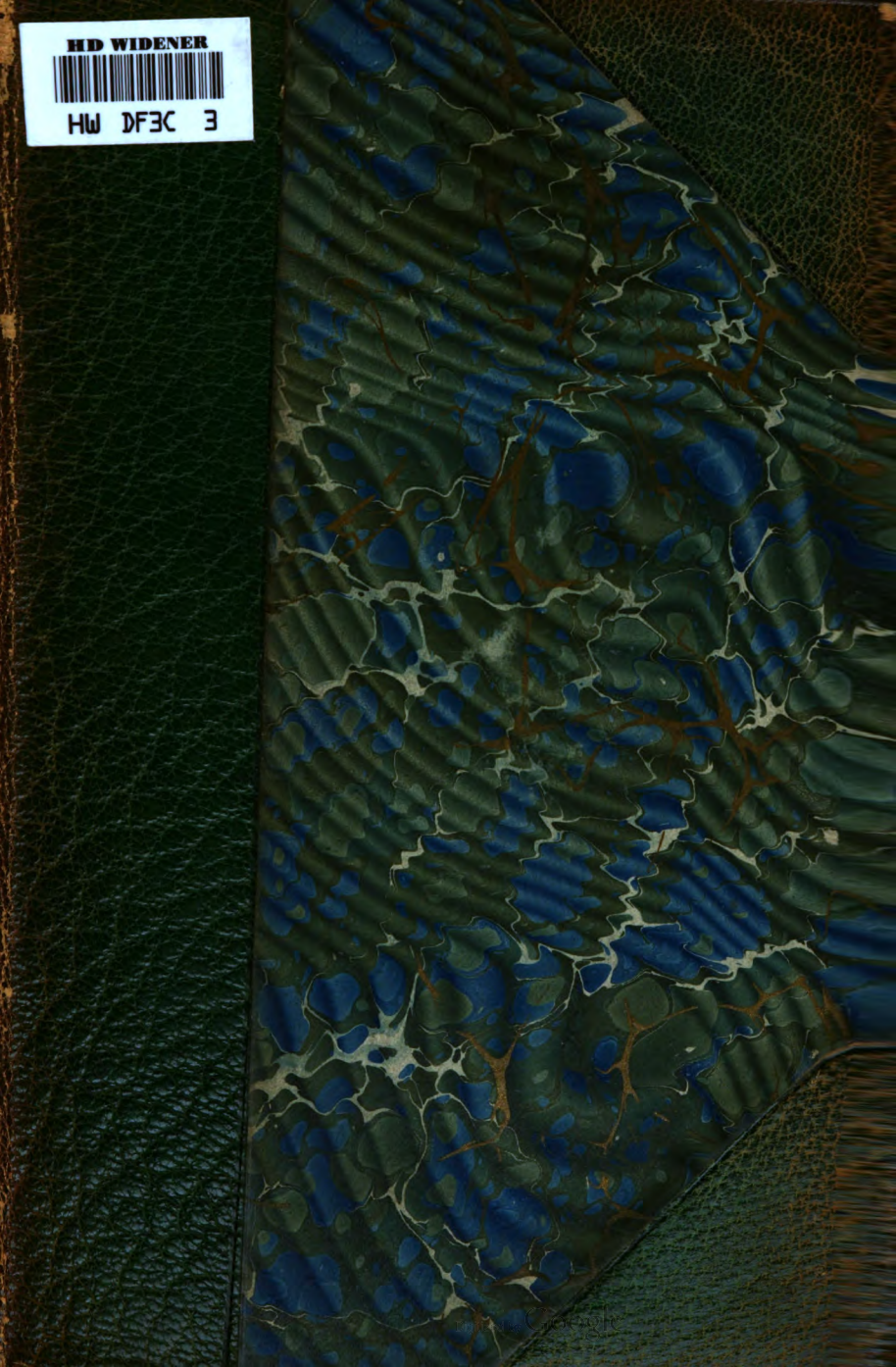

THE OLD HOUSE BY THE RIVER.

THE

OLD HOUSE BY THE RIVER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE OWL CREEK LETTERS.

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TO

J. Hammond Trumbull, Esq.

WHEN this book was prepared for the press, several years ago, your name, as you will remember, was on this dedicatory page, and I would not displace it now. But the book is not dedicated to you, nor will you value it any the less for that. Times change, and we change with them; and although nothing has occurred, or could possibly occur, to change our close attachment, yet it will not be necessary for me to explain to you why I give the book to one who now has a place nearer to me, and to all my thoughts and hopes, than ever you or Joe Willis have had.

The old house on the river stands where it did when the book was written, but its tenants are no longer there. Joe Willis, our friend, is a wanderer.

The old house is closed, the housekeeper its only occupant; and Anthony, prince of family servants that he was, sleeps in the graveyard, near his young mistress and old master.

I am in my city home, surrounded by new friends, new scenes, and new employments; and I ought to add here, that these scenes and days are happier than those, strange as it may seem.

I do not care to say what reasons have induced the publication of the volume after so long delay. You may guess at them, provided you like the book. I trust you will like it.

I need not say to you that there is some fiction in the volume, for a certain amount was necessary to conceal the identity and personality of the incidents.

The heart of every reader will spare me the necessity of saying how much there is in the volume which is no fiction.

There are experiences such as no imagination can paint, joys and sufferings such as none can describe but those who have known them experi-

mentally. However much in this book may be called sentimental, or weak, I care not. I have a hope for the book. It is that it may reach some hearts that will acknowledge the faithfulness of much that it professes to delineate, and that it may lead the minds of those, who in the busy scenes of the world are forgetting their own histories, back to the gentler and purer days, when the springs of life gushed from cool, deep fountains, unstained and sparkling in the light of heaven.

Do you remember that day, (how many years ago!) when we lay together on the deck of the Phantom, and looked down into the clear deep water. You then spoke of the everlasting impression of thought on the mind, and shortly after that one of us suggested the idea of a volume something like this. I retained the idea, and prepared the book. It has lain among my papers ever since. Neither of us then thought that one of the gay company who was with us on the boat that day, would win me from the old hall, the Phantom, and Joe Willis. But so it has proved; and to her,

dear as she is to both of us, you will be glad to have me give this volume, as I now do, with earnest hopes for its success, and with fear, not on my own account, but lest I should not have done her sufficient honor, by offering such pages as these.

I am, my dear James,

Ever yours faithfully,

P.

April, 1853.

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Joe Willis

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Joe Willis

THE old house stands on the river-bank, in a grove of oaks, the growth of more than a century. The house is large, built of stone in the substantial style of fifty years ago, with broad halls, endless suites of rooms, deep windows and large chimneys. The antique appearance of the building is forcibly contrasted with the perfection of modern luxury in the interior arrangements; nor is there a wish that the most fastidious of tastes will find ungratified, in the various portions of the establishment.

At the foot of the lawn which slopes to the river's edge, is a stone wharf, at which our boat is lying in pleasant weather. The stables are at a convenient distance from the house, and the road is a half mile off, the park grounds stretching away toward it.

About four miles from us is the village and the post-office, while nearer, and at various distances, are old places, mostly visible from the upper windows of the hall, where some of the pleasantest families in the county reside.

Here, surrounded by all that can make the days pass calmly and joyously, my old friend and I live together, quarrelling not with time or weather; and here the years glide gently along by us, or bear us along with them unto that pleasant land of rest to which we look forward without fear or hesitation.

My friend is no ordinary man. To know him you must know all his history, for his character is made up of the experiences of a life of much joy, and not a little sorrow. To look at him as he sits in his easy-chair yonder under the swinging lamp, you would not fancy his life had been so varied a story; but as you know him you will learn to love him for the sacred love with which he treasures all the past, and then the wealth of his soul will open to you, and you will grow rich in his memories.

He has been my friend from childhood, and we two have roughed it together thus far through the world. In the forest, and in the crowded city alike, we have been side by side for many years, more indeed than either of us now care to admit.

In the month of January, in a year which I will not name, for the years go so fast that I dare not tell you how long ago these things happened, Joe and myself were still at the cabin. It was late for hunting, and the deer were in poor condition. But there had been very little snow, and now indeed it was all gone. The air had for several days been soft and May-like, and we found it pleasant to trudge over the hills together, sing-

ing, laughing, or shouting; and we had almost concluded to winter it at the cabin, and wait for trout-fishing in the spring. One morning, when the sky was uncommonly clear, and the sun almost like June, we left the cabin for a long day's tramping. Our rifles had been carefully cleaned, and the patches cut with all the exactness possible. Somehow we had a fancy that the day's sport would be good. The dogs seemed to feel as we felt. John was a noble fellow. Leo was a large, heavy-chested hound, lithe and active, while he was strong as a lion. They stalked behind us, occasionally looking at one another, and at times lifting their heads so as to look into our eyes, but without even an inquiring look. Their expression seemed to be one of perfect readiness for any emergency. It was nearly noon. We had thrown ourselves down on a pile of leaves where the sun was shining pleasantly, when suddenly Leo raised his head and broke out in a long bay that was as strange as it was startling. I looked at him, and he came up to me, crouched at my side, and laid his head on my lap. As I rested on my elbow, my face was turned close to his. He looked into my eyes, and I saw that something was ailing the dog. Again he raised his head, and commenced a low whine, which finally broke out in a long, clear, musical but mournful baying, that made the forest ring.

The next instant a deer dashed across the open hollow below. He was a fine buck, and had evidently been startled from his noon rest in the thicket. He took to the cover again the instant he caught sight of us, and

breasted the hill gallantly. The trees were nearly leafless, quite so excepting the evergreens, and we could see him for a hundred jumps. Suddenly he doubled on his track, and came down the hill again. Leo, whom a word from Joe had kept quiet, now watched my face for the signal to start.

"Phil, let the dogs manage him. John has turned him yonder, I think, and if Leo meets him in the hollow he will stand fight."

"I don't like to risk the dog, Joe. I wouldn't have Leo harmed for a thousand bucks like that."

"I'll trust him—I'll trust him. On, Leo!"

The brave dog went down the hill like lightning. The deer did not see him till he broke from the cover, and they met on as pretty a sward as a knight could have asked for a tourney. It was a round grassy basin, a hundred feet across, with smooth hard turf, surrounded by forest trees and a thick underbrush. The deer came in with a bound over the low ring or hedge of scrub-oak that surrounded the basin, and suddenly meeting the dog, turned and coursed half way around the circle, then dashed into the centre, and turned at bay. John came in at this instant. They were in a position for a picture then. The deer standing with head down, his nostrils close to the grass, his keen blue eyes flashing like fire, his hair bristling on the ridge of his back like a hyena's; the one dog, Leo, standing quietly as if looking curiously at the spectacle—and I thought his head was canted a little on one side with a quizzical expression; the other

crouching low on the ground, his feet planted out on each side of him, his broad chest expanded, his eye like a snake's, watching every motion of the game, his head slanting upward, and his whole body indicating that every muscle was ready for the fight.

The next instant the deer made a long bound; his feet planted close together came down with a force that would have cut John through and through, if he had not met the plunge with a dash at the ear of the buck, which he tore to ribbons. Leo had not moved an inch, but looked on as a cool spectator, and as the deer turned he saw John crouching close by Leo's side, waiting him as before. But now the attack was made on the other side. Before the buck well understood the new state of affairs, Leo's teeth were in his throat, and John seizing him by the lips dragged him down. Now followed the worst of the battle. A deer's strength is all in his legs, and when down he uses them madly. I once took a deer by the head, with my knee on his neck; but before I had time to think, much less to act, he planted his two hind feet on my breast, and sent me flying a rod into a heap of brush.

They rolled over and over and over. Now the deer was nearly on his feet, and now the dogs were on him, but they never loosened their hold. Once he sprang up, and they both swung clear of the ground, but they brought him instantly down again. I could stand it no longer. Even Joe began to feel uneasy. I stepped forward to a rock from which I could command the scene, now about a hundred and twenty yards distant, and

shouted to the dogs. They instantly let him up. With a wild bound, (frightened at the sound of a human voice,) he sprang for the cover; but my bullet was swifter, and stopped him on the edge of the basin.

The battle over, Leo relapsed into his usual calm and dignified condition, looking complacently on, while John had his nose in the bloody heart of the deer, which I had thrown to him; but when I had bent down a sapling, and fastened the saddle of venison to it, and let it swing up again, and was slowly walking up the hill, Leo approached me, and touching my hand with his cold nose, again gave voice to one of the most melancholy wails that I have ever heard.

And now I must pause to relate what perhaps I should have stated before. Leo was given to me some years previously by a friend, whom I valued highly, and who valued me so much as to give me one of the two young dogs which he had received from England.

At a short distance from my own home was the residence of Joe Willis, who was the ward of Judge Willis, a distant relative of his father, and a man of some note in the county. With him Joe had lived from mere childhood until he attained his majority, and succeeded to the large estates left him by his father. Nor did his manner of life change at all then; and I shall not have to explain why he remained a resident of the old hall for a year longer, and why, at the date of which I now speak, it was still his home. Judge Willis had but two children living, his daughters Ellen and Lucy.

Our families were on such terms as country neighbors are apt to be on, and Leo was as much at home in the one house as in the other. Perhaps I should say he was more at home in Judge Willis's house than in our own, for he never ventured beyond the large hall and my rooms in the one, except by special permission, while at the other he was welcome from kitchen to garret. I did not part with my title to the dog, but it was now manifest that I was not half so much his master as Ellen Willis was his mistress. It was a rare sight to see them together—she a fragile, fairy girl of eighteen, and he a gaunt, strong hound, standing always close by her, or yielding his head nobly to her caresses.

She was of the mould of heaven, which some (and I sometimes, since she left us) have fancied has been broken. Light and graceful as a dream when she moved across the room or the lawn, she was still more like a dream when she sat thoughtfully at her window, crowned a queen and an angel by her golden hair. Her eye was blue, not with the lustre of the sky, but that soft shade which the distant sea has of a summer evening just before sunset. Oh, what an ocean lay in those blue depths! —of purity, of faith, of hope, of love, pure holy woman-love! Her lips were chiselled as Eve's must have been, or better if that might be; for Eve's had the passion on them which tasted the forbidden fruit, but her's had only the imprint of the sounds of Eden on their delicate lines, and were fit to talk with angels and with God.

