doting maternal parient."

"Thought he caught a mammoth sturgeon, perhaps," remarked Albert.

"Pray don't dream quite so loud next time, old fellow," said Fred; "it's rather startling to your neighbors."

"Hark! there's a knock at the other door," whispered Ercurius. "Halloo."

"What's wrong now, lads?" asked the voice of Burns, senior.

"Nothing but a dream, father; we're all right, thank you."

"Ah, ye're a rare dreamer, my son; I'd advise a light supper in future." And the old man's retreating footsteps were heard descending the stairs.

Tom was promising himself some sport at the

breakfast-table over the affair, but it was Sunday morning, and the Sabbath stillness that pervaded the entire household, awed him into unwonted sobriety.

Our party left the Braes early on Monday morning ; the seminary students returning to its halls, Fred to his legal studies in New York ; but with the promise that he would be with them again at the Commencement in June.

CHAPTER XIX

Gitsie's Strategy.

“I’M awful glad you’ve got back!” exclaimed Miss O’Flarity, putting her arms about Gitsie’s waist and kissing her in the most sentimental style; “we’ve had a dreadful dull time without you.”

“Why, you surprise me!” returned Miss Ertel, elevating her eyebrows. “I’d no idea of being missed while you had such delectable companions as those ‘dramatic persons’ of yours, particularly Celestia Sophronisba and Frederic Augustus.”

“Ah, but I’ve seen nothing of the dear creatures for days.”

“Indeed! my astonishment increases; I thought nothing could deprive you of the sweet pleasure of their society.”

“Ah!” sighed Jerusha, with a rueful shake of the head; “I fondly dreamed so myself, but alas, all things on this terrestrial globe are subject to alteration. I had a slight bilious attack, and becoming morbid and depressed, grew fearful of mental aberration of the mind, if I continued exerting my intellect so constantly. So I have laid my beloved employment aside for the present.”

Quite right and wise. I'd give myself a long rest from it, if I were you. But what's going on yonder in that corner? Those girls are having a good time, I must go and ask what's up, for I never miss a bit of sport if I can help it." And hurrying to them, she inquired, "What's the fun, girls? Have you found a haw-haw's nest with a tehe's egg in it?"

"How did you relish the butter to-night?" asked one of the group, turning toward her and answering her query Yankee fashion, by putting another.

"Execrable! as strong as—as Samson. How long has it been on the table?"

"Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday; four days," said the other, counting on her fingers, "and the case looks hopeless; for so little is eaten that there's no sensible diminution of the quantity originally provided."

"Has any complaint been made?"

"I should think so!" cried several voices, in chorus; "but it's no good; we're told there'll be no fresh bought while that lasts."

"Surely Mrs. Weir would never insist on feeding us with such stuff as that! Have you appealed to her?"

"Yes; but she can't help it any more than ourselves; the steward bought a lot of it cheap, and the doctor can't allow the extravagance of having it thrown away. So it's plain we'll get no more till it's gone; and we're trying to contrive how to get rid of it."

"And has anything been proposed?"

"Oh, yes; various plans; very good if we could

only carry them out ; but there's the difficulty. We'd even steal it and carry it off the premises by night, but old Broadax is in the way."

"Then it must be done by daylight," said Gitsie, decidedly.

"But how, 'Sir Archibald Bell the Cat?'" queried the other, laughing.

"It must be taken piece-meal, every girl doing her share ; every chap, likewise. We must communicate with them and secure their co-operation ; concert of action will be necessary to success. In union there is strength."

"The details of the plan, if you please," demanded several voices. "Are we to carry it away in our hands, and by main force?"

"No ; in our pockets ; each girl must provide herself with a piece of thick paper, help herself liberally to butter, and watching her opportunity, transfer it from her plate to the paper, and slip that into her pocket."

"Good !" cried some ; "That's feasible."

"But what's to be done with it afterwards?" asked others.

"Somebody else make a suggestion in regard to that. I've done my share, I think," said Gitsie.

"Perhaps the boys can help us out with that," said Miss Landon. "I have a tin box we can put it into. But—I wonder if it's quite right?"

"What? To take butter and put it out of the way? Of course it is ; they wont give us any better while this lasts, and it'll last for the rest of the session if we

don't get rid of it some other way than by eating it ; for that's an impossibility."

"And we pay our board, and are entitlec to butter that we can eat."

"Yes, let's take it without any compunction, put it in the box and bury it down yonder at the foot of the hill," said Gitsie. We might have a grand funeral."

"No," said Elena, gravely ; "death is too solemn a thing to make sport of. I'll provide the box, help take the butter and to bury it too, if you like ; but I'll have no share in any parade of funeral ceremonies."

"Come now, Lena, my dear, don't be over-scrupulous," said Gitsie, coaxingly. "Why shouldn't we kill two flies mit one schmack?—get rid of the butter and have a little sport out of it, too?"

A rather noisy discussion followed; but finally Elena carried her point.

She and Gitsie were then delegated commissioners to confer with the other side of the house, in order to secure combined action in the affair.

They contrived to do so that evening and returned to their companions filled with disgust and indignation at the discovery that the young men were not sharers in the unpalatable viand forced upon them, but had very good butter upon their table.

"They knew the fellows wouldn't put up with it, you see," remarked Miss O'Flarity.

"And they thought we would ; but we'll teach 'em better !" cried Gitsie, her black eyes sparkling with anger.

“Yes, I’ll do my part at it, as sure as my name is Jerusha Arabella.”

“The assembly was unanimous in favor of the measure, and voted that it should be carried out at once. It was done at breakfast the next morning, and that so effectually as to leave scarce a vestige of butter on the table.

Elena’s box received the packages and was hidden away in a closet till the hour of recreation in the grounds, when a gardener’s trowel was borrowed (without leave) a hole dug at the foot of the hill, where by reason of the nature of the ground, they were not exposed to view from the seminary windows, the box placed therein and carefully covered up with earth and leaves.

Their stratagem was entirely successful. If Mrs. Weir had any suspicions, she kept them to herself, merely reported that a new supply of butter was needed; and some that was quite fresh and sweet speedily took the place of that so adroitly disposed of.

CHAPTER XX.

A Tussle in the Dark.

EARLY summer had come again ; the sweet breath of June had clothed hill and valley with verdure and filled the gardens with blossoms, sprinkled in white and pink over the tree tops, and in variegated hues along the beds beneath ; in the woods also grew many a lovely wild-flower, and of these the girls at the seminary had gathered to adorn themselves and the large reception-room ; for it was Sociable evening.

Gitsie and Elena were charming in white taraltan with roses in their hair, and confining the dress at the throat.

Gitsie with her witty speeches, keen sense of the ludicrous and quickness at repartee, was as usual the life of the company, while Elena's sweet face, and her graceful and refined manners and conversation, rendered her no less attractive. Her cultivated and beautiful voice, and rare musical talent, were also greatly admired, and she was led to the piano again and again, in the course of the evening.

It had been so at every Sociable she had attended, and almost always either Burns or Rudolph stood at

her side to turn her music ; often both hovered near Gitsie declared they were rivals and very jealous of each other.

There was another who was jealous of both, yet kept studiously in the background, seldom intruding himself upon Elena's notice.

It was Stephen Guthrie whose young, brave, manly heart, had succumbed to the witchery of the fair girl's kindly sympathy in his aims, and struggles, and her genuine respect for the sterling worth of his character ; unobscured to her inner vision, by the poverty of his circumstances.

By the generous aid of his chums, and his own determined efforts, Stephen had succeeded in keeping up with his classes, losing nothing, but rather gaining by the injury to his hands. They were now entirely healed ; but he had not returned to his old duties about the building ; another having assumed them during his disability, and still retaining the place, quite to Stephen's satisfaction ; more lucrative and congenial employment having been furnished himself through the instrumentality of Albert Rush. This was copying for Mr. Ramsey, and was paid for at most liberal rates.

Yet Stephen had wisely determined that for his health's sake, he would still devote a part of his time to work which would give him vigorous exercise in the open air ; and with that end in view had procured employment in the doctor's garden, and also continued to pay as formerly for his washing and mending.

Nor was he much better dressed than before ; for all that the closest economy could enable him to save

from his hard earnings, was joyfully sent to his mother to relieve her toils and cares.

Rudolph was asking Elena to play.

"Now, do let her have a little rest," said Gitsie, who stood near by; "it's too warm for constant exercise to-night. O Lena, look! Blackberries as I'm a living girl!" she added, in an undertone of excessive amusement; and with a rapid glance at a young gentleman who had just entered the room.

Elena laughed behind her fan, as at some amusing recollection; at the same time turning upon the stranger a glance of curiosity and interest.

"I am mystified," said Rudolph. "Come Miss Ertel, be good enough to enlighten my ignorance."

"Do you know Blackberries?" she asked, laughingly.

"As a common, but not as a proper noun."

"Do you know the gentleman who just came in?"

"Yes—no; by sight, and by name, but he is no acquaintance. He is Mr. Barker, the owner of a fine fruit-farm, a mile or two out of town; is he not?"

"Right, sir; Barker is the name he is known by among his friends and acquaintance; but with us seminary lasses his cognomen is—Blackberries. And not to keep you dying with curiosity—this is the way it came about. One day last summer when the season for that luscious fruit was at its height, he drove up to the gate on our side of the ground with a wagon full of it."

It was recess time, and we girls—nearly two hundred strong, were out for a little air and exercise. The cry of Blackberries was instantly raised and we

rushed at him pell-mell. He lifted his hat politely, and answered ; " I can not give you any to-day, ladies, as they are all engaged by your matron." Then there were various cries ; ' Mean fellow ! ' ' Stingy ! ' ' Aren't you ashamed ! ' ' Come on girls, let's help ourselves ? ' and all over the wagon we swarmed, diving our hands into his nicely-packed crates, quite as much for the fun and mischief of it, as because we wanted the berries."

Gitsie stopped to laugh, and Paul laughing too, asked, " And what next ? How did he take it ? "

" Looked as if he would like to drive us off with his whip, but too polite for that, hastily seated himself on top of the crates, with an air of one determined to defend his property ; at the same time repeating that they were engaged to Mrs. Weir."

" Then we seized the reins and tied them out of his reach ; jumped off the wagon and whipped up the horse. But just then the bell rang, spoiling our sport and no doubt bringing great relief for our victim."

" Did he ever complain of you ? "

" No, and taking that generous forbearance into consideration, it is really too bad that we have ever since called him Blackberries."

" Miss Landon had no part in the transaction ? "

" Oh, no, she was not here then, and besides is too lady-like for such carryings on ; while with me, the love of fun often gets the better of both politeness and prudence. But dear me, he's actually coming this way ! "

" So he is," said Paul. " Miss Landon, are you sufficiently rested now to give us another song ? "

"Quite," answered Lena, allowing him to lead her to the instrument.

Burns, who was bringing up Barker, introduced him to Gitsie and several others, then leaving them to entertain each other, turned and made his way to the piano.

Guthrie from afar looked on and sighed, but presently edging his way through the crowd, drew nearer until he stood almost at the side of Burns.

"We are going to bring in the refreshments now, will you help, Mr. Guthrie?" asked Mrs. Weir's voice at his elbow.

"Oh, certainly."

"And you, Mr. Burns? We need several, you know."

"With pleasure, Mrs. Weir."

They followed her from the room and returned almost immediately, each bearing a waiter with cake and iced-lemonade. Guthrie was foremost, and leaving Burns and others to wait upon the guests, he presented himself before Elena, who now left the piano-stool, but stood near the instrument, with Rudolph still by her side.

"Take a slice of cake and glass of lemonade, Miss Landon; you must be thirsty after singing, and the evening so warm, too," said Stephen, proffering his viands.

"Thank you," she said; accepting his offer with a smile and a glance of her soft brown eyes that brought the blood to his cheek.

A cool drink was a rare treat to the students of Thurston Seminary; for the water supplied for their

daily use was from a spring on which the sun shone during the greater part of the day, and ice was considered too expensive a luxury for any but high days and holidays.

This was looked upon as a great grievance ; particularly as it was well known that much better and colder water could be procured from a spring no farther off than the foot of the hill in the rear of Dr. Gerwick's residence. But he would neither allow the students access to the spring, nor have the water carried to them.

"How refreshing a cold drink is!" remarked Elena, taking her glass from her lips. "One learns how to appreciate it here."

"That's a fact," said Paul. "It's a crying shame that we are compelled to drink luke-warm water in this institution, when deliciously cool could be obtained at no cost, and with so little trouble."

"Then it is really true that the water of the spring in the doctor's grounds, is much cooler than the other?"

"Yes ; cold almost as ice-water."

"And why are we not supplied from there?" she asked, indignantly.

"He will trust neither students nor servants there, lest they should help themselves to his fruit ; he has some apple trees in the vicinity of the spring, and currant and raspberry-bushes on the route."

"And what if they should? If the fruit were mine, I should say, let them have it ; and welcome ; for there are loads on other parts of his grounds ; and if there were not, his salary is large enough to enable him to buy all he and his family could possibly eat."

"Ah, but Miss Landon and Dr. Gerwick are two different persons; he has a decided genius for economy."

"Economy is a very good thing in its place," she said, laughing; "but I find it not at all admirable when it interferes with my comfort. I'd have given almost anything, last night, for a drink of cold water."

"I'm usually law abiding," said Paul; "but, when tyrants rule and use their power to oppress, I hold that subjects may disobey and resist. Miss Lena, I promise you a drink from that spring."

"Thanks, Mr. Rudolph, but I would not have you cease to be law abiding on my account."

"Oh, permit him, by all means," interposed Jerusha Arabella, who, standing near, had overheard the conversation; "it would be so romantic, so chivalrous of him, to risk—not his life exactly—but his reputation, which should be dearer still—for a fair lady. He would deserve to be dubbed a true knight, and brave. Mr. Rudolph, I shall adopt you for the hero of my next novel."

"Very kind of you, Miss O'Flarity," he answered, a slight touch of sarcasm in his tone; "but I assure you my chivalry needs no such spur as the bribe you offer."

"What's all this about chivalry, spurs and bribes?" asked merry Gitsie, coming up, tumbler in hand, and brushing the crumbs of cake from her dress.

"A little boasting on my part, Miss Ertel. Allow me the pleasure of refilling your glass," said Paul, gallantly.

"My naturally kind heart and generous disposi-

tion always prompt me to give pleasure when I can," she answered gayly, handing him her empty tumbler.

Albert had just joined the group and was speaking in an undertone to Elena. "I had a letter from home, Lena, and there was a message for you."

He gave her his arm, and led her out of the crowd to the portico where they could talk without being overheard.

They had hardly finished their chat when the bell rang for prayers; which, of course broke up the party; and deprived Paul of the opportunity he had been watching for, to speak again to Elena and arrange some plan for redeeming his pledge.

For the next few days and nights the weather was very sultry and there was much complaint of the heat and the want of cold water.

"It's too hot to study, sleep or do anything else, but sit and fan yourself," cried Gitsie, seating herself beside the open window, arrayed in a loose white dress, and with a huge palm-leaf fan in her hand. "There goes the old 'tap, tap, tap,' and what's the use? Who'd burn a light a minute longer than necessary such a night as this?"

"Not I, for one," said Elena, taking the other side of the window; "but Commencement is drawing near, you know, and there are some who persevere in spite of the heat."

"Guthrie for instance; how splendidly he recites. He'll deserve his laurels if ever anybody did. How thirsty I am! Aren't you?"

"Yes, very."

"Let's set out on a pilgrimage to that spring

Wouldn't it be a 'jolly lark?' as the boys say. We'd kill two flies mit one schmack,—have some fun and also quench our raging thirst. I declare I've more than half a minc to try it. Come, what do you say?"

Elena shook her head and sighed. "Old Broadax, my dear; and besides we're girls; 'twould never do. Oh! What was that?" for something came whizzing in at the window, and fell on the floor a little beyond them.

Gitsie leaned down and caught it as it rolled back to her feet.

"A ball of cord! Who threw it?" she cried. "Hark! There's a whistle!"

Both girls sprang up, and leaned eagerly out. The stars gave just light enough for them to see that a man was standing on the pavement directly below, but not enough to enable them to distinguish his features.

"Pull," he said softly; "I have a little bucket of water attached to this end of the cord."

"Paul Rudolph!" whispered Gitsie, laying hold of the cord; then a little louder; "You're an angel of mercy, sir! We're nearly dying of thirst!"

Elena contented herself with a hearty, "Thank you," as she came to Gitsie's assistance.

By their united efforts, and amid much half smothered laughter, the bucket slowly ascended and at length reached the window sill; though not without having spilled nearly half its contents; the greater portion falling upon the person of their true knight.

He cared little for that; it would do him no harm this warm night, but a whisper from Gitsie, had

scarcely announced the safe landing of the bucket when a window was thrown up in Professor Pettibone's room, a night-capped head appeared at it, and Paul drew hastily back into the shade of a tree.

The girls almost held their breath for a moment, till the sash went down again.

"There, Bony smells a rat! It's rather dangerous—this close proximity to the old chap," said Gitsie, "but what a salamander he must be! Anybody else would be smothered alive with his window shut such a night as this."

Elena did not answer immediately; she was again leaning from the window and straining her eyes through the darkness. Presently she drew her head in again and seemed to listen intently.

"What is it?" asked Gitsie, handing her a glass of water from the bucket. "Come, drink before it gets warm; it's deliciously cool, now. Dear me, how good it was of him to bring it! I hope he'll not be caught."

"I think he's safe so far," said Elena. "I saw him dart round the corner; and all is quiet in the next room. So we may conclude Bony made no discoveries."

Paul had made his exit from the building by one of the dining-room windows, which he had unfastened for the purpose, merely pushing the shutters to behind him ere he left. He succeeded in effecting a re-entrance there, and restoring the fastenings; but he had still to traverse several halls and climb three flights of stairs, in order to reach his own room, and at every step of the way was liable to meet the

dreaded Broadax, who with his silent foot-falls and dark lantern seemed almost ubiquitous.

"I'll be as quiet and as invisible as he, and trust to my luck not to run square against him," had been Paul's resolve in planning his expedition; he had accordingly donned a black suit, and now hastily pulling off his shoes and stockings, and taking them in his hand, he groped his way cautiously along, carefully avoiding running against the chairs and tables in the dining-room, and keeping close to the wall in the halls.

He had gone safely up two flights of stairs, and was just turning to ascend the third and last, when a hand was suddenly laid on his shoulder and a gruff voice growled out, "What's your name, sir?"

There was no answer, and they grappled in silence. Broadax was superior in strength, but Paul in agility, and after a tussle that lasted for several minutes, the latter succeeded in freeing himself from the grasp of his antagonist, and darted up the stairs.

The watchman instantly pursued, turned on his light, and caught, him by the legs.

With a sudden twist of the body, Paul put about and dealt him a blow that knocked him down backwards to the bottom of the flight, then reached the top with a bound, darted into his room and secured the door.

"A very narrow escape," chuckled he to himself, drawing a long breath of relief; "but zounds! 'tisin't even that;" he added, groping about on the floor. "I've got but one of 'em, must have dropped the other in the scuffle; and it has my name on it in full

What an unfortunate wretch you are, sir! other fellows can get up a dozen larks without being found out, and you must be caught in the very first one. Well, you must take the consequences, that's all."

Broadax had received no injury in his fall, and gathering himself up, he followed with all haste in the footsteps of the flying culprit, but was too far behind to catch him, or to see which one of the rooms he entered.

Rather disappointing that ; particularly considering his late downfall ; but Broadax was of a phlegmatic temperament, and took things coolly. But he smiled a grim smile of satisfaction, when on a careful inspection of the stairs and lower hall, he picked up a stocking, dropped in the scuffle, and saw that there was a name on it. He rolled it up, put it carefully into his pocket, and resumed his noiseless round.

Elena Landon had said truly, that there were some in the institution who were studying hard in spite of the heat of the weather. Several of the girls and also Rudolph, Burns, Rush and Guthrie—more especially the last named—were working almost beyond their strength ; while Hurst and Lenox were not far behind. Others were attending to their duties with commendable industry, and there had been very few acts of insubordination or practical jokes, for weeks past. Rudolph's exploit made all the more noise on that account.

Tom Ake was the first of his set to hear of it.

"Here's a go!" he cried, rushing up to a knot of fellows who had gathered under a tree in the campus, and were discussing probabilities in regard to the

carrying off of the prizes to be given at the approaching examination. Burns had just remarked that he thought Rudolph as likely as any one to take the highest; when Tom bounded into their midst with the aforesaid exclamation.

"What's a go?" asked Hurst, tossing up his pen knife and catching it again.

"Why, a tussle between our two chief apostles, Paul and Peter. Rudolph's put his foot in it: he's gone and had a jolly lark all to himself; by the watering of the sistring; and got caught by old Cerberus on his way back, and"—

"You don't say!" cried one.

"What! Rudolph, our law-abiding, good student?" exclaimed another.

"He's taken the wrong time for a lark," said Burns, "it's a pity."

"The very wrongest he could!" said Tom; "And who'd have expected it? For 'twas only the other day he was lecturing me on the folly of such indulgences."

"I understand it," said Lenox, nodding his head wisely, "he's sweet upon Miss Landon, and I overheard him, last Friday night, promise her a drink from the doctor's spring."

Burns turned very red, but said nothing. Albert looked vexed, but was silent also.

"He goes it strong," remarked Hurst, restoring his knife to its accustomed place in his waistcoat pocket; "breaks two or three rules at once. Will they expel him, think?"

"Don't know, but he's lost all chance of prizes."

"Who? Rudolph?" asked a member of the senior

class, who was passing. "No, they've put him on probation ; his previous good character turned the scale in his favor."

"And old Cerberus caught him?"

"Yes, no—not him, but his stocking ; I'll tell you how it was, I just heard it from himself."

They listened and laughed, voting Paul a plucky fellow, and regretting the dropping of the tell-tale stocking.

CHAPTER XXI.

Three Roguish Chaps fall into Mishaps.

THE students of Thurston Seminary were all required to attend church, both morning and afternoon, on the Sabbath ; each going to that of the denomination preferred by his parents, or himself.

It was the Sunday immediately preceding the Commencement, the weather still very warm, clear and bright. The trees in the campus afforded a refreshing shade, and numbers of the young men might have been seen lounging underneath them during the interval between dinner and afternoon service. Burns and Ake were together as usual ; the former with his long limbs stretched full length upon the grass, and his head in Tom's lap.

"It's an awful bore;" Tom was saying, as Hurst came up and threw himself down on the grass beside them.

"The very words that were on the tip of my tongue," said he; ' I wonder if your one, and my one are the same one."

"I referred to the prospect of listening this afternoon to another long-winded and dry discourse such as put me to sleep this morning. That's my one."

“ And mine ; the dryest old stick ever I heard.”

“ Don’t do a fellow a bit o’ good to listen to him, or rather to sit under him, for as to listening—it’s out of the question.”

“ Where’s the use of trying, then ? ”

“ Try, try, try again, Mark, my boy ; there’s nothing like trying,” said Ercurius, in a paternal tone.

“ Faugh ! I’ve tried enough in that direction,” answered Hurst, scoffingly ; “ it don’t pay ; a fellow gets roasted alive, and smothered to death, and nothing to show for it. I say, let’s go off down yonder into the woods, study nature, and rehearse our pieces.”

“ ’Twould be a vast deal more agreeable than being cooped up in that hot, close church, with Parson Pratt droning in your ears,” observed Tom. “ What say, Longlegs ? ”

“ H’m ! ” returned Burns, meditatively ; “ I daresay a fellow might read a book down there with as great profit, and far greater comfort than he’d find trying to follow the good, dull old dominie in his rambling, pointless discourse.”

“ It’s oncommon cool and pleasant, in that little dell down yonder, by the side of the stream where the trees are so thick,” said Tom, gazing longingly in that direction. “ Come, Longlegs, let’s try it.”

“ Yes ; that’s where the try ought to come in,” laughed Mark. “ Come on, lads. I’ve a half dozen of cigars, and we’ll have a quiet smoke.”

“ Well, to please you, Tommy,” said Burns, getting up, shaking himself into order, and taking his hat from the grass, “ I’m in for it.”

“All right, old chap, then the Long and the Short of it is, we’re going.”

And they sauntered on after Hurst who was already pursuing a somewhat circuitous route toward the brow of the hill overlooking the proposed scene of their afternoon’s enjoyment.

They reached it, unnoticed so far as they were aware, and selecting a spot where a large tree gave a dense shade, and the grass grew thick and green, they sat down, and Mark produced his cigars.

There was something in the personal appearance of each of these three, on which he particularly prided himself; with Mark it was a heavy suit of fine, soft, dark hair; with Tom a beautiful complexion; while with Burns it was his moustache; an appendage which few of his fellow-students—none at all in his own class—could boast.

“Thanks,” he said, accepting Hurst’s offered cigar, and feeling in his pocket for a match.

He drew one out, struck it, held it to the end of the cigar, but instantly and with a hurried outcry, dropped both together upon the grass, and clapped his hand to his mouth. A sudden puff of wind had sent the flame against his cherished ornament and set it in a blaze.

“Eh! What’s up, old fellow?” cried Hurst, “Burnt yourself, hey?”

“Not seriously,” answered Burns, with assumed nonchalance, but secretly feeling terribly chagrined, as he took away his hand and allowed them to see that one half his moustache had disappeared.

“O Longlegs, Longlegs!” cried Tom, lifting his

hands in dismay; "Your beauty's spoiled for Commencement! Dear, dear, here's a go! Wish I hadn't coaxed you to play truant."

"Serves me right, don't it?" Burns answered, forcing a laugh. "Never mind, lads; 'twill grow again."

"In the course of time (not Pollock's), but alas! Not in time for Commencement," sighed Tom. Then he began to moralize on the vanity of hirsute ornaments which a match and a harmless puff of wind could turn to smoke and ashes in an instant.

"All very fine, Hop o' my Thumb;" returned Ercurius, picking up his cigar, and taking out another match, "all very well, but—don't crow before you are out o' the woods."

"Sensible advice that, Burns, (I declare! How appropriate the name is to-day!) I'll endeavor to act upon it," remarked Hurst, bracing his back comfortably against a tree, finding a convenient resting place for his head, in a little hollow some one had made by taking out a chip, at precisely the right height.

Ake was puffing away with his hands in his pockets, head thrown back, and eyes fixed intently upon some object in the branches overhead. "Ah, ha, my fine fellow, you can't come it!" chuckled he.

"What's that?" asked Hurst.

"Master Bunny's a prisoner, d'you see? No other tree near enough to leap to, and three giants in the way of his descent from this."

"Three giants! Come that's a good one, Short of it!" laughed Mark, measuring Ake's rather diminutive figure with his eye.

“Relatively speaking, my hearty,” returned Tom, neither abashed nor mortified ; “put me in Lilliput, and my claim wouldn’t be disputed. I say, Longlegs, that lip trimming o’ yours looks rather one-sided. Better dispense with it, altogether.”

“True enough, lad, think I’ll have to raise a conflagration on t’other side.”

“A dangerous experiment old fellow, might spread farther than desired and make you more Burns than ever.”

“Ah! a wretched pun, Tommy. And is it the part of a friend to make merry over my calamities, and with my name?”

The talk went on, the smoking also ; both probably seeming to Master Bunny, on his elevated perch overhead, very tiresome and well nigh interminable. Perhaps he did not relish the new scent that saluted his nostrils ; at all events, he at length, grew so weary of the state of siege he was enduring, that he determined to attempt escape therefrom by a bold sally ; and accordingly suddenly rushed down right over the heads of his besiegers.

They struck at him with their canes, and in the *mêlée* Tom’s nose received a blow that took off the skin down its whole length.

“Ah, Tommy, Tommy, you’re scarce more fortunate to-day than your chum!” said Burns, regarding him with a half smile of mingled commiseration and amusement, as he stood holding his handkerchief to the wounded member.

“Confound it ; I must look a pretty sight!” cried Tom, rushing to the stream for the double purpose of

taking a view of himself and washing away the blood. "Yes, I'm a beauty," he said, ruefully gazing at the defaced image reflected in the clear, bright water; "in a nice state for Commencement and the holidays."

"You'll take the ladies hearts by storm; no use for any of the rest of us to try," laughed Hurst, attempting to rise. "Halloo; what's wrong here? I'm fast." And he put up his hands to his head.

"Fast?" echoed Burns, coming to the rescue.

"Yes, confound it, what's the matter with my hair? Seems to be glued tight to the tree."

"So it does, Mark," said Burns, vainly trying to disengage it; "the resinous gum exuding from this cut has glued your mane tight to it."

"Oh, dear! Can't you get it free?"

"Afraid not, old boy; but I'll try."

"What, Hurst, you in trouble too?" asked Ake, coming up holding his nose; "Ha! ha! ha! We're all in the same box."

"Not so fast; we haven't given it up yet," returned Hurst, manfully, and making another and determined effort to get free.

Quite useless; there was no way but to cut him loose, and the other two hacked away with their jack-knives till his release was effected.

"How *does* my hair look?" he asked, turning his back to them, upon rising to his feet.

"Awful!" returned Tom, consolatorily; "we're all in the same box, as I said before. And I for one, shan't show my face at Commencement," he added, with vehemence.

"*Nil desperandum*," quoth Burns; "there are

remedies,—flesh-colored court-plaster, liquid cuticle etc.”

Tom shook his head. Miserable devices in a case like this. What fair lady but would see through them at a glance, and discover the abraded surface beneath? No, no, gentlemen, Tom Ake's spoiled for the Commencement, and won't attend.”

“Unfortunately there have been other valuables damaged beside your proboscis,” sighed Hurst, stroking down his haggard locks, and glancing ruefully at Burns.

Then they all looked at each other and burst into a simultaneous roar of laughter.

“See here,” said Burns pulling out his watch; “they're just about starting from the town, and if we make good use of our legs, we'll get to our dens without encountering any of them.”

They set off instantly on a run for the house, reached it unobserved, but in the lower hall met Guthrie, who had spent his afternoon ministering by the bedside of a sick student.

Tom rushed past him with his handkerchief to his nose, Ercurius followed, adroitly turning toward him the moustached side of his face, while Hurst brought up the rear with his hat on.

Stephen looked after them in some surprise, but said nothing. And on they went, never pausing to take breath till they were safe in the study of Burns and Ake, with the door locked behind them.

Then Tom who had a talent for turning his hand to almost anything, volunteered to play barber to Hurst, which he did, while Ercurius took out his shav

ing apparatus and disconsolately removed the remains of his cherished moustache.

The summons to the supper-table was obeyed by all three with unwonted reluctance, yet promptly; since they knew that by hanging back and coming in after the rest, they would but attract the greater attention to their altered appearance.

As it was, a whisper presently ran round the table, and they felt, rather than saw, the full battery of eyes turned upon them, and the shrugs and smiles that followed. When the meal was over and the eyes and ears of professors and teachers were removed, they had to run the gauntlet of remarks, questions and ridicule.

“What ails the nose, Tom, my boy?” asked Sparks, clapping Ake on the shoulder.

“Oh, a little accident, Joe, accidents will happen in the best regulated families, as the old saying goes.”

“And Longlegs has lost his moustache; that was an accident too, eh?”

“Cooler without it, Joe,” returned Burns, nonchalantly.

“As Mark is, without that great mop of hair,” observed Rush, glancing from one to the other. “You fellows have grown wonderfully sensible all of a sudden.”

“Burns, you never took that moustache off a purpose; you needn’t tell *me*; and you’re rightly served,” remarked Gump, significantly.

CHAPTER XXII

Commencement.

FRED was expected to attend the Commencement, according to promise, but the day before the all important one, brought a joyful surprise to Albert and Elena in the arrival of the whole family.

Elena's delight—especially at sight of her mother from whom she had never before been separated—was something pleasant to behold. She had been faithful in her studies, and though not looking forward to any brilliant triumph, felt prepared to pass the examination ; so that there was nothing to mar her pleasure.

The Commencement was a decided success. Several students, both male and female, graduating with honor, and many in the lower classes—among whom were most of our young friends—doing great credit to themselves and their instructors.

Guthrie particularly distinguished himself as regarded both scholarship and conduct, and by his manly bearing, and modest demeanor, attracted much favorable criticism.

Mr. Ramsay, singled him out, inquired who he was, and learning his name, was gratified by the dis-

covery, that this was the poor student he had been supplying with remunerative employment, through Albert.

"Bring him to me," he said, to the latter; "I should like to have a talk with him. He is one it would be a pleasure to assist, for he is evidently full of both talent and energy."

Albert gladly complied with the request, and Mr. Ramsay, after some conversation in which he showed a fatherly interest in the young man, offered pecuniary assistance; doing so in the kindest and most delicate manner.

Stephen's face flushed. "I thank you, sir," he said, with emotion; "your offer is as kind and generous as unexpected; but—do not think me ungrateful—I cannot sacrifice the pride of independence which is mine both by inheritance and education; hard and long though the struggle be, I must continue it, rather than become a pensioner on the bounty of even so kind a friend as yourself."

"I honor the feeling which prompts you to decline a gift," replied Mr. Ramsay; "but surely you may accept a loan which may save you years of exhausting toil, perhaps involving the undermining of your constitution for life. But don't answer me now; take time to consider and decide wisely; seeking counsel of your best Friend, whose almoner I desire to be," he added, laying his hand in an affectionate, fatherly manner upon Stephen's shoulder. "And now let me have the pleasure of introducing you to my wife and daughter, though I daresay you have already some knowledge of the latter."

Answering that he had had the honor of some slight acquaintance with Miss Landon, and would esteem it a privilege to make that of her mother also, Stephen followed the old gentleman into the adjoining room.

Here they found a lively group, consisting of the rest of the Ramsay family, and several of the students.

Mrs. Ramsay seemed the centre of attraction and Guthrie, like the rest, speedily yielded to the fascination of her beauty, gentleness, refinement, cultivation, and kind cordiality.

Miss Ertel was there, in even wilder spirits than usual; Burns, Rudolph and Hurst were present also; but Tom—though longing for the privilege—was not: his disfigurement was too noticeable, and—obliged, much against his will, to attend the exercises of the day,—he had kept himself as completely in the background as possible.

It had been a time of mortification to him, for in addition to the bantering of his mates, he had to endure the consciousness that his appearance was the occasion of jesting and mirth among the junior portion of the audience.

Gitsie was teasing Hurst now about the loss of his hair, wondering demurely at his bad taste in having it cropped so closely.

“Wasn’t it the part of wisdom to make myself as cool-headed as possible for the examination?” he asked, gravely.

“Ah, was that it? And was it the same prudent forethought that led Mr. Burns to shave off his moustache, and Mr. Ake to strip the skin from his nose?”

Mark laughed. "Indeed," said he ; " I have not inquired into their motives. Perhaps it was more a matter of taste with them."

Guthrie looked thin, pale and worn ; his hard work had told upon him. Mrs. Ramsay noted the fact, and that he was evidently poor ; and her kind motherly heart prompted her to invite him to spend a part of his vacation with them in their seaside cottage, to which they would return, after a trip to the White Mountains and Lake Champlain.

The lad's eye brightened and his cheek flushed, as he returned his warm, earnest thanks : for his pulses thrilled at the very thought of the delicious invigorating sea-breeze, and the delight of spending days or weeks in the familiar intercourse of home life with Elena : yet he declined the invitation and remained firm in his refusal, spite of the hospitable urging of both the lady and her husband.

He could not forget that a toil-worn, gray-haired woman, the strength of whose best days had been given to him, waited and watched for his coming, and that through long dreary months of loneliness she had lived upon the hope of the weeks when his loved presence should brighten her humble home, and his ready helpfulness ease her heavy burdens.

Others might experience the delights of new and untried scenes, and perfect relaxation from all fatiguing effort ; but for him, rest could mean only a change of work. Nor would he regret the sacrifice made for his mother—his mother who would have freely laid down her own life for him, the son of her love, the idol of her heart !

CHAPTER XXIII.

Guthrie's Vacation.

IT is early morning, the birds have begun their matin song of praise, but the sun has not yet risen ; the dew lies heavy on the grass and wreaths of white mist hang about the hills, half veiling the sleeping river that threads the valley lying between.

Along the high road a young man, of tall athletic form, attired in linen duster and straw hat, with a satchel slung on a cane over his shoulder, is passing, with no laggard step ; yet without the undue haste that would speedily exhaust his strength.

A journey of thirty miles, or more, lies before him, and he is footing it to save his slender purse. Onward and yet onward he presses, now climbing the hills, now traversing the valleys, while the sun mounts high in the heavens, the mist wreaths vanish, and the full orchestra gives place to an occasional warble, or a few twittering notes.

Men pass him on the road—some pedestrians like himself, others in their farm-wagons laden with produce for the market—and kindly salutations are exchanged, sometimes with an added remark about the weather or the crops.

As the sun nears the meridian our traveller halts by the side of a brook, laves hands and face in the crystal stream, and drinks a deep draught; then having eaten a sandwich, throws himself down upon the green sward for an hour of rest and sleep.

Refreshed and strengthened, he rises and presses on with renewed energy. The afternoon is waning as he reaches the outskirts of a village, and pauses before a humble dwelling, whose little front yard, guarded and shut in by a whitewashed board fence, is gay with roses, hyacinths, heartsease and other flowers of the commoner sort.

At the sound of the opening of the gate, a tall, thin, gray-haired woman, plainly attired in a black calico, and linen collar, came hastily to the door. They met and embraced.

“Mother!”

“Stephen, my son.”

For a moment the hands were clasped in silence; —rough toilworn hands both hers and his—while each looked into the other’s with the same expression of deep earnest tenderness.

“You are hot, dusty, and tired?” she said; “You have walked all the way and carried your satchel, too?”

“Yes, mother; and it was a very pleasant walk, spite of heat and dust; the country never looked lovelier.”

“Yes, and the fruit crop is so large, and the wheat doing finely, they tell me. We have a great deal to be thankful for.”

“And you are well, mother?”

‘ In usual health, thank you, my son.’

“ Well ; there’s a basin in the back shed and a clean towel ; and supper’s on the table ; I’ve only to draw the tea, for I thought you’d be along about this time.”

“ Thank you, mother. I shall find a little cold water very refreshing ; and bring a good appetite to my supper after it.”

They were soon seated at the table. Its furniture was coarse and plain, but inviting, from its exquisite neatness. Stephen asked a blessing and they began their meal.

“ You are growing extravagant, mother ; one would suppose it a grand occasion,” he said, with a smile, as he lifted the cover from a dish of stewed chicken, which sent out a most appetizing odor.

“ So it is,” she answered gaily ; “ for I’m entertaining a rare and rarely welcome guest. I thought you would need a hearty meal after your long tramp, and I’ve been fattening that hen for weeks, expressly for you.”

“ Your nearest approach to a fatted calf ; and much to be preferred, I think. Mother you’re the best cook I’ve met with yet.”

“ Pleasant flattery, coming from my only son,” she answered as she handed him his cup of tea ; “ but I’ve often noticed that most folks praise their mother’s cooking as what they like best.”

“ Ah ? Well they may, if they have as much reason as I. Nobody can beat you on rolls, I’m sure ; these are excellent—light as a feather ; and the butter couldn’t be sweeter. Old Sukey must be

doing well ; your garden too, for such lettuce, or such strawberries I haven't seen before this year."

" Yes, Sukey gives her two gallons a day—now the calf's gone ; and I got five dollars for it—I get a little better than the market price for my butter, too, and it's a great help. And the garden is doing finely ; I've sold about ten dollars worth of fruit and vegetables already. Our cherry trees are very full this year, and the fruit never was finer. I didn't set any on the table, because I know you like best to eat them right off the tree. We've a great deal to be thankful for, Stephen."

" Yes, indeed, mother. But you have been working a great deal too hard. You look very thin and worn," he remarked, with affectionate concern. " But you shall have it easier, now I'm at home. I'll take care of the garden and do the milking and churning."

" Thank you, Stephen, you have always been a good son ; but we must both work and earn, till you're through your studies, and probably for some years after that."

" Yes," he said ; " and I spoke about harvest work, with two or three farmers as I came along."

" Oh I'm sorry ! Because you could have the school down here. One of the directors was after you this morning."

" Ah ! that's good news ; then I'll take it. I haven't positively engaged with the farmers, and the school will suit better : I'll make more, and can give my mornings and evenings to you and the garden."