Two years more made her a woman; but I do not

think any of us expected she would stay long among us. She never left home, never visited in the village, but lived within the little circle of the two families, and made pets of all of us, and familiars of her gallant horse and my noble dog. Her father loved her better than all the world, and Joe—I will not speak of him.

And now to return to the forest. That wail of Leo's went through me. I have always had faith in dogs.

"Joe, what's the matter with that dog?"

Joe was pale and silent. He thought as I did. Our last letters had spoken doubtingly of the health of Ellen, and we connected her brave guardian's distress with those letters. The day's sport proved good, and we reached the cabin just at dusk. We had scarcely seated ourselves at Black's table, when a shout was heard on the other side of the river, answered instantly by another long wail from the dog. I grew pale, and trembled as I went to the door. Joe was speechless, and we entered the canoe together and pushed across the river. As we neared the shore we saw two men standing on the bank, one of whom was Anthony, a favorite family servant, who advanced to the water's edge, and touching his hat in reply to my quick demand for his news, said simply, "Letters for Mr. Joseph, sir," and handed him a package. He tore off the envelope, tossed me a couple, which by the dim light he could see were for me, and springing into the canoe, hurried Anthony and his companion in also, and pushed across the river.

The conclusion of my letter contains the whole story.

"She cannot live a week, the doctor says. You will come instantly. The horses will be sent out for you. Ride day and night. Joe will need no such directions."

Anthony had brought our horses. They were at the bridge, and he had procured a hunter to guide him to the cabin. In five minutes we were all in the long canoe. Joe, Black, and myself, each had a paddle, and Anthony and his man and Leo lay in the bottom. The river was swollen, for the warm weather had melted the snow in the up-country, and as we pushed out into the stream, the current took her prow around with the speed of thought, and we shot swiftly down the lower rapids.

I cannot forget that night. The stars were above me, calm, clear, and companionable, as they had been and have been a thousand times in scenes of joy and sadness. Call it romance, as you will, but I love and worship them, and they are to me the torches which the holy dead (dead in fact, or dead because epitaphed in memories) hold over the path I have trod and am treading.

There was no sound of life on the banks of the river. All was profound silence, broken only by the dip of the paddles, or the gush of the stream along the rocky shores. None of us uttered a word. For an hour we flew down the stream. We reached the Black Rapid, than which none on the river was more dangerous. I was forward, guiding our course. The flat rock was out of sight, only the obelisk (as Joe had named it) was visible. The best pass was to the left of one and to the right of the other. They were not fifty feet apart, the obelisk being the

lower. I braced myself, and taking firm hold of my paddle threw her a little over to the left bank. ("Starboard a little," would have been the direction to a man at the tiller, had we been in salt water; but this was fresh, and we steered without a rudder.) Black and Joe stood with paddles raised, watching the current and our course. The lightest touch possible in the water kept her steady, and she shot down the boiling surface of the stream, with her head direct for the tall black rock, as if she were seeking destruction. Steady so for a moment longer;—we shot by the flat rock, every paddle struck the water at the same instant, and she sprang suddenly to the right, and flew by the ghostly-looking pillar of stone, down the last slope of the rapids, and slowly floated out into the frothy basin, on the opposite side of which the horses were awaiting us.

Joe's black horse, Zephyr—black as night—stood pawing the ground under an oak tree, impatient to be away. My own dark bay, the pride of the county for his magnificent limbs and neck, and his small but beautiful head, stood like a statue, looking toward the shore as we stepped from the canoe; but as I came up toward him, he greeted me with a loud and glad neigh, shaking his mane at the same time, and stretching out his head to my shoulder as familiarly as any good and true friend might. Leo sprang toward the horses with a yelp of delight; and the instant that I cast loose the ropes by which Anthony had left them fastened, and had taken off their blankets, the three, horses and dog, commenced a series of steps

not laid down in any of the books on dancing; but which indicated, at least, the great flexibility of their limbs, and their keen pleasure at a meeting which was manifestly unexpected. For a moment we forgot the overpowering sadness which oppressed us, and almost smiled at the happiness of our noble animals. I could write reams of paper to tell of the long and adventurous journeys we had all made together—dog, horses and masters—or of the pleasant sunny (and moonshiny) canters, when the horses bore graceful forms, of which they well knew the value, and with which they stepped as daintily and gently as ever lady's palfrey; of breasting at midnight the wild torrents of Western rivers, or swimming in pleasant summer days side by side in the broad, calm Hudson. Those who have owned such treasures will not marvel that we became attached to them as to our best friends, and it needed none of all these to make me value my bay; for he, like Leo, was a favorite of Ellen, and when I was away, was always kept in the Judge's stable.

A low whistle brought him to my side instantly, and he threw up his head and reached out a fore-foot to me—a fancy of Ellen's teaching. I patted his fine neck, and threw on the bridle. I rode then always without saddle, having a broad girth strap around him, and a soft fox skin thrown across his back. I was younger and more lithe and active then, and I eschewed stirrups as bothersome and ungraceful.

There was a little hand strap on the side of the girth, which I sometimes took hold of, and then rode half lying

down. At times I rode slowly for hours in that way, when travelling. But speed was now the object. Willis was on his horse. He rode as I, except that he had light stirrups and a black cloth seat. Anthony had our traps in the wagon; and with a parting shake of Black's hand, I sprang into my seat, and we were off. As we dashed out of the wood into the road, I looked back. Black stood motionless, gazing after us; but as we swept out of sight, I saw him raise the worn cuff of his plaid hunting coat to his eyes. Poor fellow! He had learned from our stories by the cabin fire, to love the gentle girl he had never seen, and whose grave he supposed we should find fresh sodded.

I need not describe the rest of that night's adventure Had you seen us pass your own house in the wilderness, as we passed the cabins along that half-beaten track, you would have shuddered all night, or dreamed over all the old stories you have heard of the wild huntsman. Zephyr did not flag a step, nor did the bay horse falter an instant. We paused once or twice by streams to dash some water over their limbs and cool their mouths; and after a moment's rest, flew on and on again, until the forest began to grow thinner, and occasional frame houses indicated the advance of comparative civilization. Anon we saw lights in the houses, as the farmers were rising to commence their early morning work; and at length a dull gray light dawned in the East, and day approached. It came heavily, and oppressed us, as the breaking day always brings oppression to the sad. It seems always to

lend new pangs to pain, to add severity to grief. I don't know the philosophy of it; but I have thought it might be, that we are so accustomed to wake to life and strength and hope, that when we welcome the morning only to shine on our crushed happiness, we by the contrast feel more bitterly our sorrow. Not one word all that long night had my friend spoken. Lifting his black horse steadily with firm grasp on his rein, and looking intently forward, we had pressed on in silence, each knowing that the other had thoughts too sacred to commit to words.

But as the sun came up in the sky, I turned to look at him. His features were calm and pale, his lips compressed, his whole air that of a man standing erect under a weight that would have crushed one of less gigantic power. He caught my eye, and a soft sad smile stole over his face, as he spoke. His voice was clear, not tremulous, but musical though low, and you could not say whether it was very cheerful or very sad.

"Phil, she is dead. She has died while we were on the road to-night."

I looked at him without reply. I could not speak, but I believe I gave utterance to some ejaculation of anguish, at which he smiled again, and now spoke in tones of comfort and cheer that reached my heart through thick folds of grief and rebellion; but as he finished a sentence of most cheerful words, Leo, who had kept even pace with us all night, again gave voice to one of those long wails, and Joe suddenly dropped his head on his breast, and was again silent.

We had now reached the country of bad roads. Civilization in the shape of farm wagons and ox carts had cut up the track, and it was frozen in deep ruts, so that we could only walk our horses. But I spare you any farther recital of our journey. In less than four days we had reached the bank of the river, and we then took to the smooth ice, and in six hours were at home.

Our horses appreciated our haste, and seemed to understand it. They strained every nerve. The ice was broken in shore by the ebb and flow of the tide. Zephyr cleared the open space at a flying leap, and the bay followed in as gallant style. I shouted to Joe to take the little river hedge, and not go around to the park gate. We went side by side over the hawthorn, cantered up the lawn, and sprang from our horses at the front of the long piazza.

Anxious eyes had watched for us on the river, and we had been recognized half an hour before. As we threw the reins on the necks of our horses, the door opened, and the old Judge stood awaiting us, with his finger pressed on his lip, as if to command our silence.

But she was not yet gone! Thanks evermore for that, that my friend was there in time to hear her latest words and blessings.

A week flew by. It was the evening of a glorious day when I entered the old hall and passed unchallenged by servant or friend, to the very chamber door of the dying girl. The scene in the room was startling. Joe was bending over the couch in a passionate attitude. She was dead!

In vain did he lift her hand to his heart, in vain press his lips to hers, in vain speak in that low deep tone of fondness and of earnestness which, if aught can, will always prevail to wake a sleeper. He did not call aloud, for he seemed to fancy she was indeed only slumbering, and he might frighten her; so natural is it to imagine that the dead cannot be dead. She was marvellously beautiful as she lay there, and her lips were pressed together closely in an expression of determination, which, united with the loving smile on her face, seemed to say to him, "I will love you, Joe, through life, through death;" and if she was thinking thus, how could she be dead? But she was dead; and it was thus that she died.

The windows were covered with the folds of gorgeous curtains, on which, through the shutter bars, stole the last beams of the setting sun, crimsoning the dim light in the dying girl's room, and shedding on her cheek a glow of exquisite beauty.

The fire in the broad grate was burning slowly, each coal covered with a coat of ashes; but the room was warm, and a fragrance of some aromatic drink filled it. In the south window, behind the curtain, stood her sister, a girl of sixteen, springing up into lovely womanhood. Poor Lucy! She was sobbing all to herself, and not a soul in the room knew that the curtain was so often shaken by the emotions of that young and almost breaking heart!

On one side of the bed sat her father, bending eagerly forward to catch every word she spoke. Oh, did we but

listen thus all life long to the words of voices that we love, as we listen eagerly for every syllable when the voices grow fainter toward the hushing, how many mournings would we save!

On the bed sat her mother, with one hand holding the right hand of her daughter, with whom she was conversing. On the other side of the bed stood Willis. He was then but twenty-two years of age, about five feet ten inches high, and his broad, massive chest indicated his great strength. His face was not beautiful; but as you examined it, its striking mould won your admiration, until you could but do homage to the perfection of manliness which was in it. The forehead was heavy and broad, but very clear and white; and the eye under it reposed, as if content with such guard. But as you looked into that eye, you saw there all the life of a clear intellect, a quick but deliberate habit of thought, and unbounded affections.

Now he gazed with mournful earnestness into the eyes of Ellen Willis, and watched each thought through those windows of her soul. At length she turned to him and spoke. "Joe I am dying now. I shall not live an hour —call Lucy."

"You mistake surely, Ellen. You have no need to fear death now. The doctor says you will live till spring."

"No, no, Joe dear, the doctor knows nothing at all about it. I have that within me now which warns me that I must count time by seconds. It is strange, I

can't explain it, but I feel that life is separating even now from this dear body. Oh, Joe, how well I have loved the earth! Sometimes I fancied that its flowers grew dim-colored and were no longer fragrant, and the hills were not green, and the valleys did not smile, and I could then have died and left them all most willingly. But now I cling to the dear earth with all a mortal's fondness. I have often loved to think that somewhere in this world, borne on the winds, or treasured in some happy valley, by the border of a mountain stream, or mayhap giving life to the flowers down in the glen, (our glen, Joe,) sleeps dust that was once the prison of the Son of God! Think you he carried it away from us when he ascended?"

"I think not," said Willis; "I think that all that was material of that body remains with us somewhere, scattered perhaps, but sanctifying the earth; and when I think of this, I love the earth far better than before."

"Just so, dear Joe—just so I think. I used to wish I might die far at the eastward. I would love to die on some hill of Lebanon. Not in Palestine, for the foot of the unbeliever still defiles the land once sanctified by the Saviour's footsteps. But to lie down on some high peak of those old hills, in body as in spirit, close to the entrance of the Promised Land, where my brow might grow cool with the dews of Hermon, and the soft south wind would come up to me with the music of Gennesaret; oh, that would be pleasant! How pleasant to see, in the far distant south, the blue beauty of Galilee! But I

would be buried here, in my own land. For, Joe, I have had a fancy that the dust of our Lord's body was carried on the winds very far from Jerusalem, and that in this distant land I should be more likely to rest in Him and with Him than there. And then with you, Joe! Oh, we will sleep together—I know, my love, it matters nothing where we lay these chains when we have done with them, but I have a wish to wake and see you first in the morning."

She paused; and they were weeping all of them: for the music of her voice was thrilling, and those tones, low, earnest, cheerful, surpassed all description of melody. So she spoke again, but now in lower tones, and somewhat broken. She murmured her farewell in a few faint words. An hour passed, and she spoke then as if her mind were wandering.

"I feel strange breathing on my forehead, as if I were on Lebanon, but the wind is cold. Joe, darling, kiss my forehead—ah, there is warmth in that!—earthly love is warm—mother, is this your hand; where's father?—Lucy, how beautiful you are!—my eyes are dimming—I told you I was dying, Joe. Lift me in your arms."

He lifted her to his breast, and as she nestled her cheek in his bosom with a trusting smile, the spirit left the clay to repose in the love that it knew was eternal!

It was at this moment that I advanced into the room. He gently unfolded his arms from around her, and sank on his knees by the bedside. I knelt by him, with my right arm thrown over him, and looked into her face.