“ And I'll be able to earn more with my needle.”

Then he told of Mr. Ramsay's generous offer, and asked if she approved of his reply.

“ Yes,” she said, with decision; “ I would be very sorry to see you willing to give up your independence and live on charity ; and yet—as he says,—I think you might accept a loan, if the struggle can't be kept up without it. Have you ever found out who sent the money at the time you were hurt ? ”

“ No, mother, but if I never do, I mean to pay the debt by passing the favor on to some other poor fellow when I'm able to do it.”

“ That's right. But what about the Commencement ? ”

He answered with a full report of all he thought she would care to know, and the meal being ended, brought out his prizes for her inspection. And she looked and listened, examined and praised, all the time proudly thankful for her good, industrious, talented son.

“ Still faithful to your old friends, mother ! ” he said, taking up a well-worn volume from the little work-table beside which she usually sat, when busied with her needle ; “ Rutherford's Letters,” and “ Baxter's Saints' Rest ? ”

“ Yes, Stephen, they come next to the Bible, and are worth more than a fortune to me. I'd be loth to exchange them, even for your prizes ; handsomely bound and really valuable as they are.”

She was piling up the cups and saucers.

“ Let me carry the things to cellar and spring house,” he said, laying down the book. “ And if

you'll sit down in your rocking-chair, I'll wash up the dishes too, and attend to the rest of the chores."

"No, not to-night; you're too tired, and there's nothing to do but these, and milking, and feeding the chickens."

"But you are tired too, and must let me help, at least. I'll carry these away, and do the out-door chores."

Some discontented thoughts, some fretting at the ways of Providence, found entrance into Stephen's mind, as he went about these homely tasks. What a toilsome lot was his; how he must labor for little more than a bare subsistence, even during these holiday weeks which to many others would be filled with the enjoyments of elegant leisure, and the varied recreations that wealth can procure.

It seemed hard that a sense of duty had compelled him to decline Mrs. Ramsay's tempting invitation. But still harder to his loving filial heart, was the contrast between that lady's life of ease, and his mother's of exhausting labor and care; the rich attire of the one, and the plain, coarse habiliments of the other.

How he envied Fred Landon! Though not for the world would he have ceased to be the son of that gray-haired woman, with her furrowed brow, and hands hardened, and inbrowned by labor, to become that of the beautiful, youthful looking lady with her smooth, fair face, and delicate white hands, sweet and lovely though she was.

Something of all this came out in the twilight chat of that evening, just before separating for the night.

"It isn't right, my son," Mrs. Guthrie said, gently; "such murmuring thoughts will now and then rise in these sinful hearts of ours, but we must fight against them and overcome by the help of Christ. One of Rutherford's sweet sayings is, 'Faith is exceedingly charitable, and thinketh no evil of God.' Another 'Let my Lord Jesus (since he willeth to do so) weave my bit and span length of time with white and black, well or wo.'"

"It is easier to do that in regard to my own lot, than yours, mother."

"My boy trust me in his hands, he loves me far better than you do, and can not mistake what is best for me."

* * * * *

The remaining days of June sped quickly by; the sultry ones of July and August followed, finding most of our young friends with little to do but think and talk of the heat, or forget it over the pages of a fascinating book; or in bathing, boating, fishing, or some other equally pleasurable employment.

To Stephen Guthrie, they were full of hard earnest work; yet not without their pleasures also; it was keen enjoyment to see the improvement of his scholars, to feel that he was doing them good, and winning their respect and affection; as well as the money that was to help forward his own education; there was pleasure too in watching the growth of his plants and flowers; and, in feeling that he was lightening his mother's burdens and relieving her loneliness.

What pleasant confidential talks they had as they sat together for an hour in the twilight, before seeking

their nightly repose after the fatigues of the day ; what a delightful, restful Sabbath at the beginning of each week of toil !

But all things earthly have an end ; the summer months vanished like a dream, and the first week of September found professors, teachers, and students trooping back to the Seminary, to begin their labors anew.

It was Stephen's last day at home ; early on the morrow he must set out on his return, again footing it over the weary miles.

Mrs. Guthrie was putting the last stitches into a shirt she was making him, when he came bounding in, flushed and excited.

"Mother, I've got it at last ! My model works perfectly, and surely, *surely* they cannot refuse me a patent !"

"I am very, very glad my son," she said, laying down her work, and taking off her glasses.

"Mother," he cried, in a voice half choked with emotion, dropping on his knees beside her chair to throw his arms about her waist ; "I hope—I believe your hard, hard days are almost over, and I shall soon see you riding in your carriage and having servants to wait on you. Ah, don't shake your head and smile so incredulously ; if I can get a patent my fortune is made ; I feel sure of it."

"Ah, but there is the *if*—and I have heard that very many fail, for one who succeeds. But you haven't told me what it is. I only know that you have been trying to invent something that is to be very useful to farmers."

“It’s a corn-marker, mother. On perfectly level ground the ordinary machine answers very well ; making as many rows at once as there are teeth in it ; but on uneven ground—a hill-side for instance—it will make only one or two rows, because only so many teeth will touch. Now my object was to overcome that difficulty, and I have succeeded. The principle is a very important one ; will apply to railroads and many other things ; and if I can get *it* patented as well as my machine, it will be worth—no end of money.”

“Well, my dear boy, don’t be too sanguine, lest disappointment should come. And don’t forget Christ’s warning, ‘Beware of covetousness ; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.’ Nor that other scripture, ‘The love of money is the root of all evil.’”

“But not money itself, mother, it is a good.”

“Yes, if with it, grace be given to use it aright, and not to love it for itself, or the indulgences it purchases for its possessors. ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom.’ I would far rather have my portion there than here, and so I think, would you. So let us try to keep calm and quiet—finding rest in him from anxiety in regard to this and everything else—and asking him to weave into our bit and span length of time just the proportions of white and black that he sees best for us.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

Cerberus Mystified.

“**T**HERE are some changes here, *mon ami*,” remarked Gitsie, carelessly. “You see I am a day ahead of you, and have had time to gather up the news.”

Elena was busied in unpacking her trunk; Gitsie seated on the side of the bed watching the operation.

“Ah, of what sort may they be?” asked Elena, with some curiosity and interest.

“Our beloved Jewell—the teacher that taught, and Rev. Mr. Martin,—the preacher that praught, have left, and their places are filled by new comers.”

“I cannot say that I feel much distressed by your first item of information,” returned Elena. “I didn’t fancy Mr. Jewell, particularly.”

“No, and I didn’t either, and I’m hardly inclined to think the substitute an improvement.”

“What is he like?”

“Young, of medium height, dark hair and eyes, gravity beyond his years, as the books say, so of course, not much to my taste.”

“He may improve upon acquaintance.”

“Perhaps so. You haven’t asked his name. It s

Edward Leigh,—prettiest part of him, I think. Oh, how awful hot it is! Worse than the middle of August. Make haste and finish up that job, and let's go down yonder 'into the shady shadow of the umbrageous trees.' That last's a quotation from somebody, can't say who."

"I've just done," said Elena, locking the trunk, and putting the key into her pocket.

"Come on, then, I've such lots to tell you. Yonder comes red head up the hill. Conceited wretch! Jerusha Arabella's been telling me a speech of his that makes me mad, and I'll give him a dose the first chance I get; see if I don't."

The opportunity presented itself sooner than she expected. Contrary to all rule, Silas, seeing them under the trees, walked up to the fence, lifted his hat, and with a self-satisfied smirk, accosted them: "How d'ye do, ladies? Most happy to see you back again."

"Thank you, Mr. Gump, I'm sorry truth forbids me to say the pleasure is not mutual," returned Gitsie, drawing herself up and speaking in freezing tones.

"Why—why—Miss Ertel, you—you don't mean it now?" stammered Silas, growing redder than his hair. "I—I really thought I was a—a favorite with you."

"So I have understood, but allow me to say it does not speak well for either your penetration or your modesty. Yes, I heard you said you could get any girl you wanted; that you'd only to give me the wink and I'd come to you. Now just try it, and see," she concluded, with withering scorn.

"I—I don't think that was precisely the remark,

Miss Ertel," he stammered, shrinking from the glance of her flashing eye; 'and of course it was all a joke.'

"A joke indeed! You'll be pleased to refrain in future from taking such liberties with my name."

"Or if he doesn't, he shall answer for it to me." The voice stern and angry, was that of Albert Rush, who, coming in search of his step-sister, had overheard Miss Ertel's last words.

"You mind your own business, sirrah!" muttered Silas, walking off.

"Has the fellow been insulting you, Miss Gitsie?" asked Albert, turning to her.

"He has been boasting of the admiration felt for him by all the young ladies of his acquaintance; and mentioning me and two others by name, said he had only to wink to either, and she'd come to him."

"Conceited jackanapes!" muttered Albert. "Lena, here is the package you entrusted to my care. Excuse my forgetfulness in not giving it to you before."

"It didn't matter."

"I'm glad of that. Ah, yourer's Guthrie!" And again lifting his hat with a nod and smile, he darted away across the campus.

The girls looked after him.

"Yes," said Gitsie; "that's Stephen Guthrie, just come. How tired he must be; for I see he has come as he went."

"How?"

"Footing it—a thirty miles tramp. Enough to tire him. I pity anybody that's so poor, and at the same time so ambitious. I wonder he doesn't give

up trying for a liberal education—seeing it's such hard, uphill work."

"Because he has too much of the right kind of grit," said Elena, half indignantly. "Give up, indeed! When he's the smartest one in the seminary! I should be sorry to see it. Self-made men (so called), are always among the noblest; and as for pity, I don't think he wants it from anybody."

There was a flash of mingled surprise, intelligence and amusement in Gitsie's eyes, as she turned them for an instant upon her friend; then shrugging her shoulders slightly, she began talking of other matters.

The young men met and shook hands, cordially.

"So you didn't run down to see us, at all," said Albert. "We hoped you would. How have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Very well, thank you; hard at work pretty much all the time; but that agrees with me, I think."

"Take care," said Albert, shaking his head; "all work and no play, if you continue to keep it up, will finally make Jack a dull boy."

"My sentiments exactly! I say how are you two, old chaps?" cried Tom Ake, rushing up with his noisy greeting.

"Where's your shadow?" asked Albert, shaking hands.

"Behind me, as he should be; seeing the sun's on the other side," returned Ake, pointing over his shoulder toward Burns, who was crossing the campus with his accustomed long and rapid strides.

"Heard the news, lads?" he asked, when the usual greetings and inquiries had been exchanged.

"No; what is it?"

"We have lost our Jewell."

"There ought to be a tolling of bells," said Stephen.

"So there should, and so there shall!" cried Tom; leaping up and clapping his hands; "It's a capital idea, old boy."

"What does he mean?" asked Albert as Tom darted away and joined a group at a little distance.

"Mischief of some sort," answered Burns, nonchalantly. "I must away to my den; will you come along, lads?"

Tom had got Mark Hurst by the button-hole, drawn him aside from the others, and was talking rapidly, laughing and gesticulating.

Mark shook his head, dubiously. "'Twould be awful dangerous, Tommy—hardly pay; 'specially if we break our necks."

"Pooh! I haven't been on a long cruise with my sailor uncle, for nothing; and can climb like a cat or a squirrel. I'll undertake that part, if you'll do yours below.

"All right, then; only—you do it at your own risk."

"Of course; if I break my neck, you'll not have the doctor to pay, never fear."

"We must get some o' the other fellows to bear a hand: two's not enough."

"Yes; Lenox, Sparks, and Rowley. Come on, let's sound 'em. One at a time, though, lest we excite observation."

They separated, and Tom went in search of Lenox. "Are you in the mood for a lark. Bob?"

“What sort?”

“Tolling the bell to-night, because of the loss of that precious Jewell of ours.”

“How’ll you manage it?”

“Borrow the key of the belfry—without leave of course—tie one end of a ball of twine to the clapper, climb out of the window, over the roof, throw down the ball to some fellows below, and they take it off to the woods, and do the ringing there at their leisure.”

“’Twould be a good joke,” said Bob, laughing. “Some danger and difficulty about it; but of course that only adds to the fun. Who’s to do the climbing?”

“I. We must have our signals, so that I’ll know you’re ready for the ball when I throw it, as it mightn’t be so easy to find in the darkness.”

“Then you go back and down through the belfry again?”

“Yes, and join you, if I don’t fall into the hands of old Cerberus.”

“Why should you? Get through that part of the job before he begins his round.”

“So we will; ’twill be dark enough long before curfew.”

The plan seemed feasible; but they were met by an unexpected difficulty at the very outset—the key of the belfry was not to be found; a new lock had been put on the door and it was one they could not pick with any instrument they had at hand.

“We’ll have to give it up, after all,” said Sparks.

“There’s no such word in my vocabulary,” retorted Tom. “I’ll climb the pipe up and down.”

"You can't do it."

"I'll try, anyhow."

He did and successfully. The others were waiting in almost breathless suspense below, till he joined them.

"Good for you, Tommy," cried Hurst, in an excited whisper, and clapping him on the shoulder. "I declare I quaked in my shoes, lest you should catch a fall, by losing your hold, or the pipe giving way."

"We'd give you three times three if 'twasn't for throwing the fat in the fire," said Lenox.

"So we would ; but come on, boys," said Sparks. "Old Cerberus is going to have a jolly good time of it to-night, ha ! ha ! ha !"

"How's that ?"

"Some of the fellows have been robbing a citron patch, and he's likely to get the benefit of it, as well as of this lark of ours."

The three sharp taps of the bell—the usual signal for extinguishing the lights—sounded out upon the still night air, just as our conspirators had reached the proposed scene of their operations.

"Hold on !" said Hurst ; "let's allow Cerberus a fair start before we begin."

All had grown quiet within and without the building, as the watchman began his accustomed round. He of course, had no regular routine, but would sometimes take one side first, sometimes the other. He was gliding noiselessly along on the lowest floor, when a faint tap of the bell brought him to a sudden halt.

He stood still, listening intently for a moment, thinking his ears had surely deceived him. But no there it was again—faint yet unmistakable—and he started at once for the belfry speeding on with a swift, but still noiseless tread, through corridor after corridor and up flight after flight of stairs.

“The young scamps! They’ve stole the key, or picked the lock; but won’t I catch ’em!” he was saying to himself, as he reached the belfry door.

But what could it mean? The door was fast, the lock had not been tampered with and the bell was still ringing. He carried the keys while on duty, and speedily selecting the right one, opened the door and sprang up the narrow stairway.

One hasty glance shewed him that not a living soul was there, yet the clapper was swinging slowly to and fro without visible cause. He stared at it with open mouth and eyes.

“Well, here’s a go! What’s got into the old thing! Hark, what’s that now?” as a rumbling, rolling sound came up from below.

He hurried down. As he stepped into the first hall the roll and rumble seemed to approach from its farther end; then something struck his foot and rolling on between his legs, nearly knocked him down.

Recovering his balance, he turned and pursued, determined to learn what it was; but another came rumbling up behind; and as he stooped to feel for the first, struck him a smart blow in the rear. Starting up he turned on his light and discovered the attacking party to be a couple of innocent citrons.

“Ah, I’ve caught ye!” he muttered under his

breath ; “ But ye didn’t come here of yourselves, I’ll find who sent ye.”

But that was more easily said than done ; the hall was empty, every door closely shut, not a sound to be heard, save a faint snore or two here and there, and the tap, tap of the bell, which had never ceased.

Broadax found he must content himself with the confiscation of the citrons ; since there was no one against whom he could lodge a complaint. For which—being a good-natured fellow, and rather enjoying the sharpness of the lads—he was not really very sorry.

But the same rumbling, rolling sound now came up from below, and he hastened down to encounter a few more citrons, and to be as completely baffled as before in the attempt to discover by whom they had been set in motion.

Confiscating these, also, thinking, with a grim smile, that his wife would have plenty for preserving, he kept on his way to the ground floor, where he deposited them in a corner ; then passed to the other side of the house. He had not heard the silent foot-falls that had dogged him from the floor above.

“ Where did he put ’em ? ” whispered a voice, at the foot of the staircase.

“ Here in this corner ; I’ve got ’em. There take hold. Won’t he think citrons are plenty this season ? Ha ! ha ! ”

“ Yes, but what on earth ails that bell ? ”

“ Don’t know, somebody else is playing tricks besides ourselves.”

The watchman had gained the second floor on the female side of the house, when a door was hastily

thrown open, and Prof. Pettibone's querulous voice asked. "Are you there, Broadax?"

"Yes, sir; what can I do for you?"

"Tell me what that bell's ringing for; is the house on fire?"

"No, sir; nothing's wrong that I can discover. P'raps it's the wind."

"Nonsense! Just go up and see who's there."

"Not a soul, sir. I've been up and couldn't see any cause; it must be the wind, or—spirits."

"Nonsense!" repeated the professor, in a tone of mingled contempt and exasperation; "Don't be a fool, Broadax. Did you turn on your light?"

"I did, sir, and there wasn't a soul there—not so much as a mouse—and not a thing touching the bell; but the clapper was movin' slowly back and forth altogether of its own free will and accord."

With that the professor withdrew back into his shell, and the watchman went on his way again. The continued ringing caused a good deal of commotion in the house, and though the majority soon quieted down and fell asleep in spite of it, apprehension or curiosity kept some awake the greater part of the night.

The ringers took turns at that, and sleeping; the heat of the weather making the grass under the trees a not unpleasant resting-place. As the day began to dawn, they stole quietly back to the house, one a a time, and entered by the window of a room on the ground floor, whose occupant had not yet returned.

CHAPTER XXV.

Selling the Doctor.

DR. GERWICK was walking at a brisk pace along the brow of the hill. A casual glance of his eye seemed to show him a small round object, of a whitish gray color, on the ground at his feet.

“A silver dollar!” he exclaimed, half aloud, and stooped to pick it up; but—could it have been mere hallucination? The thing—supposing it to have been really there—had suddenly, and mysteriously vanished.

After a minute or two of groping about under the bushes, near where it had appeared, the doctor walked on, smiling to himself at his folly; yet somewhat disappointed; for—to put it mildly—he did not despise silver dollars, or indeed silver or gold in any shape.

Then, as the sound of his footsteps died away in the distance, a low, gleeful chuckle came from the other side of the clump; Tom Ake, who had been lying there upon the grass for the last half hour, raised himself slowly to a sitting posture, peered cautiously under and over the bushes, glanced this way and that, pocketed the dollar (a veritable one of solid

silver, after all, with a strong silk thread attached), picked up hat and book, and made his way back to his study ; where with much laughter, and exultation over its success, he gave Burns and Rush an account of the clever trick he had just played their honored president ; concluding his narrative with the avowal of his intention to " try it on again."

" Better let well enough alone, Hop o' my Thumb," said Burns ; " he'll maybe be a bit sharper next time."

" And nab your dollar," added Albert, laughing.

But Tom, not disposed to take to advisement, tried it again, twice successfully, then a third time with a result much less satisfactory to himself ; though doubtless far more so to his intended victim.

The doctor—made wise by former failures—instead of promptly stooping to snatch the tempting prize, set his foot firmly upon it, then bending down, felt for the string, broke it off, pocketed the coin, and went on his way, rejoicing.

Tom gathered himself up, and might presently have been seen crossing the campus with a rather crest-fallen air. Approaching a group composed of Rowley, Hurst, Sparks, Gump, and two or three others possessed of a like turn for mischief, he inquired, " What was up ;" for they were evidently holding a consultation.

" We like pears," answered Gump, with a significant glance toward a tree in the doctor's grounds, loaded with a delicious variety of that fruit, now just ripe for gathering ; " don't you ?"

" Nothing better. Has the doctor offered to treat ?" queried Tom, sarcastically.

The question was answered by a general, "Ha, ha!" and simultaneous exclamations; "Nary time." "Not he, indeed." "Catch him at it."

"No," said Rowley; "but we're not bashful, and don't mean to wait for an invitation that we know will never come. You'll take a share in the risk and profit, Ake?"

"Yes, a dollar's worth," growled Tom, feeling in the pocket where his silver dollar—was not.

"And you won't object to the fun, either, Tommy, will you?" said Hurst, clapping him on the shoulder. "We're in for that, too."

"And to-night's the very night for it," remarked Spark's; "moon rises at ten; dark time before that for gathering the crop and putting the thief into the tree."

"The thief?"

"Yes, he's to be a man of straw; plenty of that in the doctor's stable, and we supply the chap with hat, coat, boots and pants, as much clothing as such rascal's need."

"Oh, I see, I see!" said the little man, "I see!" cried Tom, bursting into a laugh. "Yes, I'll help with the fun, and—fruit, ha, ha!"

His conscience gave him a pretty sharp twinge or two, telling him it was stealing, downright stealing, he was about to engage in; but he silenced it with, "He's got my dollar; it's only fair I should have something in return."

When the moon rose that night it shone on the pear tree denuded of its golden burden, its branches sustaining instead something that looked like a man

or boy engaged in rifling it of its treasures. Long, slender strings, not easily discoverable in that light, were attached to the body, legs, and arms of the figure, and extended across the intervening space between the tree and the hedge that formed the boundary line on that side of the doctor's domain, separating it from the campus.

On the Seminary side of the hedge crouched a group of laughing students, each with one of the strings in his hand. Their pockets were filled with stones, and a small heap lay on the ground beside them.

"Now for it, lads!" whispered Rowley; and at the word several stones flew over the hedge and fell with a thump, thump on the grass under the tree.

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Gerwick, starting in her chair, as the sounds struck upon her ear. "Somebody's stealing those pears; I do believe!"

She sprang up and ran to the window. "Yes, Dr. Gerwick, there *is* some one in that tree. Now I think you'll be sorry you didn't have Jake gather that fruit, as I proposed."

The doctor rose and went to the door. "Who's that?" he called in a stern, angry tone.

The boys behind the hedge were almost convulsed with laughter; the one in the tree moved a little, seemingly to reach for another pear, but kept silence.

"Come down from there, you sir; do you hear?" roared the incensed doctor; "come down instantly, or I'll have you arrested and sent to the lock-up."

"Oh dear, dear, if 'hat isn't rich!" cried Tom in a loud whisper, stuffing his handkerchief into his

mouth, and holding his sides, while he shook with suppressed mirth, in which his companions joined him.

"He won't mind, not a bit!" laughed Hurst; "oh, I shall go off the handle!"

"Hush! what's that he's saying now; that dear doctor of ours?" laughed Rowley.

"Oh, he's brought out a gun! he has actually!" cried Gump, peering over the hedge; "what if he should fire this way!" and he threw himself flat upon the ground in an agony of apprehension.

"Goose! coward! run to the house if you're afraid," sneered Rowley, giving him a kick.

But the doctor was speaking again, and they almost held their breath to catch the words.

"Now, sir, if you don't come down, I'll shoot you."

The figure moved, shaking the branches slightly, and thump, thump, thump upon the grass fell something—the ripe, luscious pears the doctor thought—nothing but stones the lads over the hedge knew, and went off into a fresh convulsion at his delusion and increasing rage.

He stalked rapidly toward the tree, gun in hand. "So you defy me and wont come down, you rascal! Well, sir, we'll soon see if—" He seized the intruder by the leg, the boot came off in his hand, followed by a small shower of sticks and straws, and—the boys letting go the strings—the whole man toppled over and fell upon him, nearly knocking him down.

"Time for us to git now, lads!" whispered Rowley in a voice half choked with the effort to control

his emotions, and they ran swiftly and silently along in the shadow of the hedge, and one by one made their way, from different directions, to the house and each to his own room.

"What now, Hop o' My Thumb?" asked Burns, looking up from his book, as his room-mate came panting in some five minutes before the tapping of the signal bell.

"Oh, a bit of fun!" laughed Tom, pulling out his watch. "Time to make tracks for bed. Good-night, old fellow," and rushing into his bedroom, he began a very hurried preparation.

It was some time before he could get to sleep, his conscience pricking him again and again with the ugly word, "Thief, thief!" and refusing to be silenced with the old plea that the doctor had coolly pocketed his dollar.

There was quite a buzz about the breakfast table; evidently the affair of the night had got wind.

"We're in for it, Ake," whispered Hurst, as they left the table; "the doctor, it seems, picked up a knife under the tree, with Gump's name on it in full. That comes of the creature's vanity. He'll be charged with the mischief now, and of course will turn state's evidence and give up all our names. The sneak shouldn't have been in the affair at all, but unfortunately was the first to propose it."

"Better forestall him and do the thing ourselves," said Tom; "I'll go at once to the doctor, own up my share and offer to pay damages. I'd half made up my mind to do it anyhow; was only held back by the fear of getting the rest of you into trouble."

“ Yes, you’re right ; there’s nothing better to be done. It’s a tough morsel to swallow, but the sooner one gulps it the better ; so come on.”

They only waited to seek out the others and declare their intention, then carried it out at once.

The doctor was very angry, threatened them with expulsion, suspended them for a week, and mulcted them in damages to four times the real value of the pears.

“ We have paid dearly for our fun,” was their rueful and indignant remark to each other.

CHAPTER XXVI

Quits.

“**S**AY now, Bob, didn’t your chum get a box of goodies yesterday? I was by when the expressman deposited the box in the hall, and if I didn’t smell grapes and oranges, I—don’t know what’s what.”

“I wouldn’t have the rudeness to attempt to dispute that last proposition, Tommy,” answered Lenox, showing a double row of very white and even teeth.

It was a dreary, rainy afternoon; an equinoctial storm had been raging all day, and the prospect from the large window in the third hall, about which a knot of fellows had gathered, was, as Tom remarked, “very watery and dismal.”

“But that’s no answer to the query,” put in Hurst. “We want to know if Rudolph isn’t setting his face against the good old customs of the institution, by shunning the opportunity to treat when his larder’s full, and meanly keeping his dainties to himself, or sharing them with his chum alone.”

“You do, eh? you think it concerns you?”

“Yes; every mother’s son of us. I appeal to the company if it isn’t the rule—hasn’t always been the

rule—that when a fellow gets in a lot of grub, he shall advertise, and let all the rest come in for a share?”

“All correct!” “Just so.” “You’ve hit it exactly, Mark,” responded a number of voices.

“I didn’t know Rudolph was so stingy,” sneered Gump, who was very jealous of Paul’s popularity and superior social position.

“I don’t know,” remarked Sparks, carelessly; “I suspect ’t isn’t that so much as his aristocratic views and feelings; Mr. Paul Rudolph of—what’s the name of that grand place down in Maryland?—doesn’t like to herd with the masses.”

“That’s it, boys—the stuckupedest mortal!” muttered Gump angrily.

“Oh! oh! stuckupedest! what a word!” cried several, laughing outright. “Where did you pick it up, Si? Webster and Worcester, with all their learning, probably never heard of it.”

“More shame for them then,” retorted Silas, still more angrily.

“Gentlemen are wandering from the point. Question! question!” cried Mark, tapping his cane upon the floor.

“Yes, out with the plain truth, Bob,” cried Ake; “what have you and Rudolph got up there in your den?”

“Softly, softly, Tommy dear, ’twould take some time to enumerate all our effects.”

“No occasion. I change the form of my query to suit your dull comprehension—what have you in the way of eatables?”

“I? Nothing whatever ’cept a chaw or two of tobacco. Will you come up and partake, lads?”

“Thank you ; we prefer a raid upon your chum’s larder. Give us the key, and we’ll give him a lesson. It won’t do to allow such trampling upon old established laws and customs.”

“And now’s the time—while he’s in class.”

“Come on then, if you will have it so,” said Bob, leading the way.

With hurried, eager tramp they ascended to the hall above. Bob unlocked and threw open the door of his study, and they flocked in and began an instant and thorough rummaging of that and Rudolph’s bedroom.

“Hurrah! here it is!” cried Hurst, pouncing upon a box in the closet. “My stars and garters, what a haul! oranges, figs, grapes, nuts, candies, raisins—and—what’s this alongside? A can of pickled oysters, I declare.”

“Crackers and cheese, sugar and tea on this shelf,” added Sparks, reaching over Hurst’s head. “Cake too, a splendid one with icing an inch thick. Boys, it’s the jolliest lark ever was—a perfect godsend to hungry collegians—specially on such a day as this.”

“‘Polly put the kettle on and let’s have tea,’” sang Tom, suiting the action to the word ; for Lenox had already started a fire, while Rowley and the others busied themselves in setting out a table.

Rudolph, approaching his study some fifteen minutes later, wondered at the hum of voices coming therefrom, and opening the door, was struck dumb

with surprise at sight of a table extending the whole length of the room, loaded with the dainties sent him a few days before by a doating and too indulgent mother, and surrounded by a hungry crew who seemed to be enjoying them without stint.

"Oh, how d'ye do, Mr. Rudolph!" cried Tom, starting up, rushing toward him, seizing his hand, and shaking it in the most cordial manner. "You're just in the nick of time; we're having a royal feast, and you really must sit down and partake."

"Thank you," said Paul, recovering his self-possession in an instant; and taking the head of the table, he did the honors with a manner as gracefully cordial and hospitable as though his guests had not been self-invited or unwelcome intruders.

Their feast was seasoned with a good deal of small talk, principally of the affairs of their own little world. Some one remarked that the doctor was going on a trip to the next town.

"When?" asked Rowley, pricking up his ears.

"Day after to-morrow."

"That's not on the railroad?"

"No, he travels in that close carriage of his. I believe he goes to visit his parents, who are clever, plain people, and have always lived in that little one-horse place shut in by the hills."

* * * * *

The doctor, never very popular with his students, had become particularly obnoxious to Rowley and his set since the unlucky affair of the pear-tree. "I'd like to pay him off, and I will one o' these days," Rowley had said again and again to one and another

of his mates. The news of this intended trip seemed to please him; drawing Ake and Sparks aside, as they left the scene of their festivity, "The chance we've been waiting for has turned up at last," he cried in an exultant undertone.

"Eh, man! what have you got in your noddle now?" queried Tom.

"I propose to interfere slightly with the river-ence's plans, Master Hop o' my Thumb, by putting that vehicle of his in a place where it will be somewhat less comatable than in the coach-house yonder," returned Rowley facetiously.

"Where?"

"That's a question for consideration; it must be some place easy enough of access to us, and not too easy to him."

"He goes day after to-morrow," observed Sparks meditatively; "starts early in the morning; that little job must be done up to-morrow night."

"Ah! I have it!" cried Tom; "the marsh, lads; it's the very place."

"Yes," laughed Rowley, "the very middle of it, where there'll be a nice pond after this rain."

"We'll have to wade through mud and water," said Sparks; "but what's such a trifle as that in comparison with the pleasure we shall give our honored president?"

"We, us, and co., will hardly be equal to the emergency."

"No, of course not; we must secure the co-operation of at least half-a-dozen of the other fellows. Let's decide who they shall be, and sound 'em at

once ; but bind 'em to secrecy, and keep the thing quiet from all the rest."

"Agreed," said the others.

The suggestion was immediately acted upon, and within an hour the party was made up and the whole plan of operations arranged.

The greatest difficulty in their way lay in the fact that ever since the taking to pieces of the doctor's carriage, his coach-house had been kept locked. It was Tom Ake who undertook to overcome that obstacle ; and about dusk on the appointed evening, meeting Rowley under the hedge on the side of the campus most remote from the president's house, he exultantly announced the final success of his efforts.

"I've got a duplicate key to that padlock ; so that there'll be no difficulty in effecting an entrance, or in bringing the vehicle out."

"Good ! then it's all smooth sailing now. By the way, we've concluded to start at eight precisely, instead of quarter past ; 'twill be dark enough then, and as it is two good miles to the marsh, we'd better allow ourselves plenty of time."

"All right," chuckled Tom ; "but won't there be a wonderment to-morrow morning ? the door fast, but the treasure gone."

"Yes ; wonder how soon the old chap'll guess whither it has fled," laughed Rowley.

They little suspected that "the old chap" had overheard every word of their short colloquy ; yet it was even so.

Something had taken the doctor into the town at an hour which, as was well known to all the students.

he was accustomed to spend in his study ; and fortunately for him, though hardly so for our conspirators, he had, in returning, taken a circuitous route that brought him up the side of the hill most remote from the town ; and tempted by the beauty of the prospect, had lingered for a moment to feast his eyes upon it.

The lads had spoken in an undertone, yet, though screened from their view by the trees and hedge, he was near enough for every word to reach his ear.

A sardonic smile played over his features as he listened. He stood perfectly still, till assured they had left the vicinity, then walked on with head bent as in deep thought. He avoided the campus, entering his own grounds from the rear ; and so passed on to his dwelling.

He was unusually silent and abstracted at the table, and immediately upon the conclusion of the meal retired to his study.

At twenty minutes before eight, he crept out stealthily at a side door, taking the key of the coach-house with him ; unlocked it, returned and hung the key in its place ; then summoning a servant, asked where Sam, the coachman, was.

“ In the kitchen, sir, eatin’ his supper.”

“ Tell him the coach-house door is unlocked, and he must go at once and attend to it.”

“ Yes, sir.”

The girl hurried away, while the doctor slipped out again, made his way quickly and quietly back to the coach-house, shut the door after him, got into his carriage, shut himself in there, and carefully let down all the blinds.

In the mean time, Sam heard the girl's message with extreme surprise and incredulity. "Can't be possible, Betty," he said, laying down his knife and fork and pushing back his chair. "I locked it up myself tight fast a little afore dark, and brought the key in and hung it in its place. I could take my oath on that, and I'll be bound it hangs there yet. I wonder what's come over the doctor."

"I don't know; but he said you was to go and 'tend to it right away."

"And so I will, of course; though it's a goose's arrant to go on," he grumbled, stepping into the hall and taking the key from its nail.

The doctor heard him, presently after, putting it into the lock, and wondering aloud "how on airth that ever come undone."

The listener smiled grimly, but remained mute and perfectly quiescent in his chosen hiding-place, allowing himself to be left there a close prisoner.

It was not long before the silence was broken by stealthy steps, and voices speaking in undertones. He recognized Rowley's. "Now lads, quick work and no unnecessary noise. We all know our places—who's to pull and who to push. Into 'em now; every fellow put on his strength, and at it with a will. Tommy open the door wide, and step back out o' the way. One, two, three, now for it; here she goes!"

The man in the coach leaned back against its cushioned sides and listened with huge delight and many a grin of satisfaction, to the puffing and straining of his unconscious propellers; he nearly laughed outright on hearing one of them remark with a

weariness, that it was much heavier than he expected ; and again waxed wroth at the uncomplimentary jests at his expense, and the ugly epithets freely bestowed upon him ; for when once fairly clear of the Seminary and its belongings, they ventured to converse in an ordinary tone, and enlivened their toil with many a witticism they would never have uttered with the knowledge that the president or any of the faculty was within hearing.

At length the marsh was reached ; and now the wheels making deep ruts in the yielding soil, and becoming heavily clogged with mud, into which their own feet sank ankle-deep at every step, the young men found it necessary to redouble their exertions and put forth all their strength. The bog was not of very great extent, and a few moments of this toilsome progress brought them to the centre, where, as anticipated, the water was discovered to have collected in a very considerable pond.

They plunged in unhesitatingly, dragging the carriage after them. The passenger heard the swash of the water about the wheels, and again smiled grimly to himself. His hour of triumph was near at hand.

“ Whew ! ” exclaimed a voice, almost at his ear, “ hard work this ! wouldn’t like to have it to do over again. Hold on now, lads ; haven’t we gone far enough ? ”

Several voices answered in the affirmative, and Rowley gave the word to halt.

“ Ah, ha, we’ve done it ! ” cried Tom Ake pantingly. “ I’d throw up my cap, only I’m afraid I couldn’t find it again in the wet and the dark. ”

"We're safe to make a noise now," said Sparks ; "one minute to get our breath, then three times three and a tiger."

"No," interposed Rowley, "it wouldn't be safe ; "the sound would take a straighter road than we have, and might even reach the astonished ears of the old governor himself."

"Well, let's go out on to dry land. I'm wet to the skin as far as my knees," said another.

"Yes, I second the motion ; let's adjourn *sine die*, and without delay," cried still another.

There was an assenting murmur, a movement toward the shore ; but a sound startled them ; the carriage door was thrown open ; there was just light enough to see that, and the head thrust out at it.

"Boys," said a well-known voice, that made every one of them shake in his shoes, "you have brought me here, and now you will have to take me back. You can hurrah, now, if you feel so inclined," he added, as he drew in his head and closed the door again.

The effect was like that of a thunder-clap out of a clear sky ; for a moment they stood struck dumb with surprise, fright, and chagrin ; then seeing there was no escape, silently bent themselves to their task.

It was a slow and toilsome journey—this return trip—an up-hill affair both literally and figuratively, enlivened by no jest or witticism—scarce a word exchanged ; there was some panting from exertion, and now and then a groan or a sigh from very weariness ; but even these were suppressed as far as possible, lest they should reach the ears of the passenger, and add to his triumph.

At last, long as it seemed to them, the coach-house door was reached ; they paused and wiped the sweat from their brows ; for that last pull up the hill had been a hard and long one.

“Unlock that door, Mr. Ake,” commanded the doctor, alighting, and Tom obeyed in a terrible fright.

“Take the carriage in, and restore it to its place,” was the next order. Then, as they came out, “Lock the door, Mr. Ake, and give me the key. Now, young gentlemen, we will consider ourselves quits ; but beware how you venture to cross the threshold of my coach-house again, or meddle with anything belonging to me. There is the prayer-bell. Let me find every one of you in his seat in the chapel.”

They drew a long, free breath as they turned to obey, and the doctor caught a muttered word or two : “He’s a brick after all.” “Guess we’ll play ~~of~~ our jokes on somebody else another time.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

Hallow-Een.

FORTUNATELY, or unfortunately—as we adopt the opinion of students, or faculty—Broadax was laid up for a week, with what Miss O'Flarity called a "bilious detack," and no efficient substitute could be found to undertake his duties.

There had been an attempt to keep the students in ignorance of the facts, leaving them to believe themselves under the customary surveillance ; but of course it had failed ; they had learned the truth with delight ; particularly because, the time being the last week in October, it gave them the opportunity to celebrate Hallow-Een according to their own fancies without much danger of detection.

The acts of insubordination were not confined to either side of the house, for each had its quota of restless spirits, to whom stolen waters were sweet.

Ten o'clock, that night, found more than one young man stealing out under cover of the darkness and wending his way to the town. Also in the study of Gitsie and Elena, a half-dozen or so of merry young girls were gathered about the fire, paring apples and roasting chestnuts.

"Here, Jerusha Arabella, this is you," said her room-mate Sally Turner, putting down a chestnut near to the coals on the hearth, "and this," placing another beside it, "is Mr. Burns."

Jerusha simpered and blushed. It was the generally received opinion among the girls that she was rather smitten with Ercurius.

Elena had put two nuts side by side, naming them Gitsie and the new professor.

"Elena and Paul Rudolph," said Gitsie, putting down her two.

"Sally Turner and Tom Ake," said Jerusha, following suit.

"Oh, Jerusha, you've lost him! he's hopped away; but there you go hopping after him!" cried Sally, clapping her hands, and laughing gleefully.

"Hush, hush!" said Gitsie, "somebody'll hear you. There, do see! Lena has jumped away from Paul, and he stands stock still and burns to death in his grief."

"Very likely," laughed Elena, "but just see how loving you and the new professor are!—standing still there as close together as possible."

"And Tom has jumped into the fire to get away from Sally," added Miss O'Flarity, a little spitefully, "and she stands there and burns to death; that means you're to be an old maid, dear."

"Better that, than running after him," sneered Sally.

"See there!" cried Jerusha, triumphantly, holding up an apple-paring, "I got it off whole."

"Good! now whirl it round your head three

times, and let it fall on the floor behind you," directed Miss Ertel. "There!" and she sprang forward as it fell.

"What letters?" cried Sally. "Not E. B., I'm sure; looks more like S. G."

All assented to that, except Jerusha, who insisted it looked not a bit more like one than the other.

"S. G., who's that?" Sally went on. "Oh, Stephen Guthrie."

"Stephen Guthrie! as if I'd look at him!—poor as poverty," sneered Jerusha.

"Or he desire that you should," added Elena quietly, but with a slight curl of the lip, and one flashing glance of her brown eyes, while the color deepened on her cheek. "No, it is Silas Gump."