She lay on a low couch, appearing much as in life, with her eyes closed, and her lips a very little parted, as if she were about to speak. There was no smile on her face, no expression that could be taken at the first glance; but when you looked again and again, when you studied the beauty of that most heavenly countenance, you began to perceive what was meant when the face of one was spoken of as being "as it had been the face of an angel." Beyond all reach of human care, sorrow, doubt, or suffering, beyond all disturbance from earthly discord, beyond all darkness, all clouds, all stars, she had passed into the presence of her God. Before she left the earth she had felt on her brow the spray of the river of the water of life, had heard the music of the leaves that fell in its pure stream from the trees on its banks, and why or how could her features express any emotion that could be interpreted by those she left here? All her life long she had been nearer heaven than any of us, and had heard and felt the softness and the balmy sweetness of the winds that blow over its hills. And now as we saw a tress of golden hair waved over her forehead by a passing breath of air, we knew well that those breezes were fanning her brow, and so we were comforted.

I have said her soul was an ocean of purity and love. That was an earthly metaphor. Somewhere in holy writ there is a promise like this, "There shall be no more sea." Her great, broad soul was moved no longer by changing moons, or those deep hidden currents that stir

human life from its lowest depths. Calm, like the peace of God, lay on her forehead, and we knew that calm had forever settled on her soul.

I rose from my place by her side, and left Willis still kneeling. As I turned away I saw Leo. He had entered and lay now at the foot of the couch, his head raised, and his fine eye fixed on mine. I do not know that he meant it, but I interpreted the look as asking permission to see her. I nodded, and he came slowly toward the bed-side. He was tall enough to see her as he stood there; but with my permission he placed his fore paws on the side of the couch, and looked fixedly at her face for the space of two or three minutes. He then returned to his position at the foot, and stretching himself on the carpet, followed every movement in the room with his eyes, but did not leave his watch until she was carried out forever.

We buried her. She had asked to be laid in the north graveyard, by a sister who had died five years before. We carried her into the old church, and for awhile rested her coffin under the pulpit, while the choir sang a hymn of rest. It went up peacefully in the little church, but she heard it not; and as they sang the last verse I heard one voice in the choir grow tremulous, and then cease suddenly, and at length a low, suppressed sob called my attention, and I turned and saw one who had loved her since they prattled their first words together in the bright days of infancy.

It grew late, later than we had thought, and the cler-

gyman spoke briefly and eloquently, and then we carried her to the graveyard. Down the long street through which I had often walked, holding her little hand, I followed her now to the hill where the village dead are resting. How desolate the scenes of life appear when we follow the dead past them!

Twilight was passed, and the stars were out when we reached the grave. It was dark and forbidding, and my hand trembled as I held the cord and slowly let her down into the gloom. But as I heard the coffin touch that of her sister, by whom she was laid, I felt that she was not alone, and thanked God that at length the weary one was at rest.

Then the earth was thrown in. Lightly at first, so that that saddest of all earthly sounds might not fall harshly on the mourners' ears. The stars were shining before this solemn work began. They looked down on the coffin in its lowly place, and their beams disputed each inch of depth as the earth was heaped on it, as if they longed to rest there with the holy sleeper. Struggling to reach her they peered into each crevice, and every mass of earth appeared to frighten and scatter a host of holy ones that were down in the grave with our angel lost one. Driven back at length to the surface, when the sod was laid on the mound, they rested among the blades of grass quietly and peacefully. There they will rest, keeping loving watch above her till the years of sleeping are ended. Father and mother have been laid beside her, and the moss has grown over the crumbling

head-stone—but the heavenly watchers have come back nightly, and when the last mourner shall have ceased to mourn, will not forget their priceless charge.

She sleeps from sorrow. The glorious hair that waved in the mountain wind, lies waveless now where wind may never reach it. The lip has forgotten its melody, the eloquent lip has forgotten its words of love! Her eye is dim, the glad eye that answered ours so often, and so gaily, and so lovingly; and the heart that beat once wildly with the joys of life-loving youth, now rests in dust. In the ocean of our lives there is an island, on whose shores the waves of memory break with heavy roar!

Four years passed swiftly after that, and Leo was our constant companion, the hero of a hundred days.

He died one pleasant Sunday morning in summer, and we buried him with not a little grief. We dug his grave across the foot of the grave of his gentle mistress; and somehow I always feel easier about her being out in the long stormy nights in autumn and winter, lying there in the church-yard, since her brave guardian took his old place at her feet.

It was thus that Willis became the bachelor he now is. From the day that we stood together by the grave of Ellen Willis, a closer bond than ever before has held us together, and we have lived more and more for each other, and less and less for the world that surrounds us. My own old home has given place to a comparatively modern house, which has none of the attractions to me that the old place had.

Years ago the spring-flowers bloomed that Lucy planted on her sister's grave, and more winters have shed snow on it than I would dare to confess have shed their frosts on my head, but Willis has by no means forgotten one particle of his love for her. He is rich as we count this world's riches, and Lucy, whom he in some sort adopted, owes to him a princely fortune which she bestowed on a worthy husband.

And Willis is rich in affection. Not alone in the love of a friend, and of Lucy and her bright-eyed boy, but in the waiting, watching love of Ellen Willis. Beyond the river they will be happy.

Sometimes in the night, seated by our cabin fire, we talk of her; and we always speak low, and as gently as we can, for we know she hears us. Sometimes Willis turns restlessly on his bear-skin and speaks in his sleep. But his murmurs are indistinct, and yet I once heard him murmur as if she were talking to him.

When her father died he left his house to Joe, and divided his vast fortune between his wife and Lucy. But by some mismanagement Lucy's share was lost almost entirely, and Willis supplied it from his own full coffers. He lives now most of the time in the old house, and I pass much of my life with him. A suite of rooms appropriated to my use has always been my favorite resting place when I am not at my own house, which, to say truth, I like so little that I am here four-fifths of the time. He occupies the room in which she died. The same rich curtains, scarcely at all faded, hang over the windows.

He will not be persuaded to exchange them; and here he lives and here will die, and I have promised if I outlive him to see him buried by her side, so that their coffins shall touch each other, and that being arranged he is content to wait.

Do not imagine from this that Joe is melancholy, or has ever anything like a fit of the blues. That would not be consistent with his calm confidence in the present and future presence and love of the departed: a more cheerful, light-hearted man you will not find the world over. His heart is a perfect spring of joyousness. He is ever devising some plan of pleasure, and carries it out with a zest that none can equal. He enters into all the enjoyments of life with a keen relish. He enjoys company, is a capital shot, rides his superb black horse with a free rein, and is the life of every gathering into which he goes. But to know him, you must come to his old place here on the bank of the river, and pass a day and a night with us. You may ride over the hills in the morning after breakfast, with Joe on one side of you, and myself on the other, and return to see company, of which we have plenty from twelve to four. Perhaps Mrs. ——— may drive out, as she not unfrequently does, to dine with us. "Our Lucy," as we yet call her, is a magnificent woman. But if she does not, you may sit down at five to a dinner which we will make as merry as we can; and then we will adjourn to the library, and cozily around the grate discuss the pile of books which Anthony, the prince of family servants, has brought up from

our publisher's; and you shall have what you please of the weed, wherewith to make blue rings in the air, as you listen to Joe's fine voice reciting Tennyson; or, if you prefer it, he will read to you from Sophocles, and therein he does excel as I can testify. At ten o' the clock he will ring for Anthony, and you shall hear the farmer break off from the sonorous old Greek, and in plain English talk of hogs, and horses, and hens; and then we will return to our books, and at one or two o' the morning, you may sleep quietly under a roof, beneath which once dwelt and slept an angel who will visit Willis to-night in dreams.

II.

Adam Pierson.

WHILE we are at the Hall we have plenty of occupation in looking after the tenantry of Joe's lands, and my own, which join his on the north. Many of the farms are occupied by families that have been born, as their fathers were, in the houses they now dwell in; and not a few of these people are near and dear to us by the memory of many kindnesses which we and ours have experienced at their hands. We seldom allow a winter to pass without having visited every house on the estates, and I believe we are safe in saying that no landlords were ever better loved by tenantry than are we.

On the dividing line of our estates, and entirely surrounded by our lands, is a farm of nearly a hundred acres, of as fine land as can be found in the county. You reach the house by a lane shaded with old elm trees, that give it an avenue-like appearance, and indicate at least the antiquity of taste in the residents of the Hickory Glen farm. In a hollow, protected on the north by a hill covered with a forest of fine growth, and at the point where the brook leaves the glen, and passes out into the meadow lands, is the old farm house. It is a cottage, very large, and very ancient in appearance. When you

look at it, you think it covers nearly half an acre of ground, but find that the various dairy-houses, and other farm buildings which are apt to be near the house, give it this extensive appearance.

This farm was purchased about fifty years ago from my grandfather, who was a clergyman and a man of considerable wealth. He sold it to Adam Pierson, senior, who had a son of his own name. It was sold because he loved Adam Pierson. So says his will. The sale was a conditional one; but on the death of the old clergyman, his will released it from all conditions; and, in memory of the faith and friendship of Adam Pierson in a trying day, when death came suddenly into the old hall, he gave to Adam and his heirs forever, the whole of the farm, charged only with a small annuity to my old maiden great aunt, who lived but six months to enjoy it.

And after the death of his friend and adviser, Adam Pierson lived nearly twenty years, but looking always much as if the world and he were not on terms of intimacy; and when he died, he left the farm to his son Adam, who was the friend and patron of my early years. Many a quail-snare did he teach me to set, and many a partridge fence did he help me put down. I remember not a few rabbits marked by him for my shooting; and the first fox I ever succeeded in unearthing, was by his direction.

As Joe and myself grew older, we retained grateful recollections of his kindness, and when his head grew white in the winter of life, we loved him well, and no one was more welcome at the hall than Adam Pierson.

There was one incident in his family history that we recall, with pleasure now, and have not infrequently related to those who saw the fine form of the old man in the church on Sundays, and admired his herculean proportions. It was a Christmas story too, worth relating again just at this season, for as I write it is the birth-night!

Joe sits before the grate in silent meditation. A smile is on his face and I know the companionship he has sought and found. The night is bitterly cold, but clear and beautiful withal. It was such a night as this, a score of years ago, when the incidents I have to relate occurred.

It was then, as now, the birth-night. A thousand years, almost two thousand, have the hearts of men clung to that day; children lisped carols with their earliest voices, and old men gone tremblingly to the church altar, to thank God that they lived to celebrate another of the days of the coming of the Lord. Who does not love the day? Around it cluster the holiest associations of childhood and of youth; the holiest memories of old times, when pleasant stories and happy songs made the fireside glad, songs and stories told by voices that are silent now, and long since.

Then, there are other and sublimer recollections and associations. Thoughts of martyrs and holy men of old, who were burned in the flames on Christmas day, and of the midnight vigils of the persecuted in the ancient days, when they celebrated the birth-night in the cities of the infidel. I never see the stars on Christmas eve without fancying that they look lovingly down on the earth then;

and that they remember the night of their reward and rejoicing, when a new one burned with unknown lustre on the breast of the Almighty!

What said you? It is not the exact day? Why not? —and what if it is not? You celebrate the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on the very day they did not land, and the round world itself has made such grievous error every year in time, that even our Sabbaths are all wrong. But what of that?

It was Christmas eve. The hearth in the cottage of old Adam Pierson was broad, and the hickory logs blazed brightly; but no one sat before it, for Adam's youngest daughter was sick and nigh unto death, and in her father's room the family were all gathered to watch and wait until the change should come.

Sarah was a well-beloved child. Her calm and pleasant face was known all through the country around, and her sweet voice in the village choir was the winsome sound that brought many a young man to the church and kept him there till the doxology.

But Sarah Pierson was dying. So said the doctor, and he was a good and wise, if he was a quaint old man; and so said the pastor, and he was old, and ought to know much of the ways of life. He had seen her grandfather and grandmother die, and had watched by her mother's side when the hand of God was heavily on her, and he said her face looked much as the old man's (her grandfather's) face looked, when he was drawing near to the land of his final rest.

By the bedside was one who had loved Sarah Pierson for many a year with pure and true love. Philip Winter was the son of the pastor, and had been a wild boy and a dissipated young man. But when he was nearly thirty years of age, the vision of Sarah Pierson's beauty had crossed his path, and he compared her loveliness and purity with the false form of beauty he had been worshipping, and he straightway turned to her and wooed and won her. Or she won him, for thereafter there was no more pleasure for him in the wine-cup or the revel, and he became a sober, earnest man, and began to make rapid advance in his profession as an advocate.

His intellect was of high order; his tastes naturally refined and delicate, and his powers of conversation unsurpassed. Sarah was but a child, yet she soon learned to value that high heart which was all her own, and from constant association with him, became his equal and companion. He guided her reading and studies, and made her an accomplished woman before she was eighteen. She looked up to him as a stout soul, on whose strength she depended; but in all that was pure, and gentle, and lovely, he worshipped her as a star of heaven.

Well, she was dying. It could not be denied or doubted. They all said so, and she said so; and she said it in those low, moving tones, that convinced all who heard it that that voice had already ceased to be of the earth. But it most of all convinced him, whose life seemed to hang on hers. He had knelt long at her bedside in silence, while his father wept and prayed and prayed and wept

by turns. Adam Pierson had not opened his lips for many hours, except to give directions at the door of the room, and then he spoke in a low tone of anguish which thrilled through the hearts of all who knew him; for Adam Pierson had been a somewhat stern man, and when agony was in his soul, they knew that his pride made it suffer the more.

The night struggled painfully along. It was bitterly cold, and the wind wailed out of doors around the old house, as if wild with frolic or madness. Never did its tones seem so cruel, so mocking. But Sarah, the gentle girl, who lay there pale and peaceful, awaiting the coming change, heeded it not, except to smile once and whisper, "Phil—dear Phil, you'll think of me when you hear the wind blow." But the stout man did not lift his head, only a convulsive sob shook his iron frame, and he was still again. Midnight had passed. The wind had lulled somewhat, and it seemed now, at times, as if it brought angel voices on its wings, now far, now near, now out on the plain, now on the hill-side, now in the branches of the old oak tree, now at the very casement of the sick girl's room, and then suddenly floating away, as if among the stars.

"Philip," said Sarah, in a low whisper. He rose and bowed his face to hers. "Philip, I am going from you I think. I must sleep. I cannot keep awake longer. This must be the sleep of death stealing over me, and I am dying. I shall not wake again, Phil dear, to put my arms around your neck; I shall not feel your kiss

again, nor look up trustfully into your eyes ever again. God will take me, Philip. I feel his arms drawing me closer to him now. I will not ask any promise from you. I only ask you to remember my grave. Come to it often, Philip, and oh, when darkness is around you, when the night of temptation comes, as I know it will come in your desolateness, after I am gone, come to my grave and kneel there and remember me. I am strong in the confidence of our love, and I know that, come what may, your strong heart will never burst these bands which I bind around it again, and yet again."

As she spoke these words she wound her arms around his neck, and kissed him twice, gently and fondly, and looked then into his eyes with a long gaze of devoted affection, and then continued in a lower and more broken voice, with frequent long pauses.

"Good-bye, good-bye; oh, what sad words now! Sometimes I think I can't be dying. I don't believe I am. I hear voices, Phil. Do you hear them? I am very, very sleepy. There, put your arms so—close around me—and lay your cheek close against mine, and I will go to sleep, to sleep forever—to sleep with all the dead. Is it daybreak yet? Oh, Phil, do you remember the Christmas morning two years ago? I wish—I wish—oh, I have so many wishes! Now I must sleep."

A few more words like these were murmured in tones scarcely audible, until her voice ceased, and her eyes closed, and her white cheek lay on the pillow, and Mr. Winter sobbed aloud, and falling on his knees prayed

God to give them all strength for that terrible blow. But the doctor alone stood firmly, only leaning a little forward, gazing intently at Sarah Pierson's face, and at length spoke in a few low words of holy writ, "She is not dead, but sleepeth."

The effect was magical. Philip sprang to his feet. The old man sank back in his chair, and the pastor knelt still by the bedside, with eyes fixed on the face of the girl, while he prayed that those hopeful tones of the good doctor might not be without reason. Three hours of anxious watching passed, and day broke on the country side. The Christmas sun was very bright and clear on the snow, but the sexton was not called that day to dig a grave among the drifts.

"Where am I?" asked the sick girl, as she awoke at length from the long and refreshing sleep.

"You are in a little heaven, my beloved," answered the low, glad voice of Philip Winter, as he sat on her bedside, and held her thin, white hand, "You are in a little heaven, since you have come back to us."

There was joy in the cottage of Adam Pierson that evening, and the Christmas fire blazed gloriously on the hearthstone, and the stars winked and blinked down the great chimney, as if the smoke was in their eyes, but didn't move any farther away, for they seemed to know there was great joy in the farm-house and around the hearth fire; and when the voice of Philip Winter was heard in a loud clear Christmas carol, they listened to it, and sent it echoing from one to another of them, until

verily it seemed to Adam Pierson and to Philip Winter, that night, as if the song of creation were renewed, or else the hosts of heaven were busy in welcoming again a star among their number, as on that night almost two thousand years ago.

But the voices of the wind seemed sad, and well they might be, for the angels had hoped to have another among them, and they were disappointed, and their sad voices floated all night around the house. But the happy ones within did not heed them; and as they threw new logs on the fire, and the sparks went dancing, and the blaze went floating up the chimney sides, the voice of Philip Winter grew clearer and gladder, and at length he broke out into a song of thanksgiving, which sounded through three or four doors, so that Sarah heard it where she lay, and smiled joyously in her mother's face, and then fell asleep, and dreamed of the little heaven that Phil had spoken of, in which his voice seemed that of a chief spirit.

And that house was a heaven for many a year. Adam grew older, and was gathered at length to the grave-yard among the hills. When the sun is at noon on Christmas day, the point of the shadow of the church spire is at the very head stone of his grave. Philip and Sarah were married, and to-morrow they will dine with us.

Lucy will be here with a party from the city, and we shall have a pleasant Christmas day. It is midnight, and I will rouse Joe from his reverie to wish him a merrie Christmas.

III.

The Bear Hunt.

IT would be easily gathered from the sketches of our past and present lives, which this volume will contain, that Willis and myself have little regularity of habits. To confess the truth, we have none. As the whim seizes us, we act, move, or sleep; and it is unusual to have a plan for more than a week in advance, and not very frequent for us to know what adventure the coming day is likely to find us engaged in. Our boat, the Phantom, lies at the wharf near the old hall, and our horses are in the stables. We cannot say whether, to-morrow morning, we shall be at sea in the Phantom, or on our way to the forest with the horses. Perhaps neither; for the notion may seize one of us to go to the city, and the other will infallibly consent, and we shall go together.

If at sea, Block Island, Newport, and Stonington are our post-offices, where we call for books and letters. If in the forest, we are at our cabin on the river bank, with Black for a host, and the winds for company. For there is no human residence within five miles of that cabin.

A more lonesome, yet a more beautiful place is not to

be found. A magnificent creek pours its deep current into a lordly river, at a point where the low, oak-covered shore on the one side, is forcibly contrasted with the high rugged mountain on the other. The roar of the river through the lower pass is constant, while immediately in front of the cabin it is as placid as a lake, slowly gliding toward its turbulent outlet. Here, for many years of our aimless, yet be it hoped not useless lives, we have passed much of almost every autumn and early winter, as well as some of the weeks in May and June. In this region the deer abound; the bear are not unfrequently venturesome; wolves have been shot, and smaller game of every kind are to be had for the seeking; while the creek is stocked with trout, such as would do old Izaak good to behold, and more good to feel on his line.

We have but recently returned from our usual autumn visit. We were at the cabin only three weeks, and had some bad weather. On the day of our arrival, Black told us he had seen a bear on the mountain, and we were off in the morning before daylight.

Thinking it dangerous work for the dogs, I chained Nora and John at the cabin, and determined to try the old plan of tracking the bear by his foot-prints. Not a very easy task in the forest, after the leaves have fallen, but not so difficult as it might at first appear.

We pushed across the river in the small canoe, and crossed the mountain; pausing on the summit, to watch the coming of the dawn.

It was a glorious sight, as the stately footsteps of the

day began to be visible in the east, calmly and steadily advancing into perfect light. The stars retired gracefully, one by one disappearing. Only one remained glowing in the flush of the coming sunlight, when we plunged into the forest.

Two hundred rods from the brow of the mountain was a hollow, with a swamp thicket in the centre, always wet, and usually producing a short, crisp, green grass, on which the white frost was plainly visible till the sun struck it. The slightest touch changed the silvery color of the grass to a dark watery black, and it was here that I expected to find traces of the game. Nor was I disappointed; for on entering the hollow, I saw before me the foot-prints of two bears, distinctly marked on the grass, going toward the thicket and not returning.

Between us and the swamp was a broad open space of fifty rods, across which they had passed. The first matter to be decided was, whether they had left the thicket on the other side, and if not, what was the best means of provoking them out of it, without exposing ourselves.

Leaving Joe at the point where we first saw the foot-prints, I went cautiously around the hollow, keeping under cover, until I had made a complete circuit of the swamp and was satisfied that we had run our game to cover without the slightest trouble. Accordingly I returned to the side of Joe, and we held a council.

If we should expose ourselves, the chances were in favor of the bears; for either both of them would show fight, or else both of them would run, and that doubtless

at the most distant point from us in the thicket. If we took opposite sides we should be sure to lose them, and our only hope was a stratagem of some sort.

"I say, Joe, what do bears eat?"

"Honey, Phil."

"Honey don't make a noise. Try again."

"Sheep; when acorns are scarce."

"Are you certain?"

"No, but I'll try it and find out."

"Ba—a."

The bleat was perfect, but might have answered as well for a doe as a sheep. It was very well, however, for we heard a crash in the thicket.

"That moved them. Now for our quarters."

Accordingly we each mounted a tree, one about sixty yards from the other, selecting them so small that a bear would not be likely to attempt to come up also, and yet stout enough to be a protection. Having safely braced ourselves, we commenced a duet, well calculated to cheat a bear if he wasn't uncommonly bright. A human being would unquestionably have taken us for sheep, whatever a sheep might have thought of it.

In a moment we saw the two bears coming along at a shuffling pace, at once ludicrous and astonishing. I never saw a bear move without being surprised at his velocity, and the noiseless manner in which he got along. An owl's hoot from Joe indicated that he saw them, and we suspended our calls.

At this moment two new actors entered the scene.

Nora and John had been taken out by Black to feed, an hour after we left, and in spite of all he could do, took to the water like fish, swam the river, and overtook us just in time to see the bears advancing. The latter no sooner saw the dogs than they paused, and, with a low snarl, seemed to be preparing to repay what they appeared to regard as a low piece of cheating. The idea of dogs imitating sheep, to cheat bears into the expectation of a good breakfast! and hounds too, thin as rails and perfectly destitute of fat! A dozen of them wouldn't make a comfortable meal for a cub; and here were two fellows, all bone and gristle, (as the bears soon learned,) that had deliberately led them into this disappointment!

But the dogs flew at them with very different sentiments, and Nora's broad breast and stout limbs soon convinced the one she seized that he had a job before him.

They shook the dogs off and rose on their haunches, back to back. The scene was comical beyond description. No one who has not seen a bear in this position can imagine the ludicrous imitation of humanity he presents. And here were two of them, braced firmly each against the other, looking gravely with their little sparkling eyes, at the dogs, and waving their paws with gestures of dissatisfaction, or warning, to their tormentors, that seemed clearly enough to advise them to keep a safe distance.

The dogs did n't take the hint. Nora sprang at the largest one, receiving a pat from his paw that only

changed the direction of her attempt, for she seized the ear of the other and tore it badly. The bear, enraged at the attack from the rear, which he supposed fully guarded by his companion, attributed the wound, of course, to that source, and wheeled instantly, and struck his ally a blow on the side of his head that might have felled a professional boxer. It did the business for the bear, for it laid him flat on the ground, and before he could recover himself, thanks to the teeth of John and Nora, he was minus an ear and the end of his nose, while his mate was making long strides for the woods beyond the hollow. The whole scene occurred out of rifle shot from us, and we were therefore silent witnesses of it; for though we had forsaken our trees, and were hastening to the rescue of the dogs, the whole affair had been so brief, that we were in sight of the bear only when he found himself deserted.

As he rose and freed himself from the dogs, he caught sight of us, and again rose on his haunches, waving his paws furiously as if to clear away a cloud from before his eyes, and assure himself that he saw correctly.

There could not be any mistake about it; he saw distinctly two specimens of the human sort, and this increased the vexation of his disappointment about the breakfast. But a bear is a wise animal, and discretion with him, in the present case, was decidedly the perfection of valor; and he incontinently exhibited to us a round ball of flesh growing smaller as it grew more distant: for a retreating bear looks like nothing but a black ball on legs. Joe sent a rifle ball after him, which

had the effect to make him turn his head and snarl at us, retreating steadily; and when he entered the forest there seemed little prospect of our finding him or his companion again that day.

The dogs would have followed him but for my sharp call, that brought them to our feet, and I was glad to find that they were not wounded by the fray.

The sun was now tinging the tree tops with that rich lustre of the autumn morning that seems to make more glorious the varied robe of the hills. The sky was clear and deep blue; the air was still and calm; the forest voiceless. There was not a sound to disturb the repose of all the world we could see around us.

That little world of ours was a pleasant one, after all. What more so? There was Joe Willis, the companion of a lifetime, and there were the good dogs that had been with us many a day like that, and there was the sky and the forest, the sun and the earth. To us a golden world, of calm and of joy; and within us there were a thousand happy thoughts. We might have seated ourselves on the grass, and talked the sun-light down the western sky with pleasant talk, nor grown weary, or wished for a change. Such is our forest life, and so full of enjoyment are all our days passed together.

We rested a few moments, and discussed some hard bread and dried venison for breakfast, while we arranged the proper plan for circumventing the bears.

About three miles from us was a deep hollow, or basin, in which the fallen trees lay as they had fallen for a

hundred years, and to which the sun-light scarcely penetrated through the overhanging branches of hemlock and pine. I had once before found traces of bears near this glen, but I had no notion of meeting one alone in its mazes; for it was a half hour's work to climb the fallen trees and get into the hollow, a piece of business very short to a bear. The chances were ten to one against a man with one bear there, and forty to one if he found two. But with two men the case was different, and the chances materially varied. I made up my mind that our friends had sought that cover, and Joe coincided with me in opinion. So we trudged along the oak opening to the brow of the hill, at the foot of which lay the basin; Joe all the way whistling cheerily, and occasionally singing a line of an old song, with a clear rich voice, that floated through the forest as you would have loved to hear it. He was silent as we approached the cover, and I crept to a rocky point overlooking the hollow, and laughed aloud in spite of myself at the curious spectacle presented below. The two bears were there, seated facing each other, and manifestly disputing. Whether the one was charging the other with cowardly desertion at a critical moment, or the other was justifying himself by accusing his companion of a dastardly attack in the rear, it was impossible to say, but there they were, snarling, growling, and gesticulating, as much like two politicians in a bar-room as brute animals could be.

Joe, seeing me laugh, approached and enjoyed the scene awhile. But now it became necessary to determine

on our course. Willis proposed to try the sheep again, and see if it would not scare them this time. If they left the hollow it could only be within near gun-shot of our stand. Accordingly he gave one faint bleat.

The effect in the hollow was electrical. One bear vanished under a pile of fallen trees, while the other came up the side of the ravine as rapidly as he could ascend.

Half way up the hill he was exposed to Joe's unerring aim, and a ball crashed through his head just under his eye.

"A little too low, Joe. Give him the next ball on his cheek, between the eye and ear."

"Give him your ball, Phil. I have forgotten to load my second barrel."

He had paused a moment, and now stood on the trunk of a tree, which he was crossing, when my ball met him. His hold loosened, and he fell back, and rolled a hundred feet down into the very spot where he had been standing with his companion.

"Now, Joe, about that other one. It is a clear case that we can't get this one's hide without a battle with the other. What say you?"

"I am ready. Let us load first."