"Oh, to be sure!" laughed Sally, "Silas Gump, of course. How did I come to forget his highness?"

"How, indeed!" echoed Gitsie, drily; "but Stephen Guthrie's worth a dozen of him—not to say that one Gump isn't less of a bore than a dozen would be."

"I've named your apple, Jerusha," said Sally; "now count your seeds. Twelve, he marries; I declare you're bound to have him!"

"Who?"

"Si Gump! I named it him."

"Well, it's all nonsense," returned Miss O'Flarty, looking slightly vexed.

"Of course it is," said Gitsie; "but just wait till you see who looks over your shoulder as the clock strikes twelve to-night."

Sally shuddered slightly. "I don't know whether

I can hold out," she said ; " I shall get awfully scared as it comes near the time."

" Oh, you go to Timothy, if you're such a coward as that!" cried Gitsie, whirling her apple-paring round her head.

" Timothy who?"

" Timothy Grass. There! I'm to be an old maid, sure ; for that's no letter at all."

" Not a bit of danger of your coming to that dreadful end," laughed Elena ; and then putting her lips close to Gitsie's ear, she whispered roguishly, " It looks as much like A. R. as anything else."

In these pleasant employments, varied by the telling and hearing of similar doings, on the part of others, and their results, and then a ghost story or two, the time slipped away very fast.

" There, girls, it wants only a quarter to twelve," said Miss Ertel, pulling out her watch.

Miss O'Flarity and Miss Turner exchanged glances, the latter again shuddering slightly.

" Come on, Sal, I'm not afraid," exclaimed Jerusha, rising, and putting on a very brave air ; " it's only nonsense, anyhow."

" Yes, I know ; but I can't help feeling sort o shivery," said Miss Turner, rising also. " Is anybody else going to try it?" And she glanced round the circle half appealingly.

" Yes, Lena and I," returned Gitsie, looking persuasively at Miss Landon.

" No, not I," said Elena, firmly. " I don't think it's right."

" Oh, pshaw ! it's nothing but fun !" cried several

voices. Of course we don't really believe our future husbands are going to come and look over our shoulders, or a coffin show itself if we are to live single," added Gitsie, mockingly.

"It may not be wrong for you; I don't feel called upon to decide that question," Elena answered; "but it would be for me, because I am more than doubtful whether it is right."

"Well, I can't see a bit of harm in it, and I'm going to try it," said Gitsie. "Come, girls; there's no time to be lost."

The others immediately withdrew in silence, and moving with the utmost care to make no noise. Gaining their own rooms, Jerusha and Sally each lighted a candle, set it on her toilet table, and stood silently gazing into the glass, Gitsie doing the same in her bedroom.

It was a wild night, the wind blowing in fitful gusts—now dying away for a moment, but only to rush on again with redoubled fury, shrieking, roaring, sighing, wailing, filling the air with weird unearthly sounds, that sent a shiver of fear and dread through each silent solitary listener. Even Gitsie, bravest of all, was conscious of a nervous tremor as the minutes glided slowly by, seeming many times their usual length.

But at last, the clock in the belfry tolled out the midnight hour. As the last stroke fell, Sally uttered a shriek, sprang wildly into a corner, and trembling in every limb, crouched down with her hands over her eyes. There was a simultaneous cry from Jerusha, and she too hid her face and shook with excitement and terror.

Several minutes elapsed ere either gained courage to move, speak, or so much as uncover her eyes, and thus ample time was afforded two boyish figures to glide noiselessly across the study and through the door into the hall beyond.

"He! he! he! but didn't we scare 'em good?" whispered the conceited voice of Silas Gump.

"Yes," answered that of Tom Ake; "and Sally will resign herself to the horrors of old-maidhood. But I say, Si, t'other one's fright wasn't very complimentary to you."

"Pooh! she'd have been delighted if she'd known it was myself, and not a spook in my likeness. But come on; now for the fun down town."

"And to return this board to the undertaker's. Remember you promised to help carry it back."

"Yes, yes, come on; softly now, or we'll get nabbed."

Meanwhile Gitsie, who had wickedly contrived, aided, and abetted the trick upon her mates, was repaid in kind—an apparition appearing to her at the same moment, in the form of a tall gaunt figure, wrapped in a dressing-gown, and wearing a night-cap above a ghastly, terror-stricken face, with wild eyes and half-open mouth, showing a great gap between the front teeth of the upper jaw.

At the first glance Gitsie was scarcely less frightened than her victims; but she repressed the scream that rose to her lips, and at the same instant the figure spoke in a well-known voice: "I—I want an emetic! quick, quick, for the love of heaven! or I shall die! I'm poisoned! there isn't a moment to lose."

"Mustard!" cried Gitsie, opening a drawer snatching a bottle therefrom, and rushing out into the study; "it's the very thing; I always have it at hand, and there's hot water here on the fire. I'll mix it for you in an instant. But how did it happen, Professor Pettibone?"

"Oh, don't stop to talk! that's the way with these women; ready to run the risk of a man's dying on their hands while they try to satisfy their insatiable curiosity," he groaned, dropping into a chair, and rocking himself to and fro. "Do make haste! oh, *do* make haste!"

"I am, I haven't stopped at all," answered Gitsie, stirring up the mixture in a tin cup, and handing it to him.

He snatched it from her hand, drank it down, and rushed back to his own room.

"What is it? What's the matter?" asked Elena, opening her bedroom door, and peering out.

"Professor Pettibone; he came to me for an emetic; says he's poisoned. He's always dosing, you know, and I presume he has applied to the inside something meant for the out. Hark! there he goes in a perfect cataract."

"Oh, I wonder if he really has poisoned himself! don't you think we ought to send for the doctor?"

"No, I don't; that surely must be bringing up all that's there. But how he did frighten me! I'd die in despair if I thought he was to be my other half," and she laughed till the tears stood in her eyes.

But the door was hastily pushed open, and a ghastly face looked in. "I must have another, Miss

Gitsie ! They haven't come up ; and they'll be the death of me if they don't." The words came in gasps, the voice was pitifully despairing.

" They ? what ? " asked Gitsie, as she hastily filled the cup again.

" My teeth, my false front teeth, plate and all, if you must know. I swallowed them in my sleep, and I'll be a dead man if I can't bring them up."

Again he snatched the cup from her hands, drained it to the dregs, and rushed back to his room. The nauseating sounds were repeated, the girls standing there, listening and exchanging looks that were an odd mixture of pity, perplexity, doubt, wonder, and amusement.

A thought seemed to strike Gitsie. " Come, we must really do something for him," she said, seizing Elena's hand, and drawing her into the hall. " There, he's stopped, and how he groans ! Let's knock and ask what we shall do."

She rapped on his door, then hearing a faint " Come in," opened it and entered.

A lamp burning dimly on a table showed the professor lying back in an arm-chair, looking very white and weak.

" We want to know what we can do for you, sir," said Gitsie. " I hope you were successful this time."

" Oh, no, no ! " he groaned.

" And you are—quite sure you swallowed them ? "

" Of course I must ; I went to sleep with them in my mouth, and woke up without them ; I felt in the bed too, and they were not there."

" Let Miss Landon and me look," said Gitsie,

turning up the light while Elena threw back the bed-clothes. "There, what's that?" She pounced upon some small object and held it up to view with a merry laugh.

The expression of the professor's countenance was a comical blending of relief and chagrin. "A wretched mistake," he groaned, doubling himself up as if in a spasm of pain. "I've nearly dragged my vitals out, and all for nothing; oh dear! oh dear!"

"It's a great pity," remarked Miss Ertel, putting a strong constraint upon her inclination to laugh. "You must feel dreadfully empty; shan't I get you a cup of tea, and a bite of something to eat?"

"If you can; there's a terrible vacuum here," he sighed, laying his hand pathetically upon his stomach.

"We'll find something," said Elena, running away in haste to relieve her pent-up mirth. Gitsie followed; for a minute or two they indulged in a hearty laugh together.

"It's really too bad—for he looks half dead; but I can't help it," said Elena, wiping her eyes and going off into another convulsion.

"Nor I," said Gitsie; "to think of his pouring down those emetics and bringing 'em up again at such a rate—so despairing because the teeth were not there, and they all the blessed time lying snugly in the bed! ha, ha, ha. It's the best joke of the season."

"But we'll have to keep it to ourselves, or he'll haul us up for breaking rules."

"Oh dear, yes! and isn't it too bad? for I'm just bursting to tell it."

"But what can we get for him. I have some rusks I'll split and toast over these coals; but I've no butter and no tea; and he ought to have a cup of tea."

"Jerusha Arabella keeps both. I'll go to her while you do the rusk."

She stole quietly down the hall and tapped at Jerusha's door. No answer; she tapped again, then tried the lock. It was fast.

"Jerusha!" she said softly.

A step crossed the room, the key was turned in the lock and the door cautiously opened an inch or two.

"It's I," whispered Gitsie; "let me in, won't you?"

Miss O'Flarity pulled the door half open, and as Gitsie stepped in, quickly closed and fastened it after her.

"Oh!" she cried, lifting her hands and opening her eyes very wide; "nobody needn't ever tell me again there ain't nothing in it!"

"Why, what happened?" asked Gitsie looking extremely surprised, curious, and incredulous.

"He did come; he came right up behind me, and looked over my shoulder exactly as the last stroke sounded for twelve."

"Who?"

"Silas Gump, as sure as I'm alive."

"You don't say so!" cried Gitsie, bursting into a laugh. "Jerusha, you're bound to have him, if there's anything in signs."

"Well, maybe I might do worse," she answered in a tone of melancholy resignation; "live and die

an old maid, or marry a poor man. S. always has lots of money."

"Is it you, Gitsie?" said Sally, creeping out from Jerusha's bedroom, looking pale and frightened. "Oh, would you believe it! I saw a coffin reared up right behind me; I actually did, and I was so scared you can't think. Catch me trying that again. I'm afraid to sleep alone, and so's Jerusha, and we're going to crawl in together."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Gitsie, a little conscience-struck, but not willing to own what she had done; "either you imagined it all, or somebody was playing a trick on you. Old Bony's sick and wants a bite of victuals. We've some rusk Lena's toasting for him, but that's all; can you furnish a bit of butter and a drawing of tea?"

"Yes; well I never! what ails the old fellow to want to eat in the night?"

"Something made him sick; he's been vomiting and feels dreadfully empty now—has nothing in his stomach but his sins, I s'pose; should think so by the way he groans. Thank you," as Jerusha produced the requested articles. "Now go to bed and to sleep, and forget all our nonsense. You may depend it was all excited imagination or a trick of some of the fellows."

Tom and Silas, with perhaps a dozen or so of the more viciously disposed among the Thurston students, spent the greater part of the night in roaming about the town and its vicinity, engaged in the senseless folly and wickedness of robbing gardens and hen-roosts, throwing cabbages, stones, and other missiles

against the doors of quiet peaceable citizens, taking gates off their hinges and pulling down signs ; sometimes carrying them away to a considerable distance.

I am ashamed of Tom—who is quite a favorite of mine—that he should be found in such company and about such business ; business in which you may rest assured, Guthrie, Burns, Rush, and Rudolph had neither part nor lot.

They—the rioters—were passing along the principal street, when the town clock began to strike.

“One, two, three,” said Tom ; “time we were getting back, boys.”

“Not just yet ; I must give Sam Duncan a call first,” returned Gump, starting across the street toward a drug-store, in which the young man he mentioned was clerk.

Duncan slept in a room over the store, in order that he might be at hand to attend to calls for medicine during the night. Silas and his boon companions had been for some time past in the habit of occasionally amusing themselves at the expense of this clerk. When passing at such unseasonable hours as this, they would ring the night bell, then ask through the speaking-tube, “Is this Park’s drug-store ?”

The reply would come down the pipe, “It is.”

“Prescriptions filled at all hours ?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you. All right Good evening.”

And the students would go on their way, haw-hawing over the success of the hoax ; while the discomfited clerk went back to his bed and tried to

resume the nap which their selfish folly had so rudely broken in upon.

This farce had been repeated till the wretched joke was completely worn out ; clerk's patience ditto. He had set his wits to work to put a stop to the annoyance, and thought he had hit upon a plan that would prove effectual.

Silas gave the bell-rope a vigorous pull, then applying his mouth to the tube, shouted out the usual query, " Is this Park's drug-store ? "

" Pre "—began Silas, when down rushed a torrent of some nauseous fluid, filling his mouth and throat and bespattering his clothes.

" Faugh ! faugh ! ugh ! ugh ! " he cried, starting back, and ejecting the unexpected dose as fast as possible ; " oh, he's poisoned me—the wretch ! "

" Yes, *you* the wretch ? that's it exactly, Si," laughed Tom ; the rest of the troop joining in with right good will.

" Sam's liberal to-night, gives his physic free of charge," laughed one.

" Hope Dr. Duncan's prescription will do you good, old boy," jeered another.

" Guess Sam's tired of night-calls ; better let him alone in future," advised a third.

" Hold your—tongues ! " foamed Silas, slinking behind as they all hurried on toward the college.

There was one Peleg Jones, a shoemaker by trade, who by a surly manner, non-fulfilment of promises, refusals to rectify mistakes in his work, and importunate and pertinacious duns, had rendered himself exceedingly unpopular with the students.

They had learned that he was absent from home at this time, and his premises fared worse than almost any other ; not a gate was left on its hinges ; his cabbages were pulled up and thrown against the doors, startling and alarming his wife and children ; limbs were broken from his trees, and his sign was taken down and carried to the woods, where it was hidden in a clump of bushes.

“What do you suppose Jones will do when he gets home ?” queried Tom, as they left the town behind them.

“Don’t know, but he’ll be mad enough to get us all expelled, if he could,” said Rowley.

“He’ll have a sweet time finding that wonderful work of art that has so long graced his doorway,” laughed Spang. “How the dogs do bark ! and here comes one big fellow in as great a fury as if he understood exactly what we’ve been about,” he added, as a large mastiff sprang over a fence, and rushed toward them, barking furiously.

Most of the party took to their heels with all haste ; but Tom turned and faced the foe, springing to meet him with a yell that would not have disgraced an Indian on the war-path.

The dog was struck dumb with astonishment and fright, turned tail at once and fled incontinently.

“That’s the way ; fight such fellows with their own weapons !” cried Tom, with a shout and loud laugh of triumph, as he ran after his companions.

Thanks to the absence of Broadax, they gained their rooms in safety ; but the time left for needed rest and sleep was very short. Much too short for

our friend Tom, who woke with a raging headache, and was good for nothing in the way of study or enjoyment all day.

"Tom, my boy," said Ercurius, paternally regarding him with a look of concern, as he sat holding his throbbing temples, "that sort of fun doesn't pay."

"Fact; it don't," sighed Tom. "Wish I'd been born a sensible chap like you, Longlegs."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A poor, dying Gump.

SILAS GUMP had never become reconciled to the sanguinary hue of his hair. It was still in his estimation the one blemish in his personal appearance, and many were the wistful, longing looks he bent upon the dark locks and moustache of Ercurius Burns. "If he would only tell me how he makes his reddish moustache exactly match that black hair of his!" he often sighed to himself; "if I could only get the real truth out of him!—it's too mean that I can't."

"How you stare at a fellow, Gump," said Burns, one day; "what's wrong about me?"

"Nothing; but—I say, Longlegs, I'd give five dollars to know how you dye that moustache of yours. Come now, what's the use of keeping dark about it? haven't you the generosity to be willing to help me to get rid o' this fiery mop of mine?"

"Go to the barber, and his sheers will rid you of it in a twinkling, and at a cost consider ably less than the sum you have just named."

"Now don't take a fellow up so; you know well enough it's the color and not the hair itself I want to be done with. You know Thanksgiving's next week

and we're to have a grand party in the evening—strange ladies present, and some of ours to leave the next day; and I want of course to make a good impression. Come now, let me into your secret, and I'll make myself the handsomest fellow there, and take all the ladies' hearts by storm."

At that there was a simultaneous roar from several who stood near enough to overhear the boast.

"Modestest chap ever I saw," laughed Tom.

Burns shook his head doubtfully, and reaching across the desk at which he sat, patted Gump on the shoulder, saying with a serio-comic gravity, "Softly, softly, Si! don't make rash promises, my man."

"Nonsense!" returned Gump, half angrily, and shaking off the hand; "don't treat me like a baby. Come, do as you'd be done by, and tell me how you do it."

"If my memory serves me right, I've answered that question two or three times already; but I'll repeat. Get a box of common shoe-blackening, and mix with it the yoke of one egg well beaten," returned Ercurius, with unmoved gravity.

"You're hoaxing me, you know you are!" cried Gump, growing very red and angry, and walking off, pursued by the laughter of his mates.

The next day, seeking out Burns as he sat alone in his study, Gump again urged his request. "I've already answered that question several times, as I remarked yesterday," replied Burns, putting on an air of offended dignity; "and now I have nothing more to say to a fellow who doubts my word."

Gump walked out looking very crest-fallen, stalked

about the hall for a little in moody silence, then came back, made a humble apology for his doubts, and said he was ready to trust Burns' word, and to try the experiment, if he would be good enough to show him how.

"All right; I'll help you," answered Burns in a mollified tone. "Get your blacking and an egg; and I'll come up to your room directly after tea, and we'll see what we can do."

"All right; you're a brick, Er!" and Gump went off in buoyant spirits to make his purchases.

"What's in the wind now?" asked Tom, coming in. "Gump's off like a shot in the direction of the town. Is he after hen-fruit?"

Burns nodded and laughed; but with a look that said he was more than half ashamed of himself.

"Hi! won't it be a jolly lark!" cried Tom, clapping his hands, turning a summerset over a chair, then jumping up and capering about the room. "Do you oversee the interesting operation?"

"Yes," said Ercurius, pushing away his books, and leaning back in his chair with his hands clasped behind his head; "yes, Tommy, and I—I'm—fact is, my good old father would think me a sort of reprobate for telling such a—"

"Lie?" queried Tom, as Ercurius paused for a suitable word.

"That's it, I s'pose, Hop o' my Thumb; but it has an awful ugly sound."

"Whopper, then," suggested Tom; "don't sound quite so bad, though I s'pose it amounts to the same thing, eh?"

"I'm afraid so; but the fellow's such a conceited

jackanapes, that one can hardly resist the temptation to have a bit of fun at his expense."

"No; and where's the harm? Do him good to be taken down a peg. When's it to come off?"

"To-night after tea."

"There'll be considerable help needed. I volunteer my services, and engage to bring two or three more fellows along."

With that Tom rushed away eager to tell the news and beat up his willing recruits.

All this time Gump was speeding on toward the town; arriving there, he visited every store in succession, asking for eggs.

They were all "out of the article, eggs were scarce now; everybody was saving them up for Thanksgiving."

But obstinacy was a large ingredient in Gump's composition; he did not easily give up anything he had once determined to do; baffled at the stores, he tried the private dwellings, begging for "a single egg; just one, or the yolk of one."

All in vain; no one was willing to spare even so much, and he returned to Ercurius in a disconsolate mood, to tell of his efforts and their sad failure.

"Perhaps castor-oil might answer instead," suggested Tom, who was present at this interview. "I've heard it was very good for the hair."

"What do you say, Burns?" asked Gump, turning eagerly to him.

"Well, I can't be sure you'll succeed without the egg, but you might try it with the oil; saturate your hair thoroughly with it, pour a little water on the

blackening, apply it with a brush as you do to your boots, and afterward polish it well, as you do them," answered Burns gravely.

"Thanks, Longlegs; nothing like trying, and I'll off to town again, after the oil," cried Gump, snatching up his hat, and whisking out of the door, leaving the other two laughing at his simplicity and folly.

Gump was a little late at supper. He came in breathless, as from a rapid walk, and sat down with a triumphant glance and wink at Burns, and a tap upon his breast pocket, to indicate that this time success had crowned his exertions.

Tom's face grew scarlet with the effort to suppress the laugh that was nearly choking him, Burns' features worked slightly, and several other faces wore a very broad smile.

Silas ate rapidly, was among the first to leave the table, and immediately rushed up to his room, Sparks following close in his rear.

"Halloo, what's your hurry, Si? What's in the wind?" he asked, as they dashed into their study, nearly breathless with their race.