We loaded both barrels, (we each carry a swivel breech rifle,) and began our perilous descent, in which a misstep or a stumble would send us into the embrace of an enemy that would have little mercy.

The bear continued under cover of the trees which lay

piled in the hollow, and it was a slow task to approach him, for we had to climb over masses of fallen timber, jump down into spaces between them, and climb again to the top of other masses, and so ascend and descend until we reached the spot.

As I sprang from a pile of trees, some ten feet high, into a square sort of enclosure, surrounded by similar piles, I was startled at a sharp, quick snarl, and out rushed the enemy tenfold more frightened than I was. He went up the breastwork of trunks like a cat. I sprang at him, but could only reach his hind legs with my knife, which I drew swiftly across them both, and effectually ham-strung him. At the same instant Joe gave him the ball from one barrel, within twenty feet of him, and he tumbled back into the enclosure, out of which I sprang as rapidly as he fell. Never were mingled pain and rage more thoroughly displayed. He gnashed his teeth and growled, and fairly howled with agony, while he tore the ground, bit the barks of the fallen trees, and even seized the stones in his mouth and crunched his jaws on them. Seven balls were necessary to quiet him. We shot always at his head, so as to preserve his skin as perfectly as possible; but it was not till half an hour had passed after the last ball was shot into him, that either of us ventured into the enclosure. Meantime, we had skinned the other and selected a few steaks; but there are only a half dozen pounds of meat on a bear fit to be eaten by any man, and those only when he is starving. We were not precisely starving,

but we were reasonably hungry. So we broiled the bear-steaks while they were warm, and ate them with salt and hard bread, and made a meal out of him. Then we skinned the other, and found our way back to the cabin with our trophies.

Such was one day at the cabin, and such was each successive day, until the storm came. Then we lay on our bear-skins before the fire and read all day long, or talked of other times and scenes, or told stories of the chase, or planned expeditions for the coming pleasant days. And in the evenings, when the night came down on the forest, as it never comes on the city, in majestic stillness; and calmly as a great thought of death or sorrow comes down on a strong soul; when the river's rushing along the lower pass was the only sound outside the doors, and the stars peered down our cabin chimney at our fire on the broad hearth; then we lay watching the flickering shadows on the walls, tapestried with the trophies of many a chase, and telling tales of childhood and youth; passing from memory to memory with thoughts as bright and as changeful as the firelight, until in the small hours after the noon of night, we would all lie sleeping on the cabin floor, a pleasant company of woodmen, scarcely to be recognized as the masters of the old hall in which we are now sitting. But so our lives vary.

IV.

Delirium Tremens.

ON the north side of the upper bend of the river, five miles from our cabin, was a log-hut occupied by a man who had lived a better life in his earlier years. He was sometimes peculiarly attractive in his manner of conversing about forest matters, and once when he was half drunk, I was quite sure I detected him muttering to himself one of the odes of Anacreon. I looked then closely at him; but he eyed me suspiciously, as I thought, and raised his voice so that I could hear him distinctly, but he was now talking English in his usual rough style and dialect. I might have been mistaken. He was a hard drinker, but perhaps never was actually drunk. He could drink more than any man I have ever known, without being on the floor, and yet when in that condition which was consequent on his potations, if not really drunk, he was usually insane, and it was dangerous to be in his neighborhood. These fits were periodical, but whether caused by his visits to the post-office being quarterly, at which time he carried down a canoe-load of skins, or whether he was able to restrain himself for

three months at a time, and then was impelled by his thirst to make the trip to the settlement, I am unable to say.

Such habits as these, it need not be said, would wear out the frame of a giant. Such indeed was his. He was at least six feet one inch high, and proportionally broad-shouldered and heavy-limbed. I have seen him shoulder two deer which must have weighed over two hundred and eighty (they were not very large ones) and carry them through the woods as easily as I would have carried one. Had you been with me that morning in the forest you would have shrunk as I did from the idea that that gigantic form could be in so short a time a handful of dust. Yet so it was, and I watched the struggle of the destroyer with the stout man as I never watched battle before. I need not tell you that the victory was complete at last; and when I took his brawny hand in mine there was no pressure, not the slightest touch of recognition, in the limb which had possessed the strength of Hercules.

It was a cold autumn night, the fifteenth of October. Black was sitting at the hearth, and heard a call on the opposite bank of the river. It was repeated, and the second cry, coming with a gust of wind that made a loud wail in the branches of the oak, woke Willis and myself.

It proved to be a neighbor of "Big Ben" (as he was called, although I believe his real name was unknown to any one). He had come down to beg some of us to go

up and see Ben, who, from his account, it appeared was laboring under one of his fits of insanity.

We went up, and found him raving in delirium tremens. To attempt any description of such a fit would be folly in me, and only disgust the reader. Those who have never seen the victim of such madness, can obtain from words no idea of the horror of the scene. It has always seemed to me to approach, nearest of anything earthly, to the agony of the damned. Ben continued in this condition, with intervals of stupid silence, until the day; alternately moaning in a low agonizing tone, and then shrieking until the forest in which his cabin stood, rang as if with the laughter of fiends. I stood outside of the door for an instant, and I believe I was actually scared at the unearthly sound that filled the air. Toward morning he appeared to be exhausted, and sank into a sort of stupor or sleep, from which it was impossible to rouse him.

I afterward learned that this was the fifth day of his madness, and was not surprised to see that he was nearly worn out. In the course of the day he was almost motionless, and it was only by the most powerful exertions that we could force anything into his mouth, so tightly were his jaws clenched. In the early part of the next night, I was sleeping on the floor not far from him, when I felt the grasp of his stout hand on my arm, and waking instantly, found his eyes wide open and staring fixedly at me. His grasp tightened until it was painful, and I confess to a momentary terror, but his eye had no madness

in it, and when not in the fits I have spoken of, Ben was a kind-hearted, and really gentle fellow.

"There, Ben, there; not quite so tight," said I mildly, laying my hand on his.

"I thought—it was you—choking—me," said he in a husky, broken voice, speaking with great difficulty.

"Why should I choke you, my dear fellow? You were dreaming. I'm glad to see you're awake."

"I say—Phillips, I'm not dreaming—and—I tell you—something's—on my throat—and—God! how it tightens."

He tried to raise himself from the floor, and succeeded at length. Reeling like a drunken man, he crossed the cabin to the water gourd, and taking it up in both hands guided it with difficulty to his lips and drank till it was more than half empty, then reeled back to the bed of skins again, and throwing himself down, commenced singing in a voice which, always good, was now uncommonly clear, an old mountain song; but before he had finished the first verse he paused, with an oath, cursing his throat, which was again parched with the raging fever that now had possession of him. Black, who had lain silent during all this, now came to his side, and I also took a seat on the bearskin which covered his bed.

"Ben, you're sick, do you know it?" said Black.

"Yes, yes, Black, I'm used up. I thought it would come to this at last. Every dog has his day, and I've had mine."

"Keep quiet, Ben, and we'll put you all right in a day."

"Don't you believe it; don't you believe it. I've had my last spree, and now comes the finishing."

I fancied I heard him muttering to himself something like a quotation from Scripture, but I couldn't detect it clearly. I had long looked with great interest on Ben, for he had a fine soul. I had met no less than three men in the forest who had been elegantly educated, and doubtless were valued members of society, who from some strange whim or misanthropy had taken to the wild life of the woods, and I was fully prepared to find that Ben was just such a man. I was therefore not surprised when he looked up at me and said, "Mr. Phillips, what do you think my old father would say if he should see me dying here? The old man thought me always a wild boy, and I have proved myself one, haven't I?"

"You're a long way off from dying, Ben."

"Not so long as you fancy. I've felt this day coming, and I remember when I was a boy I used to dream of just such a death as this will be. My father, he was a good old minister, used to say to me, 'Mend your ways, boy, mend your ways, or you'll repent some day in sorrow;' but I always laughed after he left me, sober as I was when I was with him. I couldn't bear to grieve him, for I did love him;" a pause, and he continued in a low tone, "Yes; I loved him and my mother. I remember now more than I ever thought I should. This life has pretty much spoiled my memory, but I see it all now. The old parsonage! It wanted paint more than the church did. Old Deacon ———, curse him, could have spared

paint from his hypocritical face, and enough to cover the church too. Ha, ha; the deacon had the worst of it that morning—I wish I could have seen the old man in his coffin though. I did'nt think that he'd die so very soon or I might have staid longer." And so he continued muttering sentences, by which I gathered that he had been the unruly son of a country pastor, educated with the usual care of a clergyman's children, but that one day after he had a quarrel with one of the officers of the church, his father had punished him severely, and he had that day left home and began the wandering life which ended in this cabin.

In the course of the next three days, in the delirium of fever, he spoke of scenes in many lands which convinced me he had been a traveller; and I gathered, too, that he had not always been without company; but whether the Lizzie of his dreams had been his wife or not, I could not determine. He spoke of her in tones of very deep affection, but as if he had wronged her and she had died. I do not wish to be understood as saying that he spoke of these touching memories in the way which would have been most fitting. On the contrary, he used the roughest language, not infrequently coupling the names of father and mother and Lizzie with oaths too shocking to be repeated. Yet there was a burst of agony occasionally which recalled the long-concealed emotions of his heart, in language such as he might have used in his better and more refined boyhood.

At the close of the third day he was speechless, and

evidently dying. Black, Winter, Smith, (from below,) Willis, and myself, took turns in watching by him, and at this time we were all with him.

His giant form was stretched out on the black skins, covered with blankets, and the long, separated heavings of his massive chest indicated that the breath of life came heavily and with pain. His large and muscular arms lay outside of the blanket; the hands were clasped together as if the dying forester were praying. I imagined him, however, then perfectly senseless. No prayer passed his lips, unless when for an instant his eyes opened and a faint motion indicated some unexpressed wish. The fire flickered on the hearth and cast a red glare on his marbling features. A cold, calm smile, more as of contented scorn than anything else, seemed to be settling on his face, but changed suddenly into a mournful expression, and as suddenly again to a look of relief from pain. (I wonder if a phantom had passed before his vision then!) These frequent changes of countenance continued for a long time, and I was watching them with anxiety, when he suddenly raised his right arm with clenched fist and held it for a moment in the air, dropped it on the blanket, rigid and motionless, then a shudder as of remorse or horror, passed through his frame, his lips quivered an instant, and then the fire light flickered on a changeless face. Willis, who had been standing at the foot of the pallet, with folded arms and fixed gaze, interrupted the solemn silence in the cabin with his deep-toned recitation, "*Requiem Eternam dona eis Domine.*"

We buried the woodman on the bank of the river, and carved a stone rudely with the sign of salvation, which appears to be the most fitting mark for the resting place of clay, whose only hope is in the cross.

I do not pretend to say what mercy the apostate boy found in his extremity, yet I humbly hoped that the prayers of a father and a mother, and mayhap of a dearer one than father or mother, might have been heard by the God who has promised blessings on the children of the righteous, and that the last motion of the hunter's lips was in a petition that found acceptance.

V.

Death of the Panther.

WILLIS and myself, after a long day's hunt, found ourselves fifteen miles from our cabin, and the night had set in with a tempest. But before it was quite dark, we had hunted the country round for a safe resting place, and had come to the conclusion that such an one was not to be found in the district. Ascending a high hill, and climbing to the top of a tree, Willis had seen smoke rising over the forest at not more than two miles distance in the North-West. The wind was North-West too, and it was cloudy, and occasional snow squalls chilled us; but, heading the wind, we hurried on toward the smoke. *Hurry* means something different in those wilds from what is ordinarily understood by it. A mile in three quarters of an hour is extraordinary travelling over fallen trees and through dense swamp thickets. A mile in two hours is often swifter than is either convenient or possible.

Darkness, dense and unwelcome, overtook us in the forest, and now we dared not trust the wind for our guide. We did not know North from South, and of course not

East from West; therefore, it was not safe to move a step after we lost the direction, nor when we found it again could we trust ourselves to keep it, for every one has heard of the tendency to go in circles, when one is lost in the woods.

After satisfying ourselves which was North and which South, by an examination of the bark of the trees, we proceeded on a plan which Joe and myself had frequently practised in similar cases. I would go on in the proper direction a hundred yards, and then shout. If I had pursued the right course, Joe would come up. If not, he, who had been standing facing the course, would direct me till I was due North-West from him, and then come up to me, walk directly past me, and I would face his course, and again set him right if he wandered, and walk up to and past him. So we kept on for another hour, and found we had not mistaken. A little to our right we saw through the forest a gleam of light, and Joe immediately said, "It must be the cabin of old Paint, the Indian. You know, Black said he lived about here, and this is on the bank of a stream, just as he described it."

So we approached, and were glad to obtain admission; for the wind was blowing almost a hurricane, and we had been forced to walk so slowly that we were chilled. "The Panther" was the English of the old Indian's name, and this had been shortened by the hunters to "Paint" (thus, Panther, Painter, Paint,) and he was distinguished from his son, who alone occupied the cabin with him, as old Paint.

He was emphatically *old*. Certainly not less than four score years and ten had left their marks on his dark forehead. There was no hair on his head. Even the scalp-lock was scattered on the winds of years ago! And that night the old man's pilgrimage was ended. The storms of a century had not bent his body; the clouds of a hundred years had not dimmed his eagle eye.

As we entered the cabin, he lay on a rude deer-skin couch, elevated some inches from the floor. His quick glance caught in an instant the features of our race, and the first words I heard, as the cabin-door swung on its rough hide hinges, were, "White men,—white men," muttered in a low tone to himself. I walked up toward him, and taking his hand in mine felt his pulse—for I saw at a glance that he was sick. But I could scarcely distinguish it, so very feeble was it. And as I looked in his eye I knew that he was beyond my skill, or help of man.

"Ha, Ha!" laughed the old man with a deep guttural laugh. "The Panther will not leap again, you think?" He had read my face, and I replied calmly, "I fear not, my old friend. Your life has been a long one, and somewhat adventurous I imagine. But you'll not have to struggle much longer."

In a little while we were lying asleep on the floor by the fire. It was after midnight when I awoke. The fire in the stone chimney was blazing brightly, and the whole cabin gleamed in the light. The younger Indian was standing by the side of his father, whose giant limbs were

straightened on his couch. I thought he was dead, and laying my hand gently on Joe, he started up and watched with me the scene. A moment undeceived us as to the old man's death, for his eye was flashing with the fitful glare that precedes the glaze of death. He spoke some words occasionally in a low and distinct voice, and to my surprise used the English language instead of the musical dialect of his nation. I soon saw that his mind was wandering among the scenes of years long gone, and that he fancied himself sitting by the fire and telling to his son the stories of hard-fought fights and the golden days of his tribe. There was one eloquent story that I gathered from his broken English, wherein he told his son of the manner in which he first met and carried off his mother. Then he spoke of her. "The Fawn," I believe, was the translation of the name he gave her, and his eye flashed vividly as he recounted her beauties and his love. It is not strange that that early love of the heart should come back, as it so often does, when the dim eye is brightening with its last light. It is not strange that the freshest fountains the heart has ever known in its wastes, should bubble up anew when the life-blood is growing stagnant. It is not strange that a bright memory should come to a dying old man, as the sunshine breaks across the hills at the close of a stormy day; nor that in the light of that ray, the very clouds that made the day dark, should grow gloriously beautiful.

"Air, air! I can't breathe," moaned the dying warrior. His son stalked to the door, threw it wide open,

and returned to his statue-like position by the side of his father. Turning on his side the old man looked out of the door. The moon had risen, and the clouds were gone, and the stream was brawling aloud to the wind, which was even wilder than in the early evening. I saw the moon-beams glancing on the water-fall before the door, and the old man saw it too and smiled. I saw that smile stealing across his face, and, the flickering fire-light perhaps deceived me, but I was certain that it was a bitter smile before it left his rugged countenance. Perhaps the memory of a boyhood in the forest, of a seat by the brookside with an Indian girl, of a gay glad heart, gave place to memories of a race that passed away like the dreams of that childhood, of a life that was closing among scenes unworthy the Panther warrior of the Mohawks.

At length he spoke; and now in the low musical language of his earlier years. I could understand but a word here and there, and the son afterwards translated for me the last words of his father:

"I have no song to sing, my son. My life has been like yonder stream, flowing along in darkness and over rocks and down steep hill sides. Once, only once, there was a bright still place in its current, like yonder place where the stream rests awhile in the moonlight, before the door, and then falls over the rocks again, and passes on in the forest.

"I will tell The Fawn that her son lingers yet on the river bank, and sometimes we will come to the cabin and talk with him. The snow is deep on her grave by the

shore of the great lake. I will go there and see it before I go to the great council of our tribe up yonder! The winds moan over her. The waves dash up about the mound. I built it high. I dug her grave deep—deep—deep."

His voice ceased suddenly, and he lay motionless, looking up at the rude covering of the hut. After some time, seeing that he was silent, I turned over and slept till daylight. We then rose, and walking across the cabin found that he was sleeping, and left him thus. He never spoke again. Before that night he had joined his fathers.

I have fancied a scene in the hunting grounds of his tribe that day. There was a gathering in a lofty lodge, where the old chieftains sat in solemn council. And, at a moment of silence, a shout was heard without, and all eyes were turned toward the entrance. A hand thrust aside the deer-skin that hung across it, and the giant form of the Panther stalked across the ring, and took the seat which had been left vacant for the last great chief of the Mohawks.

VI.

Ghosts in the Hall.

AMONG our favorite friends we number the family of Mr. B——, who is the near neighbor of Mrs. ——, (our Lucy,) in the city, and who, with all his house, is ever welcome at the Hall. For a week past they have been with us, and the house has been unusually gay. The morning breaks with the shouts of children on the lawn, waking up the sun, whose face, peering over the park trees, they love to see, unused as they are to look on him smiling so gloriously; and the whole day long they shout around the halls as freely as if in the woods. For somehow they do not seem to have the fear of Willis or myself before their eyes, but greet the appearance of either of us with new vociferations of delight.

Tom, the oldest boy, is a rare genius. He is at home from school in the autumn holidays, and takes pleasure in showing the acquirements of his schooling. These consist chiefly in those departments of which he ought to be entirely ignorant, and it is already manifest that he is much keener at a practical joke than a verse in Virgil, and can see much farther into the mysteries of fun and frolic than into equations or conic sections.

We mounted him between us for an afternoon ride, and thinking him a novice, Stephen the groom gave him Bright, Lucy's gentlest horse, and added all sorts of cautions as to his management of the check rein. Imagine our astonishment at seeing the boy lift the horse at the park hedge, instead of taking the avenue gate, and wave his cap at us as he cleared it and dashed off for the village, where we found him half an hour later, bargaining with Hugh Stimson, the landlord at the tavern, for a pair of setter pups, that he values at about ten times their worth. Joe couldn't have the heart to scold the boy, but I threatened him so sincerely, that he rode home by my side very demurely; only once managing, instead of riding around a drove of sheep as Joe and myself did, to involve himself in the centre of the drove, and commence a series of curvets, to the terror of the owner and the hopeless dispersion of the sheep. It was impossible to blame the boy, for he had managed it so adroitly as to throw all the fault on the drove, and claim all the credit to himself of his extrication without accident.

"Mr. Phillips, wasn't that well done now?" said he, with a face full of fun.

"Capitally," said I, with a face as full of seriousness as I could make it; "but look out next time, my boy, or Mrs. —— will not be apt to trust you with Bright again."

This intimation served to quiet him for the rest of the ride, but when we reached home, he was full of accounts of the wonderful things he had seen and been a part of,

to the gaping mouths and eyes of his beautiful little sisters, who are as full of fun as he, but not so free and easy with it.

The dinner bell interrupted his stories; but after dinner he got them into a corner, and when their bed time came, he was holding forth in so loud a voice that I, who had been attracted to listen by the open eyes of little Lucy, heard something about a monster that haunted the park, which he had caught sight of, and which he warned them would catch them if they ever went out of reach of call from the house, or ventured ever to tell their mother what he had told them.

So little Lucy and her twin sister Maria, or Ryrie, as she is called, went trembling up stairs to their room, which was across the hall from Tom's, and whether they went to sleep or not, depended much on the firmness of their little brains to expel unpleasant fancies.

At all events, by eleven o'clock, Joe and myself were alone in the library; and the old house was quiet, while we smoked and chatted before the fire.

Just at that hour a scream rang through the house to the very cellars, and we sprang to our feet as the library door opened, and the kitchen servants rushed in en masse, led by the coachman, and backed up in the rear by Anthony. The cook was as blue as blanc mange, though rather darker, and she spoke first.

"If you please—Mr. Joseph, Mr. Philip, the—the—the devil's here sure—I saw him myself."

"What does he look like, Susan?"

"He had horns, sir; and was black, sir; black as—as —as Stephen, sir."

"Yes sir," broke in Stephen, without in the least resenting the odious comparison; "and he had claws, sir."

"Ah—claws—a new feature in the prince of darkness. Did you ever hear of his scratching any one, Philip?"

"Can't say that I have, Joe; but let's inquire about this. Anthony, what does all this mean?"

"Don't know, sir. I didn't see anything of it. We were going up stairs, Stephen ahead, and Susan next, when Susan screamed and fell against Henry; and that knocked us all in a heap; and the light went out, and they all rushed in here."

"Well, keep quiet awhile, all of you, and we'll see what's going on up stairs."

I accordingly ascended the staircase very cautiously, without a light, but found all quiet above; and, returning, sent the servants to their rooms; and the hall again sank into stillness, and Joe and myself resumed our conversation.

Fifteen minutes afterward I heard a queer sound on the second floor, and stole out and up the staircase. The moon was past the full, and shone in at the large bow window, lighting the broad hall so that everything was distinctly visible. On the walls hung the trophies of many a chase, and in the dark oak cases were many rare and curious specimens of birds and fish, and strange products of many lands. But in the centre of the hall, on the billiard table, was an object of considerable inter-

est that puzzled me not a little. It seemed to be a bear, but had the horns of a stag, and withal it was very industriously poking a long Spanish lance at the door of the room in which the children, Lucy and Ryrie, were sleeping. From their room proceeded, as yet, no sounds; but a moment after my head rose above the level of the hall floor, I heard their door latch move, and the lance was suddenly withdrawn, while the bear or nondescript animal retreated into the bright moonlight in the centre of the table. Little Lucy opened the door, and put her head out. I intended to step forward quickly enough to prevent the fright which I feared would ensue; but the little fairy, before she looked around the hall, caught sight of my face. I winked, and she saw me; for she was close by the head of the stairs, and it was very light; and the next moment I pointed toward the billiard table. The little one was as strong-minded as a woman, and saw at once that there was some hoax in the bear-skin. She turned back, and calling Ryrie to her aid, the two rushed out together; sprang on to the table; one seized the horns, and the other the bear skin, and exposed poor Tom to the moonlight, utterly discomfited. Ryrie seized the lance, and drove him to his room at the point of it, while little Lucy rushed to the head of the stairs to kiss me, and Joe who by this time had come up to investigate the racket, which had already caused the other doors to open, and woke the whole family to see the little fairies flitting about in the moonlight.

All was soon quiet and we returned to the library, and

when the clock was lifting its two hands wearily and imploringly, as if fatigued with its twenty-four hours labor, Joe rose from the large chair, in which he had dozed since the occurrence up stairs, and lazily striding back and forth across the floor, demanded of me somewhat as follows:

"Philip, do you believe in ghosts?"

"Firmly, Joseph."

"Did you ever see one?"

'Once."

"When, where, and how?"

"In Princeton. The ghost sat in my old rocker, while I was lying on the bed. I awoke and the ghost looked at me, smiled, lifted his hand, and when I moved slowly disappeared."

"Were you sick?"

"As well as I am now."

"Do you believe that ghosts are ghosts, or only spectral illusions?"

"I don't recognize the distinction. My eyes are given me to see with, and if my eyes tell me I see anything, you may argue with me till you are tired, and I will believe my eyes first. Beside all that Joe, you believe in ghosts, and so does every one else. I never saw a man or woman yet, that was perfectly certain he or she would not see a ghost in any dark night, especially in the neighborhood of a graveyard or the scene of a murder. And you, with all your coolness, never yet went across the screaming hollow, without a firm conviction that before you

reached the village you would hear the dead man's yell, or see him with his bleeding throat."

"Phil—don't talk in that way, it makes me uncomfortable."

"I told you so, Joe. You can't even hear ghosts talked about at this time of the night with any degree of comfort, and if you should hear a strange sound now, you would possibly be scared like a child."

"Bah, Phil; not so bad as that. But, hark——what was that?"

It was a low moan, and it was repeated—a long groan, ending in a broken wail. I have seldom heard a sound more thrilling. Joe looked at me for a moment imagining that I was making the noise to frighten him. But, seeing my undisguised look of astonishment, he sat down to listen for a repetition of the sound.

It came. A moan of exhausted agony, and apparently under our library window. I sprang to it and threw up the sash and dashed the shutter open. The cause was manifest now. Under the window lay John, the finest dog in the kennel, lifting his keen eye to me, as I looked out, and expressing a mournful joy that he had succeeded in attracting attention. I sprang out of the window and lifted him in to Joe, who took him in his arms and carried him to the wolf-skin rug before the fire.

The dog had been ill for several days, but we had not thought him seriously so. It was evident now that he was dying; and, for the memory of old days in the forest and a hundred gallant chases, we loved the dog as one of

ourselves. He was, among other dogs, like one of a race of kings. I never knew how old he was, but his teeth indicated that he had gnawed a great many bones. He was shivering with cold, and we wrapped him up in a pile of clothing, and poured some brandy down his throat. Perhaps it was as bad for him as it sometimes proves to be for others less sensible than he, for though he acknowledged with a smile of his fast dulling eye the kindness which he knew was meant, he nevertheless dropped his head feebly on the rug, and slumbered his life away in fitful dreams. Occasionally he languidly opened one eye and smiled at Joe, and at length shivered, and stretched himself out, so as to lay his head at the feet of Willis.

"John," said Joe, but the dog was still. It was the first time he had refused to obey that voice, and of course he was dead.

"Phil," said Joe, at length, "the dog was true in death, as he has been in life. I think he would have lived under the window till daylight, if only for the sake of seeing us once more before he died. Let him lie there till morning. We will bury him kindly, near Leo. Hark! What was that? This is a night of strange sounds."

He threw up the window again, and we heard with singular distinctness and clearness, coming up from the village church, four miles off, the sound of the passing bell.

It had not reached the first pause, and so we listened and counted; ten, twenty, thirty, and so on up to sev-

enty; and then, as if it were difficult to number those weary, later years, the old bell sounded heavily three. Seventy three! There was but one man in the neighborhood that numbered so many years, and we knew, therefore, that Solomon Pierson had gone to his reward.

With no slight emotion we closed the window, and began to talk of him and his cotemporaries, who had been the elders of the country since we were boys, and whose histories belong to this record as part of the history of our younger years, and of the families we knew and loved. These old men had been our friends and counsellors, and we had been taught to respect them, and to love them, from our earliest recollection.

Some of the pleasantest and most distinct pictures which we now recall, are of scenes in the old church, that stands yet among the hills at the end of the long village street, surrounded by the graves of three generations. Of these pictures and scenes I shall have occasion to speak in another part of this volume.

There was old John Maclean, with his stern eyes and gaunt frame, and William Denton, with bent shoulders and trembling gait, but a kindly smile on his lip; and there were a dozen others whose faces awed us on a Sunday morning, with their calm solemnity.

Solomon Pierson was the brother of Adam Pierson, the tenant and owner of the Hickory Glen farm; and as we talked of him we remembered the reverence with which we looked up to the old men who preceded him in the elder's pew in the church, and one by one they re-

turned to us as vividly as if their ghosts had come to the old library in which they had often been seated while they lived, seeking advice on earthly matters from Judge Willis, while he as eagerly sought from them the words of spiritual advice which their experience fitted them well to give.