"Oh, I—I've a little job on hand," answered Gump, chuckling and grinning.

"Want any help?" queried Joe, following into his bedroom.

"Thank you; Longlegs is—has promised to assist."

"Oh, yes, it's hair-dyeing is it? What's that?" as Gump drew out a vial, uncorked it, stepped before the glass, and began pouring the contents on his hand.

“Castor-oil.”

“Oil? thought you tried oil, and found it didn’t do much for you?”

“Yes, but this is merely preparatory,” answered Gump, still pouring with one hand, and rubbing briskly with the other; “it’s to be thoroughly saturated with this, when the blacking is to follow.”

“Thoroughly saturated! I should think you’d done it now! Why, man, you haven’t left a dry hair on your head, and the grease is streaming down over your collar.”

“Never mind the collar, plenty more where that came from,” answered Gump nonchalantly, turning the vial bottom up, and emptying the last drop upon his already dripping pate.

“A little water here on this blacking, Joe. There, that’ll do. Just bought a fresh box, and new set o’ brushes, to make all sure. I’m the fellow to put a thing through.”

He dipped in a brush, smeared the well-oiled hair plentifully with the black fluid, and taking a polishing brush in each hand, fell to rubbing with might and main.

“How d’ye come on?” asked Tom, putting his head in at the door.

“At it hard,” answered Sparks, grave as a judge.

“Dunno; can’t tell yet,” returned Silas, rubbing away. “Where’s Er?”

“Here,” answered Burns for himself, pushing past Tom. “Got the oil on, I see.”

“Yes; enough?”

“Plenty; but you’re not applying the blacking

evenly ; here's a spot with none at all on it. Hold on a minute, and I'll make a fresh application. Now rub away ; don't spare the elbow-grease. A little more water, Joe."

Sparks obeyed, while Ake brought a chair.

"Sit down Si, and I'll take a turn at the polishing. Why, you're puffing and blowing like a rhinoceros."

"How does it look—black?" asked the victim, seating himself and resigning one brush to Tom, the other to Sparks.

"Sort o' muddy, just now," said Burns, with unmoved gravity ; while the other two exchanged glances and bit their lips to keep from laughing.

There was a sound of feet in the next room, and Hurst, Rush, Rowley, and one or two more, scarcely waiting to knock, came bolting in with eager offers of assistance.

For an hour they took turns at the brushes, and in rushing out to a safe distance to relieve themselves by explosions of laughter ; while Burns, as master of ceremonies, kept steadily at his post, overseeing and directing.

Gump certainly cut a ridiculous figure, with his hair hanging in muddy strings over his forehead and cheeks—the curl completely taken out of it—the black oily streams coursing over them and down his neck, till his clothing was all bespattered and stained with the vile mixture.

He was growing very weary, in spite of all the assistance rendered him ; would now and then seize the brushes himself and rub with such frantic determination that he wore the skin off his temples.

Again and again he turned to the glass to see for himself, or asked the others, "Is it right yet?" sighed to learn it was not, and fell to work again with redoubled energy.

But at length, Ercurius pronounced it a failure ; throwing the blame on the want of the egg.

"What a shame!" cried Tom. "Well, never mind, Si ; better luck next time—maybe."

"And we'll help you with your clarin' up," added Hurst. "Come on, boys, let's bring up some water ; 'twill take a sight of it, and ditto of soap, to make the lad decent again."

The cleansing process proved almost as serious an undertaking and scarcely less a failure than the other ; bucketful after bucketful of water was carried up and applied, with no lack of soap to assist its purifying powers ; but in vain they scrubbed and scoured ; the grease resisted, to some extent, all their efforts ; and Burns, who had put a bottle of real hair-dye into his pocket, intending, when he had had his fun, to gratify Gump's longing desire, found it impossible to do so, and said nothing about it.

Gump's head presented a sorry spectacle when he made his appearance in public the next morning—sodden, dirty-looking strings of hair being but a poor exchange for even the bright red curls that were wont to cover it.

The story had got wind, there was a titter all over the room, and even the professor smiled grimly at the transformation.

"*Quantum mutatus ab illo,*" murmured Rudolph, looking after Silas as he passed to his seat.

“True as preachin’,” responded Tom, in the same low tone, and with an odd grimace.

Gump could not fail to perceive that he was the object of mirth and ridicule, and so deep were the wounds inflicted upon his vanity, that he did not so much as show his face at the scene of his anticipated conquests.

CHAPTER XXIX

Almost Caught.

JONES had found his sign after a long, wearisome search. He was of course very angry over its disappearance, and the damages done to his premises ; but though feeling morally certain that it was the work of the students, he had no actual proof of their guilt ;—many others having been equally concerned in the foolish pranks of Hallow-Een.

So he made no complaint to the faculty, but contented himself with the free expression of his opinion to his neighbors and customers, accompanied with many a threat as to the vengeance he would take if “the rascals ever dared lay hands on his sign again.”

He could hardly have given them a stronger incentive to such action ; they “would not take a dare,” and “they would chastise him for his insolence ;” while the risk of detection and punishment, only added to the attractions of the proposed “lark.”

A party of them, accordingly, lay in ambush near the shop, one dark night, and scarcely had Jones—who kept early hours—laid his head upon his pillow, when the sign was quietly taken down —

conveyed to the Seminary. It was a wooden affair of small size, and they readily carried it up to the attic, where they secreted it under a bed.

They then hurried down to chapel, the bell having already rung for the evening service. They had agreed to burn the sign, as the easiest, surest, and safest way of getting rid of it, and the evidence it might furnish against them.

Accordingly, upon leaving the chapel, they immediately repaired to the room where it lay hidden, split it up, and put it into the fire, Spang remembering, as he struck his hatchet into it, that "though there was little danger of old Crispin discovering his loss before morning, it was just as well to make all sure by taking time by the forelock."

The event proved both the wisdom of his action, and the folly of his conclusion, in regard to Mr. Jones.

That worthy was roused from his first nap by the shout of a passing acquaintance: "Halloo! Jones, the fellows have got ahead of you again; your sign's gone."

"'Tain't possible!" cried Peleg, springing from his bed and throwing up the window.

"Look for yourself," answered the neighbor, holding up his lantern.

"So it is!" groaned the despoiled user of awl and wax-ends; so it is! and if I don't give it to the owdacious scoundrels, my name's not Peleg Jones. What's o'clock, neighbor?"

"Just struck ten."

"And they don't put out lights up there till half past. I'll give the professors a call before that."

With the last word, the window went down five minutes more sufficed for the huddling on of the irate shoemaker's clothes, his tongue all the time pouring forth threats and maledictions, in which his wife feebly joined him, and he set out upon his errand.

Anger lent him strength and fleetness, and he was already laying his complaint before the professors, as the first blow of Spang's hatchet fell upon the sign. The last splinter had hardly been laid upon the fire, when the sound of approaching footsteps and voices startled the delinquents into sudden terror.

"Hark!" cried several in an undertone of alarm, "the professors are coming!"

"And Crispin with them; that's his voice, as sure as I'm a sinner!" added Spang, looking about for a place to hide the hatchet.

"What's to be done?" asked one and another, "sign's still recognizable; they'll demand admittance, and we daren't refuse it."

"There's only one way!" cried Harrell, a very wild, hardened fellow, one of the worst in the institution; "they'll not disturb a prayer-meeting. Down on your knees and let us pray."

In the hurry and fright of the moment nearly all obeyed, and without an instant's hesitation he began in a loud clear voice the mockery of prayer; daring in his fearful impiety thus to insult the Sovereign of the universe, "before whom angels bow and arch-angels veil their faces."

It had the desired effect of leading the professors to withdraw without seeking admittance; but what a fearful price had they not paid for their narrow

escape!—seeing “it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment.”

Tom Ake was one of those present, had taken part without much scruple in the stealing and burning of the sign, persuading himself that it was only “a jolly lark; serving out the old curmudgeon Jones, as he deserved;” but this—he was struck dumb with horror and fear at the sacrilegious act. He stood bolt upright, rooted to the spot, while Harrell and the others were on their knees; then, as they rose, pushed his way hastily from the room.

“Let me go! let me out of this before the roof falls in and crushes us!” he cried, with a shudder; and they made way for him without a word, thoroughly sobered at the sight of his pale horror-stricken features, and the thought of what they had done. Who should say that they were not greater sinners than those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and crushed them?

One by one they stole silently out and slunk away each to his own room, leaving Harrell alone with his conscience and the charred remains of the sign.

Burns had already retired, and their study was untenanted as Tom passed through to his dormitory.

Tom had enjoyed the inestimable blessing of pious parents, who had trained him up from infancy in the fear of God, by both precept and example. He could not doubt the truth and reality of a religion that brought forth the beautiful fruits of holy living constantly exhibited in their daily walk and conversation. He came to the Seminary with excellent principles; and though evil communications had done much to

corrupt his good manners, he was not yet haruened in sin. Careless, thoughtless, carried away by high animal spirits and the love of sport, he had run into many follies and excesses, while conscience seemed to lie dormant. But the shock given him by Harrell's blasphemous conduct had fully aroused him, and her stings were sharp.

He shuddered with fear and remorse at the picture she drew of his life for months past, nor could he find consolation in the thought that others were as bad, many even much worse than himself.

He passed an almost sleepless night, and the next day was strangely quiet and indisposed to talk. In vain Burns and others rallied him; they got scarcely more than monosyllables in reply.

A letter from his mother, received that day, deepened his convictions and led him to the determination not to resist them. It was impressed upon his mind that he had reached a turning-point in life, and that weighty interests hung upon the decision of the hour.

There were pious students in the Seminary, who held a weekly prayer-meeting among themselves. Guthrie, who was one of its members, had several times invited Ake to attend. But hitherto the latter had always found some excuse for declining. Also he bore the reputation of a wild fellow who cared for none of these things. It was, therefore, a surprise to all present, when that evening he was seen to slip quietly in at the beginning of the services, and seat himself near the door.

Guthrie was called on for the closing prayer, and

Tom was much affected by the tender earnestness with which he pleaded with his Father, for the salvation of perishing souls ; especially those of his fellow-students who were yet out of Christ.

The little assembly was dispersing. Tom hurried out among the first, but was quickly overtaken by Stephen, who, moved out of his usual proud reserve, grasped him warmly by the hand.

“ I was very glad to see you, to-night, Ake : hope you will come again.”

“ Thank you. I—I ”—strong emotion prevented the conclusion of the sentence.

“ Can I be of use ? ” softly asked Stephen, laying a hand on Tom's shoulder and gently drawing him back into the chapel. “ We can have undisturbed possession here for half an hour, and I am quite at your service, if—if you care to make use of me.”

“ I'm an awful sinner ! ” Tom burst out, vehemently ; “ and going straight to destruction.”

“ And God is calling to you, ‘ Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die. ’ ”

“ I can't, I don't know how. I haven't the power to change my nature.”

“ True ; but He is able to save to the uttermost, and His blood cleanseth from all sin ! ”

“ But will He receive me ? ”

“ He will. ‘ Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out. ’ ”

“ But how am I to come ? ”

“ By faith and repentance. ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. ’ ‘ Repent, and believe the gospel. ’ Jesus, the God-man, is here

—**is everywhere present, ever waiting to be gracious—to listen to the cry of the returning penitent—to receive, pardon, and cleanse from the guilt and pollution of sin; he is the giver of faith—is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins.**”

“**Exactly what I want!**” exclaimed Tom, emphatically, his voice trembling with emotion; “**but I’m not fit to draw near or speak to him.**”

“**Nor ever will be till he makes you so; he bids you come just as you are, and take salvation as a free, unmerited gift. And it’s the only way you or any one can have it.**”

That night was the turning-point in Tom’s life—the time when he left forever his hard bondage to sin and Satan, for the b’essed service of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXX.

Gitsie in Trouble.

MR. LEIGH, the new professor, had a calm, quiet dignity of demeanor, that won the respect of pupils, many of whom were scarce younger than himself. In class his remarks and explanations were clear and full, but outside of his profession he was a man of few words.

So much so indeed that his reticence provoked the lively Miss Ertel to a series of determined efforts to "draw him out and make him talk."

Others among her less brilliant companions had failed in a like attempt, but she succeeded so well as to excite their envy and jealousy; shown by an occasional innuendo in regard to "female courtship, coquetry, and designing flirts;" all of which Gitsie listened to with perfect placidity, and an air of innocent unconsciousness that was beautiful to behold.

Miss Ertel was a born coquette, and could seldom refrain from exercising her gifts. Her lively manners and conversation, joined to a more than ordinary share of good looks, made her a general favorite with gentlemen, and she was not unfrequently spoken of as the belle, or one of the belles of the Seminary, Miss Landon being the other.

I think the professor had very nearly lost his heart before the winter was half over. It was not evidenced by any partiality shown Miss Ertel in the class-room ; but in skating and sleighing parties, he was her escort oftener than any one else, and at the sociables usually passed the greater part of the evening by her side. She, however, showed him no special favor, but smiled on all her courtiers alike.

It was study-hour, and Miss Landon and Miss Ertel were busy over their books.

"There!" exclaimed Gitsie, "with my usual carelessness, I've left my Rhetoric in the class-room. I must go for it this minute."

"You are welcome to the use of mine," said Elena.

"Miss Landon, I'm astonished at you! do you suppose that I would break rules in that way? are we not forbidden to borrow or lend?"

"Really," returned Elena, laughing, "I was not aware that I was speaking to so rigid an observer of rules. But take care," she added, as Gitsie was hurrying toward the door; "you will find Prof. Leigh there correcting compositions."

"And do you suppose I'm afraid of him?"

"You may possibly get a reproof for your carelessness. I heard him administer one to Jerusha Arabella O'Flarity for the very same thing."

"But I'm not Jerusha," laughed Gitsie, running away.

The professor lifted his head as she entered, and as their eyes met a slight flush rose in his cheek.

"Will you step this way, Miss Ertel?" he said "I was just wanting to see you."

"Yes ; but you mustn't keep me a minute," she answered saucily, picking up her book as she passed the bench where it lay ; "for you've given us an awfully long lesson for to-morrow ; and I presume if I miss a word I'll get a lecture as long as from here to yonder."

"Am I such a scold ?" he asked with a grave smile. "Well, perhaps if my sermons were better heeded, they might be shorter and less frequent."

"Oh, it don't matter, so far as I'm concerned : they go in at one ear and out at the other, she answered flippantly.

"Allow me to correct your grammar," he said, ignoring the pertness of her reply. "It *don't* matter. Is that quite proper ?"

"No ; I should have said it *does not*. But what's the use of being so awfully particular ?"

"I heard you talking in a highly patriotic strain the other day. As a lover of your country, you should do your part toward keeping her language pure, by speaking grammatically, and using words in their proper sense. If we speak so extravagantly upon ordinary occasions—for instance, using *awfully* where *very* would be quite strong enough—what can we do more when the extraordinary comes ?"

"Really I don't know."

"Nor I. It is a great pity so to rob words of their meaning. I am correcting your composition. I find the same fault in it ; and here is an awkward sentence ; let me suggest an improvement."

He did so, asking, "Wouldn't that be more elegant ?"

"Yes," she acknowledged frankly. "May I take it to my study and make the alteration?"

"You may as well do it here," he said, rising, giving her his chair, and putting his gold pen into her hand. "Just take my pen; I'll trust you, though there are not many I would; for it's an excellent one; cost me five dollars."

He was a very beautiful and accomplished penman, and Gitsie greatly admired his chirography.

"Thank you," she said. Then as she finished and gave back the pen, 'It is the best I ever tried. I'd willingly pay five dollars for such an one; but I'd give ten for your hand!'"

She caught his laughing eye, the look of mingled delight and amusement on his face, and hers flushed crimson.

"Your—your hand-writing I mean, of course," she cried, stammering, and blushing still more deeply; "I never had any talent for that, or for talking either." And without waiting to ask if he were done with her, she caught up her book and almost ran out of the room.

"What's the matter? did you get the lecture, and find it worse than you expected?" asked Elena, looking up in surprise, as her room-mate came rushing in, flung her book on to the desk, and took a rapid turn or two across the room, her face half averted, the hot blood dyeing even her neck and the tips of her ears.

"Oh, don't ask me! I've gone and made the biggest fool of myself!" she cried, dropping into a seat and covering her burning cheeks with her hands.

"Oh, pshaw! what *did* I do it for? I could beat myself for it!"

"What's the matter? I hope you haven't beaten the poor young professor, in your indignation at his well-merited reproof?" laughed Elena.

"No; worse than that by half; I've—would you believe it? I've gone and made an offer for his hand?" And she burst into an hysterical laugh.

"Lena threw herself back, and joined in right merrily.

"Oh, Gitsie! did he accept? but of course he would; for he admires you immensely. Well, it's not so bad, after all, as it might be; we have an acknowledged right in leap-year, you know."

"Yes, I'd forgotten 'twas leap-year; but it's to be hoped he'll remember, and take that into consideration. But what shall I do? I never was so mortified in my life before."

"I'm dying to know how it happened," said Elena.

Then Gitsie told her, laughing and blushing all the time, and winding up with fresh anathemas upon her own awkwardness and stupidity.

For several days after this, Mr. Leigh found it impossible to catch Miss Ertel's eye in class, or to exchange a word with her out of it; so carefully did she avoid locking in his direction, or being left alone with him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

MISCHIEF was brewing in the Seminary ; but in so quiet and stealthy a fashion that no one but the conspirators—some eight or more of the male students—had the slightest suspicion of what was going forward.

The plotters were among the wildest and most reckless fellows in the institution ; and so bold and daring was the outrage they had in contemplation, that lest some hint of it should reach the authorities, they had made it a rule that no two occupying the same rooms should be in the secret. Also the carrying out of the intrigue followed quickly upon its inception.

It was May, the weather unusually cool for the season, the night dark and windy. As the clock struck one, several doors flew open, and dark figures began gliding noiselessly about the halls. Ten minutes later, a light blaze flashed out here and there from the windows, the belfry bell pealed forth an alarm, hasty footsteps traversed the halls, loud voices shouting, "Fire! fire! fire" and thundering knocks upon the doors helped to rouse the sleepers, and call them from their beds.

Some waiting to snatch up and hastily don a garment or two, others in their hurry and fright not stopping even for that, they rushed pell-mell into the halls, taking up the cry, "Fire! fire fire!" each adding his quota to the noise and confusion.

"The ladies! the ladies! to the rescue, boys!" Burns' voice rose loud and clear above the din, as with one or two bounds he cleared the first stair-case.

The shout was echoed and re-echoed on all sides as the lads poured through the class-rooms to the opposite side of the building; some on one floor, some on another, no one hearing or heeding the calls and cries of the professors, who found themselves fastened into their rooms, the conspirators having firmly secured each of their doors with a strong rope, upon the outside.

Elena Landon was the first thought of both Burns and Guthrie—(would have been with Rudolph, also, had not an opiate, taken to relieve an aching tooth, kept him asleep through the whole of the disturbance)—and with one impulse they hastened to her rescue.

Burns, rooming too stories lower, had the start of his rival, and would have reached her first, but for an unexpected and most annoying detention.

He was tearing down the hall toward her room, at the head of a troop of his excited mates, when with a wild scream of terror, Jerusha Arabella darted from her door and flung herself upon his breast, clinging about his neck, stabbing his cheek with her crimping pins, and entangling his legs in the folds of her long loose gown.

"Oh, save me! save me! I shall die of fright, and I shall be burned to death!" she shrieked.

"You can't be both, and you are pinioning my arms so that I can neither help you nor anybody else," he said, trying most ungallantly to shake her off.

She only clung the tighter and screamed the louder.

"Will you let go, Miss O'Flarity, and allow me to be of use to some one?" he cried, with another desperate effort to free himself. "You are in no greater danger than others. There are the stairs, and not on fire yet; run down, and get out of the building as fast as you can."

"Yes, yes; and you too," she cried, trying to drag him toward the stairway; "you mustn't stay here risking your precious life for others."

"Take care of yourself and never mind me," he answered, at last succeeding in shaking himself free, just as Guthrie rushed by half carrying Elena, who, silent, but pale with fright, seemed to cling confidently to his strong arm.

Burns ground his teeth, darted a look of anger and disgust after the flying figure of Miss O'Flarity, and hurried to the assistance of other distressed damsels.