Chiefest in dignity of character among those old men was Simon Gray, and we talked long of him before we slept. And after Joe had sought his room, and the company which always visits him in dreams, I lay awake and remembered him. There came across my half-sleeping vision a picture of the old church, its square pews and round pulpit, and high sounding-board; and the old minister, and the upturned faces of the elders on his right; and then I saw Simon Gray's calm features, speaking, in their serene quiet, all the holy thoughts that filled his soul; and then I heard the old man as on a bright summer Sabbath morning, well remembered through the long, long years, when, the precentor being absent, he took his place, and in a voice whose very age and feebleness made it musical, sang the sublime words of David to the sublime notes of Luther.

It was then that, like a flash of lightning, the truth came into my soul that Simon Gray was dead 'in the long gone years,' and his grave was green in the valley yard a score of summers ago. "Poor old Simon Gray," said the silent thought in my heart. "Rich old Simon Gray," said the heart, responding, for he went to a lordly mansion and countless treasures.

One passage in the history of Simon Gray I most love to recall. It was on the evening of that same bright Sabbath of which I spoke, that the old man left his home to go down into the hollow and attend a prayer-meeting in the red school-house, which was appointed for "early candle-light."

You might have seen the evidence of the appointment under his arm; for the package which he had there contained neither more nor less than two antique silver candlesticks, a wooden block with a hole in it, and three of his daughter's best dipped candles. The candlesticks and two of the candles were for the desk, where the minister would sit if he came, and the block of wood and the other candle were for his own use, as he should stand up and hold the psalm-book in the one hand, and the candle in the other, and should lead the little assembly in a song of praise.

He was a noble man, and that was a picture worthy a master hand, as he stood on the brow of the hill, and the sun's red rays flushed his grand features. Tall once, but considerably bowed by age, he seemed to have a right to stand on the brow of a hill and look at the world and the sky. His face was a study. It possessed all the noble features of a long and pure line of ancestry, for Simon Gray was of good Scotch blood, and his genealogy he could trace from the Comyns on the one side, and the Douglasses on the other. There was a look of modesty in his noble features. Irreverent as it may seem, I shall nevertheless not be misunderstood by those who remem-

ber their childish impressions, when I say, that until I was six or seven years of age, I involuntarily associated those features with all my ideas of the Deity; and I believe I had some help from that childish profanity in subsequently getting a faint idea of the good and great God, and of his benevolence and justice.

He stood on the hill and looked into the valley below. For sixty years of manhood, and for eighty years of life, he had not been away from that valley in heart. He had travelled, visited many parts of this country and the homes of his fathers in old Scotland, but he had returned with never-faltering and always willing steps, to the old house on the Eastern slope of the hill, and each time had come back with grateful love of his home. Forty years ago he had been one of a long procession that went down the hill and into the churchyard at its foot; and never a day since then, had he crossed the hill-top without pausing as now, and seeing plainer and plainer each year as his eyes grew dimmer, the long sad line, and the grave-mound singled out of all the crowd under which *she* slept. *She*—oh, she was dear to him, and yet, yet dear to his old heart in the memories of a golden life. He had won her in her fair young girlhood. She had slept on his bosom for twenty years, and it was harder than the idlers around him dreamed, to lay that darling head, yet loaded with brown tresses, on the ground for a pillow, and cover her over with damp sods. He shuddered as she lay there, calmly and profoundly asleep, and he shuddered one instant now, as he stood on the

hill-top and looked down at her grave, and thought of the dark night that was coming; and how she was to lie out there all night, cold and cheerless, under the damp dews and the stars. But the next instant a smile stole over his face, and he lifted his hat from his head, and his long gray hair straggling down his shoulders, gleamed for a little like waves of light, as he bowed his head and prayed aloud.

That was the scene which comes now to my recollection as freshly as of old. I was walking homeward from the house of a sick neighbor of the old elder, and my feet made no noise, as I came over the hill behind him. His form stood out against the sky as I came up the hill, and when I approached him he was uttering in a clear voice some sublime petitions. Sublime, because they were uttered where nothing was between them and heaven. I know they were heard and answered. I knew that the sun-light would no more certainly come back on the morrow, than would those answers return into the old man's heart; and from that hour to this, I have regarded that valley as holy ground, and I have never entered it without the feeling that I was entering a hallowed atmosphere, and the wild flowers gathered there seem to me redolent to-day of the old man's blessing.

Simon Gray died not very long after that. He was buried in the churchyard by the side of his wife. The stone which records her name, says she was but thirty-six when she left him, while that which stands at the head of his long grave, tells the curious reader that he was

eighty-one. But again we are thankful that they measure not years as we do, in the land of their present abiding, and I am confident that they often stand together now on some hill-top of that country, and look with earnest, gentle eyes down into the valleys of this. And of a summer morning when the church-bell is tolling across the hollow and up the hill sides near their old home, I sometimes stand on the spot where I saw the old elder standing in that summer evening light, and feel a rushing tenderness come over me, a spell of holy influences, softening and soothing and blessing me; and at such moments I cannot doubt that he is looking down on me with his dear old looks of love!

VII.

The Cruise of the Phantom.

"WHERE'S the wind, skipper?" asked the Doctor, lifting his head above the companion-way, and gazing with half open eyes toward the fly which was hanging motionless from the slender topmast.

The skipper was myself; the hour, two o'clock; the night, starry and still. The watch had been a stupid one, and I was half dozing as I lay on deck, wrapped in a large coat, on which the mist of the night had settled in great drops.

"No wind yet, Doctor; but this is the third day of calm, and we must have a breeze soon. Turn in again, and I will call you at daybreak."

The doctor's head vanished, and I was again alone. But now somewhat aroused, I paced the deck awhile, turning over in my mind a thousand fancies about the night, and the ocean, and the stars; watching the light of Montauk over the starboard quarter, and the various lights in the northern horizon, and waiting anxiously for the wind that should carry us out of sight of them all.

At length Watch Hill winked once or twice when it

should not;—and Stonington, which ought to be stationary, vanished and re-appeared, and vanished again. The signs were good. A half hour later, the mist on my forehead felt cold; and as I lifted my wet finger in the air, I felt the coming breeze. Calling Dick, who lay coiled under the foresail, we got up the canvas, and as the boom swung off, its heavy creaking ceased, and deeper sleep than ever fell on the closed eyelids in the cabin.

Now came the breeze out of the nor'-west. Light at first, but steady, and steadily increasing. She drew slowly through the water for awhile; but the ripple around her bow increased in music; and at length she sprang off like a bird that knew her course, and was glad to be away on it.

There was now some pleasure in that lonesome watch; in standing at the tiller, and guiding that beautiful craft, with its precious burden, out into the great sea. How she leaped through the water—how like a living being she breasted the waves! Now the foam flew from her weather bow. Now the green curl of the wave was above the lee rail as she rushed along. We were away at last, and the gallant little craft seemed to feel, with us, the desire to lose sight of land and be out in the blue waters of the Atlantic.

Five hours later, as she dashed through a huge wave, and swung down the side of the next one, I heard a sudden crash below deck, and forthwith the head of the Doctor again emerged from the forward hatch. Never was

surprise more clearly depicted on any countenance. One moment he glanced around at the horizon, failing in that view to catch the dim line of Block Island in the northwest, and then broke forth his exclamations: "*Eheu me miserable*—oh, Joe—Joe Willis—oh, Philip, my boy—where away is the land, Phil? Only look, boys—come up here, will you now!"

"How can we get up, Doctor, when you fill the hatchway?" said the voice of Joe underneath; and at the same instant the Doctor, impelled by some force invisible to me, was suddenly elevated to the deck, and into the lee scuppers, where he lay in astonished silence. Before he had time to recover himself, I seized the excellent chance offered me, and letting her fall off the least bit in the world, brought her up again, and, by the movement, brought the Doctor, puffing and blowing, in a flood of clear green water, aft almost to my side, when he seized the lee shrouds, and broke forth again in lamentable howlings.

Joe was, by this time, standing on the weather rail, holding by the foremast stays, swinging to the swing of the sea, his hair flowing out on the wind, his eyes full of life and fun, and his voice helping the Doctor's laments. The latter soon found his way forward and below deck; and the former came aft to relieve me at the tiller.

It was a glorious day. The white caps of the waves gleamed around us, and the sea danced with delight as the wind flew over it. I threw off my coat. Peter and

Dick cleaned the deck, and brought up the cushions. The little silver bell in the cabin announced that the ladies were ready to see us, and I sent Dick below to invite them up.

A pleasant group we were on the deck. There was Mrs. ———, (our Lucy,) and her friend, Miss ———, in their gay morning dresses; Mr. ———, (the excellent protector of Lucy;) Joe Willis, in his sea toggery; the Doctor, (in dry clothes,) and myself, holding the tiller. Peter and Dick stood near the mainmast; and my man Bob, with his ally Henry, (blacker than himself,) came aft with coffee, and to express his usual morning anxieties about the health of the ladies.

Such was the party; and the Phantom was away for the blue water.

We were off for a cruise. That expressed about the whole story. No one of us knew exactly where we might be in forty-eight hours, and I cannot say that any of us cared; for we were pleasure seekers, drifting about the ocean of life, waiting for breezes when it was calm, and longing for gales when the breeze blew.

"Philip, how does she head?"

"East by north half-north, Doctor."

"That would take us to the channel, wouldn't it?"

"Wind and weather permitting, somewhat to the northward of that."

"Keep her so then."

"Doctor, when did you turn sailor," asked Mrs. ——— with a laugh.

"Two hours ago madam. Mr. Phillips, yonder, let me into the secret of it, and I am a perfect old salt."

The ladies looked up for an explanation, and Joe Willis gave it, finishing by rising from the deck and relieving me at the tiller, while I took my coffee and biscuit.

While we were sitting thus, pleasantly talking, Mr. ——— very quietly observed to his lady wife, that he saw a fish leap clear of the water and exhibit his whole length against the sky, and what seemed to him strange, it looked as if he caught a smaller fish in the air.

"Where away was he," exclaimed Joe and myself in a breath.

"I don't know exactly what you mean by where-away, Philip,' said our innocent friend.

"In which direction was the fish?"

"Oh, that's what you mean by where-away, is it? Well, upon my word one learns something everywhere. Joseph, do you know ——"

"John, where was that fish?" interrupted Joe, impatiently.

"In the air, I told you, and that's what seemed so singular. I shouldn't have noticed ———"

"John, my dear fellow, will you do me the favor to point the forefinger of your right hand in the precise direction in which you saw that fish?"

"Certainly, Philip, with pleasure, my boy. I should say about so."

"Three points on the weather-bow. We've run a half mile since he saw it. Dick, run up the weather-shrouds

and see if you can make a sword-fish anywhere on the starboard bow."

"Sword-fish!" exclaimed a half dozen voices.

"They're ugly customers, those sword-fish," added the Doctor, composedly to the ladies. "Run their swords through a ship's side any day and sink her in a twinkling."

"Philip—Joseph—You don't intend to fight with sword-fish, do you?"

"Quietly, quietly, my child. You know you promised to trust yourself entirely to Joe and me on this cruise; and as to sword-fish, they're as harmless as minnows."

"I believe you, Phil," said Lucy, relapsing into her usual calm demeanor, while Joe and myself prepared our tackle.

A stand on the end of the bowsprit with a semi-circular iron brace or support, was always rigged on the Phantom when at sea, and from this the harpoon is thrust, (not cast.) We use generally about a hundred fathoms of line, and a bushel basket for a drag. We preferred the old harpoon, until we found one with a loose hinged barb that we now use altogether. A rod fifteen feet long, for a handle, completes the equipment.

The habits of the fish are singular. He usually swims on the surface of the water with his long black fin out, and when he sees a schoal of fish he makes a dash among them, piercing more or less with his sword, with a precision and skill incredible to one who has not seen it. I have often heard those claiming to have been eye-witness-

es, affirm that the sword-fish will chase a small fish until he leaps into the air, and following him, will pierce him in the air, with unerring aim. I have never seen it, but I do not doubt the statement. John thought he saw the same in this instance.

"Port a little, sir," shouted Dick from the main top.

"Do you see him?"

"Aye, aye, sir; about a quarter of a mile off, right ahead now."

"How is he heading?"

"Right across our bow, and swimming fast too. Keep her so, sir, and you'll see him."

I took the helm while Joe went forward to the stand across which he had lashed the harpoon handle. The Doctor and Mr. ——— with the ladies, leaned over the rail, and looked out to see the sport. Joe caught sight of him as he took the stand.

"Keep her away a little, Phil."

"So it is."

"Steady so; he's luffing now. There he turns! Do you see him? Now he goes like lightning! Keep your eye on him, Phil; he'll cross under the stern."

"All hands to wear ship," I shouted, as his black fin shot by the quarter; and we came around, the boom flying across with a jerk that shook the Phantom from stem to taffrail. You can never approach a sword fish, except in the rear; and if he is still in the water, you can run him down before he will start. He was now almost to windward of us, but I could lie up nearly to

him, and spring my luff just enough to bring Joe over him.

He leaned forward, with his harpoon ready; and as she sunk on the long sea, he buried the iron in the fellow's back, drawing back the handle, and throwing it on deck to Bob, who stood ready to catch it. You could see but a twinkle of the fish's tail as he went down, and the line flew out. But, long before he had drawn half the line out, he was on the bottom, and he had a heavy pull at the cord before Dick threw the basket over. This he did at length; and we cruised about it for a while, until it was motionless on the water, and we then hauled it in again. A long and steady pull brought the fish up alongside; and, fortunately, Joe had struck him so well that he did not need lancing. We rigged a block and tackle, and hoisted him in on deck, where he afforded amusement to the ladies for an hour, and afterward satisfied the hunger of all who chose to cut from him as he lay on the wharf at Newport; for the next day we were in that harbor.