"Ah, the fire has not reached this part of the house yet," said Guthrie in a tone of relief, sending a quick keen glance from side to side as they reached the hall below; "and you need fear nothing now."

"No; so please leave me now to take care of myself," Elena answered, letting go his arm.

“Not yet ; not till I am sure that you are safe,” he cried, tightening his grip about her waist ; “ the wind blows in this direction, and the flames may be on us here in a moment.”

“ Oh, I hope not. Do you know where they are ? where the fire began ? ”

“ I know nothing but that I heard the alarm and rushed to save you,” he answered with a thrill of tenderness in his tones, as he drew her aside out of the excited crowd, that with shouts of warning, and shrieks and cries of terror, were rapidly surging past them to the outer door, that instant unbarred and thrown open by a couple of stalwart young fellows.

“ What terrific screams ! ” exclaimed Elena with a shudder ; catching the sound of other and more distant cries ; “ men’s and women’s voices too ; some must be in great danger, or perhaps actually in the fire. Oh, leave me and go to their rescue ! but no, no, don’t ; you will perish too, and I could never bear it.”

The tone of the last words was very low, but his eager, listening ear caught them, heard the tears in the voice—though there was not light enough to see how full the soft brown eyes were, and his very heart leaped for joy. He drew her closer to him, and for an instant her head rested on his breast.

But there was a shout. “ The fire’s coming this way ! out of doors all of you that want to be safe ! and they hurriedly obeyed, keeping together with difficulty, as the crowd pressed upon them from all sides.

Some one grasped Elena’s arm, and Albert’s voice

cried, "So you are safe, Lena! Thank God for that I've been to your room and found it empty. Where's Gitsie?"

"I don't know; she flew from the room with the first alarm, calling to me to follow. I think she is sure to be safely out of the building."

"I must find her," was all he said, elbowing his way through the throng, pushing one and another aside with almost fierce determination.

An odd-looking assemblage it was; young men and maidens in all states of dress and undress (principally the latter); bare hands and feet were all the fashion; shirt-sleeves and white night-gowns in full vogue; ditto unbound hair streaming over the shoulders, and rows and double rows of curl-papers and crimping-pins.

Some of the fair ones were ready to faint with fright, others in hysterics; screaming, crying, and laughing were heard on all sides. Elena, who had presence of mind to throw on a thick dressing-gown and put her feet into slippers at the first note of alarm, made quite a respectable appearance amid the motley multitude. At that moment, however, excitement ran much too high for any one to take a critical observation of his neighbors; and there was scarce light enough for it; no lurid flames shooting up to the sky from any part of the building; no smell of smoke in the chill night air.

But as Guthrie and his convoy reached the outer edge of the crowd, a window in the second story was thrown up, the shutters were dashed open, sending down a glare of light upon the sea of heads below, a

night-capped head was thrust out, and a high-pitched, masculine voice, shrill and sharp with rage and terror yelled frantically, "Am I to be left here to be burnt alive? Bring a ladder, some of you, and help me down. Some devil has fastened my door on the outside, and it resists all my efforts. And the stairs are burnt away, I know they are; and I smell the smoke and feel the heat of the flames coming nearer and nearer every instant. Do you hear? bring me a ladder! don't stand staring and gaping there; run all of you."

The conspirators, mingling here and there in the crowd, were enjoying the confusion immensely. (Their time of fright would come on the morrow.)

"Old Bony's in a way: red hot," laughed one of them to his compeers. "Come on, lads; there's a ladder in the gymnasium."

"No use," answered another; "the Long and the Short of it will have him loose before we could get to him. There they go."

Burns and Ake were already bounding up the stairs. They quickly untied the rope, threw open the professor's door, Ercurius picked him up as if he had been a mere child, tossed him over his shoulder and strode away with him, he shrieking insanely, "My night-cap! my night-cap! you've thrown it off, and I shall catch my death of cold, going bareheaded into the frosty night air."

"Here it is; we'll stick it on again, sir," cried Tom, snatching it from the floor, and hurrying after.

Gitsie's first thought, on hearing the cry of fire, was of a sort of protege of hers, a girl several years

younger, who roomed two stories higher than herself. She flew up to her door, but had some difficulty in rousing her out of her sleep, making her comprehend what was wanted with her, and getting her downstairs through the excited throng.

They were still in the house when Albert began his search for Gitsie among the crowd on the outside; having got no farther than the second floor.

Another was presently searching for her too; as eagerly and as determinately as Rush.

Mr. Leigh had spent the earlier part of the night at the bedside of a sick friend in the village. On his return, slowly climbing the hill, wrapped in thought, he was startled out of his reverie by the alarm from the belfry and the cry of Fire! fire! while, a turn in the road giving him a view of the edifice, he saw, through the windows of the dormitories on the male side, flames flashing up here and there.

"Fire! fire!" he echoed, hurrying forward at his utmost speed, his heart throbbing wildly at the thought of the peril of the sleeping inmates of the Seminary, and of one in particular.

Panting and breathless he reached the outskirts of the excited crowd, at the instant that Ercurius—bending low to do so with the utmost care—deposited his burden upon the ground; Tom adroitly clapping the night-cap upon the bald head at the precise moment when it was brought within his reach, ere the long dangling legs touched the earth.

It was a sight comical enough to have provoked a smile from the gravest, on any ordinary occasion, and Mr. Leigh had many a laugh over the recollec-

tion in after days ; but now was too full of excitement and apprehension to give it a thought.

He glanced over the throng—the light from the lamp in Professor Pettibone's room still shining down upon it—saw Guthrie and Elena, and hastily elbowed his way to their vicinity.

“Miss Ertel?” he cried, in quivering tones ; “where is she?”

Both answered in a breath that they did not know, and with a half-uttered groan, and the cold perspiration standing out upon his forehead, he turned and pushed on through the crowd to the house ; casting keen, searching glances from side to side as he went.

Gitsie's charge—terrified by the shrieks and cries coming from all sides, especially from Professor Pettibone's throat, lost her presence of mind, and rushed back up stairs, just as Burns and Ake flew to his rescue. Gitsie instantly gave chase, and with great difficulty partly coaxed, partly dragged her down again ; and had reached the lowest hall only at the moment when Mr. Leigh paused upon the threshold of its outer door.

Some one on the stairs held a light, its rays falling full upon the young girl's excited face as she stepped to the floor and looked anxiously about for a place of refuge for herself and charge.

“Gitsie!” exclaimed Albert and the professor simultaneously, each making a spring toward her.

But at sight of them, at the sound of their voices, and with the touch of the frosty air coming in through the open door, it flashed upon her that she was in

her night-dress and bare feet, and blushing crimson with modest shame and embarrassment, she started, turned, flew into the reception-room, and hastily concealed herself behind its door.

Albert darted off in search of a shawl, unceremoniously snatched one from the shoulders of Gump—who was taking excellent care of number one—rushed back with it, but found the professor was ahead of him, and had thrown his cloak around the blushing, trembling girl, and with his arm about her waist, and his lips in dangerously close proximity to her rosy cheek, was doing his best to soothe and reassure her.

With a heavy sigh, Albert stepped quietly back to the hall again.

The excitement in regard to the fire was beginning to subside, a report circulating that it was a false alarm; but Gump, missing his wrap, and not seeing how it had gone—he having been attacked from behind—was roaring out at the top of his lungs, “Thieves! pickpockets! cut-throats! murderers!”

“Where? who? what?” shrieked Jerusha Arabella, glancing in wild-eyed terror from side to side. “Oh do, somebody, protect me! I shall die of fright! I know I shall.”

“No use trying to save you then,” muttered Burns, ungallantly edging farther away from the distressed damsel.

“Hush! stop that senseless bellowing, you great calf!” cried Albert, flinging Gump’s shawl into his face; “’twas only borrowed for a moment to keep a lady from taking cold.”

"Albert," said Elena's voice, at his side, "did you find Gitsie?"

"Yes; she's all right." (There seemed a slight bitterness in his tone—or was it only Elena's fancy.) "But—I begin to think we've been badly sold—no flames to be seen—no smell of smoke in the air—shall I help you to your room?"

"Sold! sold! every one o' ye!" cried a rough voice overhead; "not a spark o' fire about the house, 'cept what's in your stoves and grates. You'd better git back to yer beds fast now, or ye'll catch yer death o' colds; and ther'll be the doctor an' undertaker to pay."

Every eye was lifted to see Broadax leaning out of an upper window, while his loud and repeated "Ha, ha, ha!" rang out upon the night air. "Yes, yes; lads and ladies, ye've been badly sold; and I hope the chaps 'as done it 'ill git their desarts at the hands o' the faculty."

"That they shall, if I have any voice in the matter," groaned Prof. Pettibone; "I shall never get over this—never, never;—the shock to the nervous system, and the chill night air, and—oh dear; oh dear!—rheumatism, neuralgia."

There was a general hurried movement toward the house, amid the hum of voices, and faint screams and exclamations from the girls, as they became suddenly conscious of the unseemliness of their attire; half-laughing, half-crying, they rushed pell-mell into the halls, up the flights of stairs, and finally gained their own rooms, to creep shivering into bed, most of them too much excited to sleep again that night.

Elena found Gitsie seated before the fire in their study, wrapped—not now in Mr. Leigh's cloak—but her own dressing-gown and shawl.

The two sat there for some time, warming their chilled limbs, laughing over the excitement and adventures of the night, the comical figure cut by "Bony" and others—Gitsie herself included—but did not exchange confidences in regard to what just then lay the nearest the heart of each.

Elena's cheek burned at the thought of certain words that had fallen from her lips in the fright and agitation of the moment, and fearing she had overstepped the bounds of maidenly modesty, and given undue encouragement, resolved to be very circumspect in future, and give a certain person no reason to think her too easily won.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Scattering.

THE faculty were very determined and persevering in their efforts to discover the authors of the late outrage, and at length were successful.

Harrell, who was the ringleader and the originator of the plot, had been overheard by his room-mate stealing softly out just before the alarm. He also, and two others, were identified as the purchasers of the ropes with which the professors' doors were tied, and one of them, turning state's evidence, revealed the names of all the others. They were all expelled and sent home in disgrace.

Commencement was now drawing near, and all our young friends were extremely busy with their studies. For Gitsie and Elena, Burns, Rush, Rudolph, Lenox, Hurst, Ake, and Guthrie, it was to be the winding up of the Seminary course, and each was fully determined to graduate with honor.

And they were all successful, Guthrie, Rudolph, and Burns taking the highest honors, while the rest were not far behind.

Mr. Ramsay and Fred came up to Thurston to attend this commencement also, but leaving Mrs Ramsay and the little folks at home.

The exercises were over, and Guthrie was receiving the congratulations of his friends. Fred came up to offer his.

"My dear fellow, I am heartily glad of your success," he said, shaking Stephen's hand cordially. "You have struggled on nobly through difficulties that would have utterly disheartened many another; and now you begin to reap your well-merited reward."

"Thank you, Mr. Landon," Guthrie answered, with emotion; "but I—I fear you put a higher estimate upon my poor efforts than they really deserve."

"Not at all. But I am the bearer of an invitation from Mr. Ramsay. Burns, Ake, Rudolph, Lenox, Hurst, Rush, and I, are to dine with him at his hotel in the village, and he wishes the honor and pleasure of your company also."

"Thanks to him, and to you, Mr. Landon; and I should be the honored one. But—I—you are very kind, but I don't think—" and he glanced from Fred's neat and appropriate dress to his own shabby attire.

"Nonsense!" cried Fred, linking an arm into his, and drawing him on toward the spot where Mr. Ramsay and Dr. Gerwick stood conversing together; "there'll be no ladies present—my sister and Miss Ertel having engaged to dine with a friend at her own house in the town—and your dress will be perfectly well. It isn't for that we value you."

The doctor broke off suddenly in his talk, as the two approached, and extended a hand, exclaiming, "Mr. Guthrie, sir, I consider you an honor to the institution!"

"As do I also," added Mr. Ramsay, taking Stephen's hand as the doctor dropped it, after a hearty shake.

The lad's lip quivered, and he had some difficulty in commanding his voice sufficiently to express in suitable words his sense of their kindness.

The dinner—consisting of a number of courses—was excellent; there were no wines or spirituous liquors of any kind, but plenty of clear cold water, rich milk, and fragrant tea and coffee.

The talk naturally turned upon the exercises of the day, and the future plans and prospects of those of the party who had just graduated.

They had all learned to highly esteem and love the benevolent, elderly gentleman, their entertainer, now seated at the head of the table; and no one felt disposed to refuse an answer to his kindly questioning; evidently prompted by a fatherly interest in their welfare. He began by asking Lenox what he intended making of himself.

"My father is a shipping merchant, sir," said Robert; "and wishes me to go in with him."

"And you, Mr. Rudolph?"

"My tastes incline to literature, sir," returned Paul, modestly; "and Providence having blessed me with ample means, I think myself warranted in indulging them."

Mr. Ramsay's eye was fixed inquiringly upon Hurst, who sat on Paul's other side.

"Civil engineering, sir," he responded, gayly. "I'm fond of mathematics; also of fresh air and the beauties of nature."

“But beware of trees that have lost a chip from their bark, laddie,” said Burns. “At least, don’t be enticed into resting your weary head in any such convenient hollow.”

“Thanks,” said Mark, laughing; “and let me advise you to beware of putting a cigar between your lips and lighting it with a match when the wind is blowing and may send the flame in the wrong direction.”

This by-play, of course, excited the curiosity of the company, and the story came out, to the amusement of all and the satisfying of the curiosity of several who had never before been able to account for Tom’s skinned nose, and the sudden disappearance of Burns’ mustache, and so much of Hurst’s cherished suit of hair. Time had restored all to their pristine beauty, and they could now afford a laugh over their mishaps.

“Served us right,” said Tom; “we’d no business to be larking down there, on Sunday especially. But I coaxed Longlegs into it; so deserve more than half the blame.”

“No, no, Tommy,” interposed Ercurius; “I was a free agent.”

“And I proposed the thing and enticed you both; so am the worst of the three,” said Hurst, magnanimously.

There was a slight pause and Mr. Ramsay resumed his questioning.

“Albert, I think you told me you and Burns have about decided upon medicine?”

“Yes, sir ; and Guthrie, I believe, has done the same.”

“Ah?” said Mr. Ramsay, turning inquiringly to the poor student.

Stephen assented, adding, “Some have urged me to enter the ministry, sir ; and if I felt that I was called to it, I should gladly endeavor to do so ; but I have considered the question carefully, asking wisdom and guidance from above, and have come to the conclusion that my talents lie in the other line, and that that being the case, I can serve the Master better as a physician than as a clergyman.”

“And if you are right in the premises, you are right in the conclusion,” said Mr. Ramsay : “too many enter the ministry who are not fitted for it by natural gifts ; and so do less for the Lord’s cause than they would in the station or calling suited to their talents. And indeed, I think a pious physician has as many opportunities to work for the Master as a minister. Now we have heard from all but Mr. Ake.”

“Sir,” said Tom, flushing and stammering in a way very unusual with him. “I’m afraid it looks like presumption in me—such a wild chap as I’ve always been—great talent for mischief, and all that—but I’ve given my whole heart to the Lord, and I’ll own it before all the world, and that I mean to serve him with all my might—and—and I seem to hear those words sounding in my ears day and night—‘Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.’”

Tom’s words—earnestly, manfully spoken, as by one who had counted the cost, and was ready to do and to bear all for Him whose servant he declared

himself—electrified all present: rapid glances passed from one to another of his mates. Surprise and delight were blended in Fred's face; Guthrie's beamed with a quiet, heartfelt joy. Burns' was grave, with a slight shade of uneasiness, and there was an almost imperceptible tremble in his voice, as he clapped his chum on the shoulder, exclaiming, "That's right, lad: stand to your colors, and turn a bold front to the foe."

There was a murmured word of approval of the sentiment from the others, and Mr. Ramsay said, with emotion, "Then I think, Mr. Ake, that you have a plain call to be an ambassador for Christ, and may you have many souls for your hire." Then glancing about upon the rest, "And let me urge all of you, my dear young friends, to enlist in the same army—each serving the Lord in his own calling—and trying to bring others to Him: for 'he that winneth souls is wise.'"

The dinner over, the company presently scattered. All were to leave for home that night, but there were no leave-takings, as they expected to meet at the Seminary for a few moments before their final departure from the town.

Fred went in search of his sister; Rush and Guthrie walked down to the post-office together, talking earnestly as they went.

"Well, I hope you will get an answer to-day," said Albert. "It ought to have come long ago."

"Yes; so it has seemed to me, and I think I now know something of the sickness of hope deferred, if I never did before."

They entered the building. Albert glanced at his box, and saw that it was empty. Guthrie was asking for letters. Two were handed him.

"At last!" he said, his face lighting up, as he caught sight of the name, "Mix & Co.," printed on the end of the envelope of one.

They hurried out together, Albert saying, "My dear fellow, I hope, for your sake, it is the conclusion of the matter, and a favorable one."

"Thanks. No," with a heavy sigh, for he had taken out the note, and was hastily perusing it, "just the same old story, 'so many applications for patents; your turn has not come yet; earlier applicants must, of course, take precedence of you,' etc., etc."

"You are much disappointed," said Albert.

"Yes; for you as well as myself. I'm afraid I should not have consented to let you risk your money on it."

"Nonsense! didn't I propose it myself, and beg, as a favor, that you would let me invest in the venture?"

"But if you should lose it?"

"'Twouldn't break me up horse and foot," returned Albert, jocosely. "So don't worry about me, old boy."

"And you can wait without inconvenience?"

"Yes; for years to come. But goodbye for the present. I've an errand down here, and I see you are going on to the Seminary. I'll see you there in an hour or so."

"Stay," said Stephen, his eyes again fixed upon the note: then reading aloud: "'We think there is no

doubt that your machine is patentable; and the invention is a good one.' Do you notice how they constantly ignore my expressed desire to have the principle patented? I begin to fear they intend to help themselves to that, and get me only a patent on the machine, if any at all."

"Looks like it, indeed," said Albert; "but we must hope for the best."

"Yes, and trust in Providence."

With that they parted, and went each his way, Stephen climbing the hill toward the Seminary with the slow step of one wrapped in sad and depressing thought.

Shortly after his return to the institution the previous fall, he had told Rush of his invention and shown him his model.

Albert, having been himself a practical farmer, could fully appreciate its usefulness to such, and at once took a lively interest in getting it patented; offering to be at all the necessary expense.

Guthrie objected that he might fail to get a patent and not be able to return the money; but Rush insisted that he wished to invest in the thing at his own risk—for his own profit or loss; and would esteem it a favor to be permitted to do so.

Thus urged, and being so entirely destitute of means for pushing forward the enterprise himself, Guthrie at length consented, and at once made his application for a patent, through the firm of Mix & Co., who were largely engaged in the business of prosecuting such claims.

The young men were at first very sanguine in

their expectations of a speedy success ; but months of weary waiting, with now and then a few lines from the firm giving little or no satisfaction in regard to the matter, had greatly damped their hopes, and this fresh disappointment had left poor Stephen sick at heart.

He could see nothing but poverty and hard, exhausting toil before him in this world, while the next seemed very far off, and the road thither a long, dreary one to travel.

He was halfway up the hill ere he bethought him of the other letter, still held unopened in his hand. He had as yet scarcely bestowed a glance upon it ; but he looked at it attentively now, and saw by the postmark that it came from home, but that the direction was in a strange hand.

The color left his cheek as he tore open the envelope, and hastily read the half-dozen lines enclosed. His mother was dangerously ill—at the very borders of the grave ; and he must hurry to her without a moment's delay if he would see her alive.

His mother—his all—dying, perhaps even now dead ! What an agonizing pang shot through the brave, strong heart. No more thought of his grievous disappointment, or of anything, at that moment, but how to reach her in the shortest possible space of time.

Crushing the letter in his hand and thrusting it down deep into his pocket, he flew up the hill and into the house.

Fortunately his few effects had been gathered together and packed into a little hair-covered trunk

that now stood just within the doorway of the lowest hall in the male department. He had left nothing for these last hours but his adieus, and there was no time for them now.

He was shouldering the trunk, when a pleasant lady-like voice spoke at his side.

“Mr. Guthrie, you are not going just yet?” It was Mrs. Weir, standing there with a paper parcel in her hand.

“Yes—I—my mother—ill—dying—must run to catch train at Newville Station,” he gasped, his pale face working with emotion.

Its ghastly look, the agony in his large eyes, and in the tones of his voice, went to her very heart. “Oh, how sorry I am!” she cried, a tear rolling down her cheek. “God bless and comfort you. Maybe it isn’t so bad, and you’ll find her better. But here, these will help you on your way: you must eat to keep up and be able to do for her,” she added, in tones trembling with tender, motherly feeling, thrusting the parcel into his pocket, along with a small purse which she took from her own.

He was hardly conscious of the act.

“A bit of lunch I’d put up for Mr. Rudolph,” she said, “but I’ll prepare another for him.” Then taking his hand in hers, she bid him a tearful goodbye, for there was that in his face that made her heart ache, and the smile with which he thanked her was more pathetic than tears.

She would have detained him, thinking he was ill—and scarcely in his right mind; but he would not be kept. She called after him, as he strode away

that she would say goodbye for him to his friends ; but he did not seem to hear.

“Poor, poor lad ! life does go very hard with him,” she murmured as he disappeared from her view.

On, on he rushed, never pausing, never once looking back, though there was anguish in the thought—creeping in now through all his grief and anxiety for his mother—of going away thus without a word or look of farewell to the dear, lovely girl whose image was enshrined deep in his very heart of hearts.

Once he had believed—with what a thrill of ecstasy !—that his love was returned ; but alas, since that hour of wild excitement—now so like to a strangely sweet dream—he had hardly found opportunity to exchange so much as a look with her. Ah, *was* it all a dream that he had for one blissful moment held her in his arms, while she clung to him with confiding affection ? that he had read in the depths of those sweet eyes, in the tremor of the dear voice, that his love was returned ! Or had he offended by his presumption ? what presumption in him to aspire to her heart or hand ! How these thoughts, these doubts and fears, had tormented him through all these weeks of hard mental and physical toil ! how he had hoped to have them all set at rest in a parting interview, and now that was not to be.

And she would think—ah, what would she not think of such seemingly shameful treatment ? And he had not even her address, that he might write his excuses, could he convince himself that it would not savor of too great assurance.

He reached the station panting and breathless, just in time to swing himself upon the platform of the car at the last moment.

* * * * *

Mrs. Weir had no knowledge or suspicion of the state of affairs between Guthrie and Miss Landon, and seeing the latter again only for a hasty goodbye, did not think of mentioning the cause of Stephen's hasty departure, or even so much as his name.

Elena, of course, did not ask for, or about him; but both love and pride were deeply wounded by his non-appearance. She only heard some of the other young men talking in the cars of his having left hastily without waiting to say goodbye to any one, and afterward Albert telling Fred that Guthrie had had a disappointment about some business affair that day, and he presumed that was the cause of his avoiding the farewells to his mates, though he "had not expected to find him taking it so hard—had believed him possessed of more pluck and spirit."

At that Elena flushed crimson and shot an indignant glance at Albert—which he did not see; then dropping her veil to hide her emotion, leaned back in her seat silent and abstracted, buried in her own sad and bitter thoughts, till Gitsie began to rally her unusual taciturnity, when her mood suddenly changed to one of unnatural gayety and mirth.

It was early morning when they reached home, and Elena rushed up at once to her mother's dressing-room.

Mrs. Ramsay, looking wondrously young and fair, in a tasteful white morning-wrapper, met her at the door and clasped her in a joyous tender embrace.

"My darling, darling daughter."

"You dear, dear mamma! how glad I am to get back to you again! But the babies! I'm dying to see them. Fred says they're such lovely little darlings!"

"We all think so," Mrs. Ramsay said, smiling, as she led the way to an adjoining room, where were two nurses, each holding a six-months old, beautiful, golden-haired, blue-eyed babe.

"Oh the darlings!" cried Elena, snatching the one nearest her, and hugging it in her arms. "Which is this, mamma?"

"Serena; she is what her name imports; you see she receives your caresses quietly; but Helen, I think, would have cried!"

"Well, what do you think of them?" asked Fred, who had followed his mother and sister; "did I exaggerate their beauty?"

"Oh no, no; they're just what you told me, twin fairies, exactly alike and each the very image of mamma."

"I can already see a difference in their dispositions," remarked Mrs. Ramsay, taking Helen in her hands tenderly; "but in looks they are so perfectly alike that I only know the one from the other by the gold chain about her neck. The styles are quite different, you see. Papa adorned them thus that we might be able to distinguish them."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Conclusion.

ON a bed in a poorly furnished, but exquisitely neat apartment, a woman lay propped up by pillows. She was past the prime of life, the dark hair plentifully streaked with gray, while the sallow complexion, sunken cheeks, and hollow eyes told of long and wasting sickness ; but borne with patience and resignation, as the sweet calm expression about the mouth, and in the large luminous black eyes, fully attested.

Through the open door and windows, one caught glimpses of roses and honeysuckle, and the sweet June air came in laden with their rich perfume.

“How many blessings !” murmured the pale lips ; “all these and heaven besides. Stephen, my dear son, you are so good to me.”

“I can never repay a tithe of what I owe to the best of mothers,” he answered, setting down a tray of food, that he had just brought in, upon a light stand, and lifting it to the bed-side. “I have made you a bit of toast and a cup of tea. Now if I could only give you an appetite for them.”

She only smiled, a sweet, patient, loving smile, for

she was too weak for many words—or even to lift her head from the pillow ; and he sat down and fed her gently, tenderly, sighing inwardly to see what forcing work eating was to her, and how few mouthfuls sufficed.

“ Mother,” he said, coming back after carrying away the tray, “ I think I will not leave you this morning.”

“ Not for long, my son,” she answered, opening her eyes for an instant, then closing them wearily ; “ but go to the post-office—now—while I sleep.”

He stood for several minutes gazing sadly upon the sunken features, listening anxiously to the low fitful breathing ; then hearing the gate swing, he stepped softly to the door.

A kind neighbor had sent her little daughter “ to sit by the bed-side, if Mr. Guthrie wished to go out.”

She was a quiet, womanly little thing, and moving across the floor, seated herself where she could watch the face of the sleeper, and with a whispered assurance that he would not be gone long, Stephen took his hat and stole softly away.

In less than half an hour he returned to find his mother still sleeping, and the child not weary of her task. He sought the solitude of the little shed-kitchen behind the house, and cast himself down in an attitude of utter despondency.

A year had passed since we left him speeding on his way from the Seminary ; a year of such toil and trial as made those of all former ones seem light by comparison. Through all these weary weeks and months that precious life had been hanging as it were

by a thread, that might at any moment snap asunder, and by almost superhuman effort he had performed the duties of both provider and nurse.

There was little time or strength left for study his earthly hopes and aspirations had all to be laid aside.

Nor had one word of, or from Elena cheered his sad heart. Was she lost to him forever? Alas! so he feared, and often saw in imagination Burns and Rudolph basking in the sunlight of her smiles.

Once, six months before this, he had received a note from Mix & Co., similar to the one taken from the Thurston post-office the day he graduated, and now, to-day, had come another giving the death-blow to his hopes. A patent had been refused to his invention; some one else having already taken out one for a machine that closely resembled it.

But worse still, the doctor, meeting him on the street, had told him there was no hope in his mother's case; unless she could be taken on a sea-voyage, or at the very least to the sea-shore; and that it would not surprise him to hear of her death at any day or hour.

Take her on a voyage, or to spend weeks or months at the sea-side? what short of a miracle could give him the means to do either? Ah, if only that patent had been granted him! Why had that firm delayed so long in making the application for him? was it that they might rob him, by selling the invention to another and letting him apply for the patent as though it were his own? The thought would return again and again, torturing him almost beyond endurance Had he been cheated? and must his

beloved mother die in consequence of her son's wrongs ?

Truly at this moment Stephen walked in darkness and saw no light "as regarded earthly happiness and prosperity ; he was bowed " down almost to the earth with grief and anguish of heart.

But ere long athwart the dark and threatening clouds shot the bright bow of promise : " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." " I have loved thee with an everlasting love." " When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

The door opened. " Mr. Guthrie," said a child's voice, " can you come ? she's woke up, and the pain's very bad."

In a moment he was at the bed-side. " Mother, my poor, patient mother, how much you suffer ! "

" It is His will," she gasped, " and blessed be His holy name ! Lift me up."

He passed his arm under the pillow, and seating himself on the bed behind her, gave her head a resting-place on his breast.

" That's it. My dear boy, God bless and comfort you ! Yes, I suffer, but how much less than He did ! and I find that His sweet presence eateth out the bitterness of sorrow and suffering. I think it a sweet thing that Christ saith of my cross, Half mine, and that he divideth these sufferings with me, and taketh

the larger share to himself; nay, that I and my whole cross are wholly Christ's."

The words were breathed out slowly with many a pause and gasp for breath.

Stephen's quivering lips were pressed again and again upon the pale brow.

"I think I'm nearing home," she whispered; "home and rest with Jesus. Oh, to be forever with the Lord! forever freed from this body of sin and death!"

The child had run to call her mother, and she with another woman had hastened in to see the end.

But Stephen was scarcely conscious of their presence, or that a black and threatening cloud had suddenly overspread the sky and was already sending down a slight shower of rain. Nor did he heed the opening of the gate, the sound of hasty footsteps coming up the path, or a light tap on the door, followed by the entrance of two ladies and a gentleman, whom one of the women quietly provided with seats on the farther side of the room. His eyes were riveted upon the still white face on his breast, bitter grief and anguish of soul plainly written upon his own.

The intruders were all young, well-dressed, and bore about them an unmistakable air of refinement and good breeding.

"Oh, Fred," whispered one of the ladies, "we should not have come in here."

"Perhaps, Bell, we were sent to help and comfort," he answered, in the same low tone.

"Look at Lena," she said.

He turned his eyes upon his sister, and saw that hers were fastened upon Stephen's face, her own working with emotion, flushing and paling by turns.

What could it mean? he had no recollection of the young man's face, nor was it strange he had not; for grief, toil, and care had left their traces, and beard and mustache altered somewhat the contour and expression of the countenance. Nor had its lineaments been treasured up in Fred's memory as in Elena's. Again he scanned them earnestly, then turned to her to ask for information.

But there was a slight movement, a gasp, a sigh coming from the bed; then all was still, the silence broken in another moment by an awe-struck whisper from one of the women, "She's gone."

Stephen's arms tightened their clasp about the wasted form; he held it to his breast; he pressed his lips tenderly, passionately to brow and lips and cheek; then laid it gently down, and sliding to his knees upon the floor, buried his face in the bed-clothes, while bitter, bursting sobs shook his manly frame.

Elena rose, glided across the room, and kneeling by his side, her tears falling like rain, whispered softly, "Stephen, Stephen, be comforted for her; she is with Jesus now: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'"

But a man had hurried in, and rushing up to the bed, thrust the women hastily aside, took the cold hand in his and felt for the pulse.

"She isn't dead; it's only a faint," he said; "bring me brandy, wine, some sort of stimulant."

Stephen was already on his feet. "Here, doctor, is brandy," he cried, springing to the cupboard and bringing out a bottle.

The doctor forced open the mouth and poured down a few drops of the stimulant.

There was a half-strangling attempt to swallow.

Stephen's emotion was overpowering. The others were trembling with excitement.

The physician persevered, and his efforts were at length rewarded by the return of his patient to consciousness, presently followed by a deep natural sleep.

All this time Stephen's eyes had been constantly upon his mother's face ; but now they turned upon Elena, who stood at his side weeping silent tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

He grasped her hand, one earnest, searching gaze into each other's eyes, and doubts and fears fled like morning mists before the bright rays of the rising sun.

Then seeing Fred, Stephen crossed the room and shook hands with him, Elena standing apart and looking on in happy silence.

"Guthrie! I didn't recognize you till this moment!" Fred exclaimed in a subdued tone. "My wife," presenting the lady by his side.

Stephen shook hands with her also.

The rain had ceased, and the two young men stepped out into the little front yard and spent some minutes in earnest conversation. Fred, with much tact and delicacy, drawing enough information from Stephen to give him a tolerably clear idea of the trials and difficulties the mother and son had had to contend with ; especially during the last year.

Then he spoke cheering, hopeful words, reminding Guthrie of the promises to the righteous both for time and eternity, things temporal and things spiritual, and assuring him that he believed Providence had sent himself, wife, and sister there to be of service to him and his mother.

"Bell and I were married a few months since," he said, in conclusion ; "and now we, and my sister, are merely jaunting about through this lovely country for a little relaxation and enjoyment. We had no idea that this was your home, until the accident—or rather, I think we should say the providence—of the shower that came up so suddenly, sending us in here, made us acquainted with the fact. We are not hurried for time, and can remain in the neighborhood for a week or two, just as well as not."

Guthrie was deeply touched by Fred's kindness, and frankly avowed his love for Elena ; adding that he had reason to believe it was returned, and hoped some day to be in circumstances to ask her of her parents.

"My dear fellow," said Fred, with a smile, and again shaking his hand warmly, "I consider you worthy of her ; and if I were her father, should consent at once to the engagement. As it is, I have no authority, but believe I may assure you that when you can support a wife her guardians will not object to her following her own inclinations, should they lead her to an acceptance of your suit."

* * * * *

It was a July night, hot and close in the crowded cities, but into the open doors and windows of the old

home of Fred and Elena, on the shore of Long Island Sound, a delicious breeze came salt and fresh from the sea.

The family were in possession now, all its older members gathered, a cheerful, happy group, upon the pretty vine-covered Gothic porch, from whence they might look far out over the water, and hear the pleasant murmur of the waves along the shore.

The full moon sent down a flood of radiance on sea and land, tipping the waves with silver, and making every object almost as distinctly visible as by the light of day.

"How delightful this is! I seem to draw in new life with every breath of this invigorating air," said a faint but cheerful voice, speaking from a couch in their midst. "And to think that this lovely spot is to be my home! My dear, kind friends, I can never thank you as you deserve for all your goodness to me and my son."

"My dear Mrs. Guthrie," answered the sweet silvery tones of Mrs. Ramsay, "what have we done? Secured an excellent housekeeper for ourselves. It is a great relief to me to feel that I can go and come as I please, and always find things in order here exactly as if we made it our only home."

"Ah, how kind of you to put it in that light," returned the other gratefully. "But you do not know what a haven of rest for my weary old age this sweet spot seems to me. And your promised generous remuneration for my poor services when I shall be able to go about again, makes me regard myself as a rich woman; and swells my heart with joy and

gratitude to the Giver of all good, and to you, his servants, that now I can help my poor boy, instead of being a burden on his hands.

“And your goodness to him! it almost overpowers me,” she added with emotion; “I well know that Mr. Ramsay is paying wonderfully liberal prices for that copying.”

“Tut! tut! Mrs. Guthrie, by what right do you presume to decide what I should pay my employees?” queried Mr. Ramsay in mock indignation. “Don’t you think now, madam, it would look better for you to allow me to manage my own affairs?”

“Oh, sir, do not misunderstand me; I would never presume.”

“And shall not I be permitted to look out for the future of my daughter, Lena?” pursued the old gentleman, ignoring the interruption; “and do you suppose I could consent to her engaging herself to a young chap that couldn’t make as much as—as Stephen does now? No, indeed.”

“And oh, my kindest, best, most generous of friends, that is another thing that fills me with wondering love and gratitude to you,” cried the invalid, her voice tremulous with deep feeling, “that you should permit your lovely, accomplished daughter to give herself to a poor young man like my son, noble and good and lovable as he is in his mother’s eyes.”

“And in those of his future mother and father,” said Mr. Ramsay. “Let me tell you, madam, we are proud of our intended son-in-law, who is perhaps not less noble in our eyes than in yours. Stephen!—why they’re gone, every one them, off to the beach

for a moonlight stroll, I suppose—Fred and his bonny bride, Stephen and Lena, and poor lonely Albert. The poor lad seems down-hearted of late, since Gitsie declined coming here with us. I begin to suspect that handsome young professor has cut him out.”

“ Well, well, I hope he’s not too deep in to flounder out, and perhaps find another some day, quite as worthy of him.”

“ And his misery may find company in poor Rudolph’s disappointment. If I’ve any skill in reading the signs, he’d give half his fortune for what Guthrie has won.”

The young people had slipped quietly away while their elders talked, and were strolling along the beach ; Albert, Fred, and his Isabel a little in advance of the other two, who were now avowed lovers. They had been engaged for two days, with the knowledge and warm approval of Elena’s parents and Stephen’s mother.

Mrs. Guthrie and the sweet girl one day to become her daughter, had grown to love each other very dearly in the few past weeks of their acquaintance ; and as Mr. Ramsay had just said, he and the little mother already felt a paternal pride in the noble young man to whom they would give their loved and cherished eldest daughter.

“ Ah, my darling Elena, how happy I am to-night,” Stephen said to her in low, half-tremulous tones, as, seated side by side on a bit of rock, they looked out over the restless waters and watched wave after wave come up and break almost at their feet ; “ so happy that I can scarce persuade myself it is not all a dream,

from which I shall presently awake to the hard stern realities of life that were mine only one short month ago."

"No, it is not a dream. But what a hard, hard life you have had, my poor Stephen," she answered, lifting her soft eyes to the face that was bending over her.

Hers were half filled with tears ; his beaming with love and hope and joy.

"There have been times," he said—"ah ! the day that brought you to me, as an angel of mercy, was one—when I found my feet sinking deep down in the Slough of Despond, when all was dark about my pathway, and my unbelieving heart cried out like Jacob of old, 'all these things are against me.'

"But I was as much mistaken as he, and God, the God of my fathers, has brought light out of darkness and joy out of sorrow. I owe an infinite debt of gratitude to him, and a very great one to your sweet mother and her noble husband, who have given my beloved, weary mother so lovely a home, surrounding her with every comfort, and have opened the way for me to pursue my professional studies without let or hindrance."

"Yes, they have been very good to us both : but it is what they always are to everybody, particularly to Fred and me. Father is wonderfully generous to us both. He gave me a very large monthly allowance when we first came on from Wisconsin ; and when I left for Thurston, the last thing he did was to put a great roll of bank notes into my hand. I told him I already had more than enough to supply all my

wants ; but he bade me keep it, for I would have opportunities to give, as well as spend. ’

A sudden light came into Stephen’s eyes, and his gaze into Elena’s face was so keen, eager, and searching, that she asked, with a merry laugh, “What now? what is the meaning of such an inquisitorial scrutiny of my countenance?”

“Elena,” he burst out, “I—I think I see it now! I believe I’ve found my unknown benefactor—the one who saved me from perishing with cold and hunger, in my bare attic room ; and who sent Conas as a messenger of relief in one of my darkest hours :—the morning after that dreadful accident to my poor hands. Tell me, dearest, tell me, is it not so?”

Her only answer was a deep blush.

“Will you not tell me, my darling?” he pleaded. “Do you not know—does not your own heart teach you—that I would rather be under such obligations—owe such gratitude to my own dear betrothed, than to any other?”

“Yes,” she murmured low and tenderly, “Conas was my messenger ; but the gift was our Father’s, whose are the silver and the gold. As for the other, Albert and I contrived it together, uniting funds, and he undertaking to put the things in your room, by means of the key of his room, which he found fitted the lock of your door.”

He clasped her in his arms, held her to his heart for several minutes ; then with a whispered “God bless you, darling! God bless you both, but you most of all : have you not been indeed an angel of mercy to me?” he released her.

“ Ah, Lena,” he presently exclaimed, in tones thrilling with tenderness, love, and joy ; “ how often I ask myself, if it can be possible that I may claim you for my own ! Yet, dearest, it must be several years before I can make a home for you. Can you, will you wait so long for one who feels that your price is above rubies, and he hardly worthy to win such a prize, though, instead of his poverty, he had the wealth of the Indies or California to lay at your feet ? ”

“ Hush, hush, you shall not talk so,” she said, playfully putting her hand upon his lips. Then more gravely, “ Yes, I can wait ; I’ve no wish to leave mamma yet ; and we are both so young, and shall see a great deal of each other in the mean time. And don’t talk to me of riches : what are they to the love of a true, noble, unselfish heart, that has proved itself strong to do and to endure ? ”

THE END