The day wore on. We lunched at noon, and dozed away the afternoon, till Bob and Henry announced dinner, which we discussed with appetites unknown on shore. There was a grand plate of soup that Bob extracted from the last terrapin left in the larder. There were sea bass that we had caught the day previous, as we drifted southeast of Montauk; and a blue fish that Dick had hooked as we ran by Block Island. Item, a slice of sword fish, by no means unpalatable. Then there was a cold chick-

en, and a cold ham, and a cold shoulder of lamb, and a half dozen of the finest woodcock you ever saw, broiled to perfection. A capital steward is Bob, unequalled on salt water, and on land only equalled by Anthony. But why waste time in describing these small affairs?

Only because those small affairs are just what make up our every-day life. We live so quietly, with so little knowledge of the storms and calms that alternate in the busy world; so far removed from convulsions of moral or political society, that the small incidents of other men's existence are the marks of our passage through life. Not that we are epicures, and care for our bodies more than we should, for none more despise the effeminacies of life than do we; but in place of measuring time by clocks and dials, we measure it by incidents, and the day is divided into "before and after dinner," as the dinner is divided into "before and after fish."

And after all, who dare call anything a trifle in this world, or this age of the world? When thrones are supported by straws that are blown away by the breath of the great people when they shout; when empires are founded in a day, and kings dethroned in a night; who shall call those things trifles, which may have weight in the scale of the destiny even of one human being?

That dinner was an epoch. The doctor and Miss —— had cause to remember it. For the doctor was full of fun, and Miss —— uncommonly grave. I fancied the roll of the vessel had something to do with it, but this

she stoutly denied. At length, however, she went on deck, and the doctor accompanied her.

The rest of the party remained below, talking for an hour or more, and then adjourned into the clear air. It was a night of nights. The sun was gone, and the moon just rising in the east, seemed to have paved with gold the track across the sea, by which her radiant messengers might come to us. The stars were full of delight, and the sky was like a memory of childhood, full of holy places of joy and purity, and indescribable beauty. The sea was alone restless, and now we fancied we could hear the moaning of the surf on the shore; but that could not be, for it was a hundred miles away.

The Doctor was seated on the taffrail; Miss —— lay on the deck, wrapped in a couple of boating-coats that entirely protected her from the dew.

And here, perhaps, I ought to pause to sketch for you her character who was the pet of our whole party. But you will take the whole sketch in a few sentences. She was young, bright-eyed, full of life and joy, as beautiful as a maiden need be, and as lovely as ever maiden was. A *protegée* of Lucy, she was much like her in her winning ways, and when our party was made up the summer previous, she had been its star. We could not go without her this time, and matronized by Mrs. —— she was safe in the company of a trio of bachelors, none of whom were ever suspected of special devotion to ladies.

But the Doctor was lost. It was not deniable, and he confessed it frankly by every act.

A smile stole over the face of Mrs. —— as she saw them on deck, and I turned to look at the vision of loveliness encased in rough coats, with an oil cloth cap on her head, more lovely by the odd costume.

"Phil," said the Doctor gravely to me, "I want to speak a word with you."

The Doctor was not apt to be serious, and I was surprised; but walked forward with him and listened.

"Miss —— is far from well. I don't know whether you have observed it, but her eyes look badly, and her face is decidedly bilious."

"Upon my word, Doctor, I thought she never looked so well in my life; and her face—you don't call that yellow, do you?" and I glanced at the white, fairy-looking creature, as she lay with her head supported on her elbow looking toward us.

"All moonlight, Phil—nothing else. I assure you she ought to be on shore; and if you'll take my advice you'll bear up for Newport."

"If you think so really, my dear fellow, I will do it by all means. It is only changing the course. I suppose no one on board cares where we are to-morrow, though we haven't much Newport toggery among us. But the ladies' trunks are there by this time, and Miss ——'s father and mother are there, I believe."

"Take my advice, Philip. You'll not regret it."

"So be it, then," said I; and walking aft I directed Dick to change her course gradually, and as the wind was now steady from the southward, he eased off the

main-sheet little by little, and it was not till we had to turn around to look at the moon that any one noticed that we were standing northward. Then she jibed, and the boom went over with a crash, and then she slipped along through the water with the wind free; and so the evening passed into the night. One or two pleasant songs were sung by Joe Willis in his clear, rich tones, and he and Lucy sang a duet which, I confess it, brought tears into my eyes; for it was a song of long ago, one of the dear old songs that she loved—she that heard it that night from her home among the stars, and blessed us as we floated on and sang!

Then came sleep—sweet sleep on the mother-like breast of the ocean—and when the gray dawn came into the east, Point Judith was well off on the larboard bow, and we were running up the bay with a ten-knot breeze blowing.

"Miss ———, I am really happy to see you looking so well this morning," said I, as the ladies came on deck.

"Me—why—there's surely no reason why I should not look well, is there?"

I glanced at the Doctor. He was silent. Miss ——— questioned him. He maintained an imperturbable calm, which certainly puzzled me.

That evening explained it. I was sitting on the piazza of the Ocean House, when Mr. ——— approached, and begged the favor of a little consultation with me, which of course I cheerfully accorded. The Doctor had offered

his fortune and himself, and referred the father to me to advise him as to the extent of the one, and the character of the other.

My first impulse was to play the Doctor a trick, for the one he had played on me. But the matter was too serious, and there was a lady's heart in the case too. So I told Mr. ——— frankly, that a nobler fellow did not exist, and so ended our summer cruise. We came back to the city by steamer from Providence, and found the Phantom at her moorings.

The Doctor is married, and will visit us with his bride some pleasant winter day, and will be welcome.

VIII.

Montauk.

NO portion of our country is richer in material for legend and poetry than Long Island, and no part of Long Island furnishes so much of this material as Montauk.

I have a strange reverence for that taper point that cradles the countless warriors of Wyandancee, rocked by the ocean in their long repose. Generation after generation of the mightiest race that ever trod the land we love, went withering to their rest like autumn leaves, and the west winds swept them thitherward. No Montauk sleeps in other ground. The song of maidens over the mighty dead never woke echo for one of that race west of Napeague. The song of the Peconic was for women to sleep by. The thunder of the surge alone could be fitting lullaby for the giant sons of Sewanhaka.

The Phantom lay to the southward of Fisher's Island. It was still, but cloudy, and a gale was brewing. I was on deck and kept the second watch. The gloom which hung to the southward seemed impenetrable. I fixed my eyes on the mists overhead, and as I watched them they began to assume forms which my brain conjured into all

manner of phantoms. But my eyes slowly fell to the horizon, and as they wandered along the dark masses, I saw a sudden rift letting through the gleam of a single star. And directly under it I saw, what at first I supposed to be a deception of my eyes, a dimmer star, on the very surface of the wave; but as I looked again and again I recognized the faint gleam of Montauk.

As I mused, the clouds again took shapes, and I fancied the great battle scene between the Pequots and the Montauks, before me. There was the advance, the *melée*, the whirling, driving, maddening confusion; the continued strife, until all was mingled in one dense, rolling mass, and suddenly all broke away and fled; and in a brief space the clouds were gone, and the myriad stars looked calmly down on the long graves of the forgotten.

That battle scene, hardly preserved in the traditions of a tribe that is almost extinct, would furnish material for a noble epic. The Pequots, flushed with triumphs on the main, determined to conquer the great tribe whose fame had crossed the water; and launching an enormous fleet, sailed swiftly to the island. But the Montauks were vigilant, and the invaders found them entrenched in a strong fortification, built on an eminence, now known as Fort Hill. The remains of this fortification may still be seen. The larger portion of the tribe were absent on some expedition of importance, and the Pequots outnumbered the islanders, some three to one.

They poured in on the devoted patriots, over palisade and mound, over trench and wall, thousands on thousands,

crushing the sand hills to a smooth plain, with their heavy weight and sweeping advance. Before the first canoe had touched the shore, their exultant yell rang across the point and mingled with the surf roar of the southern sea; but when twilight fell grayly on the bloody field, they sang death songs over four thousand stout hearts that had ceased to throb. That night the gallant defenders of the soil retreated to a neighboring swamp to await succor, and the invaders, with the dawn, rushed into an empty fortress.

Deeds of valor that would have honored the days of Bayard, distinguished that day and the succeeding ones. And though no Guillaume de Lorris, or Jean de Mung, lived to blazon the warrior's name in poesy, yet there were, even in a recent age, old men who loved to sit and tell of the great deeds of the Eagle; how a dozen dead Pequots made a rampart around the royal Sayastock; and how the maidens carried afterward annual offerings to the grave of Ammanaganset, who lay buried with twenty Pequot wolves around him, just as they fell by his own stout arm.

The next day came the expected succor to the Montauks. They drove the invaders back to their boats, and a worn and wounded few escaped to seaward. More than five hundred canoes remained on shore, the spoil of the conquerors. There is a legend of a communion between the great Wyandancee and Manitou in the dark night that succeeded the first day's conflict. It is said that the chief left the swamp alone, and had an interview with the

God of his fathers, near the Eastern point, and that the Guardian of the Montauks promised to drive their foes before them, and to make them always victorious. Certain it is that we have no record that the tribe was ever conquered on a fair field, and they have left a purer name for faith, and truth, and nobility, and friendship, to later times, than any tribe of America.

And equally certain is it, that when that scattered fleet collected a hundred canoes of Pequots and bore away to Northward, there came from the West a storm of such terrific violence as had not shaken the island foundations in centuries; and four days afterward, one solitary canoe, without paddles, drifted on the shore of Noman's Land (now so-called); and five gaunt, famine-stricken Pequots crawled up the bank, and lay waiting death in the serene sunshine. By chance, a fishing party found them there when all but two were dead, and these they carried home. The wail that went up to the sky and floated across the sea when their dismal tidings spread over the main land, it is said, reached the ears of the Montauks as they gathered in the triumphal feast on the farthermost point, and the brave warriors bowed their heads a moment, before they drank the holy water of the bubbling spring, and did honor to the brave dead. Then broke out a chant of victory, so clear, so joyous, that the wild duck heard it on her nest in Peconic's deepest swamp, and the sea-gull wheeled screaming over the feast of the valiant. They thanked God heartily and humbly, those noble forest and island worshippers.

For months, on the shore of the great sea, the Pequot warriors lay unburied. Their stalwart arms grew rigid in the sun, their brawny hands grasping their hatchets still, as if not half content with their rest. No women sang over them the plaintive songs that lulled the Red man to his sleep. The waves and the winds alone moaned around them, but they could not deepen the slumber of the brave.

For many a year the Montaukett women told their children of this day's work, and the girls, sitting on the rocks, sang songs of the brave, and strewed flowers where their fathers were sleeping. The Indian girls have gone like the moonbeams! Other voices ring now over the island, and pale-face maidens, with their lovers, wander on the shore, and make vows to be witnessed by the changeless sea.

Willis and myself went on shore in the course of the day after the night I have spoken of.

We found a large company of ladies and gentlemen there, who had come down in carriages. Avoiding them we strolled along the water-side, and, seated on a rock, talked over the history which hallowed that spot. Little thought gave the gay group near us to the bones of the mighty dead that mouldered under their feet. How lightly rang the song, the laugh, the clear glad carol of youth, in the serene sunshine; and yet how solemnly, in what fearful calmness, slept a thousand men under the grass! The same air once rang to the wail of Indian maidens, who sat by the bodies of the valiant dead.

The same sunshine fell on horrible wounds, and teeth clenched in the last long gasp, and cold foreheads moist with the death-dew. The same holy twilight that mantled us, after awhile, as with an atmosphere of love, shrouded the sleep of the Montauk, as his grasp relaxed on the throat of his foe, his brown cheek was laid quietly on the green sward, and he sank to rest under the stars.

They have slept well thus far, through centuries. Thrones have crumbled. The thunder of the invader's cannon shook these rocks from their foundations. The earthquakes of revolution have overturned the nations. The meteor-like lives of men have dazzled the world with their radiance, while they reddened it with blood. More than ten generations have been born and returned to the womb of earth which bare them, and the sleep of the Montauk is as deep as when the dark-eyed girls sang sadly over him, and his dust has mingled with the dust of his foe.

"Listen," said Joe, as he sat on the rock. "Listen to the ripples. Heard you them ever more musically? Is it strange that here the dead sleep well?"

Four hundred years ago! What right had we to be sitting within sound of those glad voices and talking of the forgotten centuries? What right had we to summon ghosts of the grim warriors to frighten the maidens of quiet later years? But they were there. Their giant forms stalked through the forest, and we gazed on their plumes and saw their dark eyes flash in the gloom of the coming evening. Four hundred years ago, fair child of

the white man, on the rock on which you spread your handkerchief and gaily arranged your luxurious meal of cake, and fruit, and coffee, an Indian girl sat, holding in her arms the head of her dying lover. He is buried under the turf you sit upon!

There is a story of that battle which deserves a separate preservation. I know not the authority for its truth, but it is at least beautiful. It sanctifies a place, in my view, when I know that therein a human heart beats with the holiest pulsations of earthly emotion. The Red man's presence life and death invest with a mournful interest the ground he trod. But the Red man's love, that last and dearest relic of Eden left to every child of Adam, that priceless boon of God which makes earth sometimes all an Eden, and woman very like to Eve before her fall; the Red man's love hallows the moon-lit bay where his canoe once floated, and the shadowy forests that witnessed his happy wooing.

As that fierce fight grew less and less terrible for lack of men, one of the Northern chiefs, a young, bold warrior, might have been seen heading the few survivors. His eagle plume flashed in the thickest of the fight, and whenever his stout arm was raised it fell to crush a foe.

At length the moment for flight came, and at that instant he caught sight of a Montauk girl, standing on a rock, on the other side of a narrow inlet, watching with intense interest the progress of the battle. He knew her, for he had loved her, and by the uplifted hand, saw that he was known by her. In that moment of despair,

who shall attempt to tell the thoughts of the brave lover? He thought of life, and a tall foe went down before his axe like a forest tree. He thought of love, and swung his heavy arm, and one Montauk more was in the blessed hunting grounds. He thought of the dove-eyed girl, and saw her eagerly gazing toward him, and his strong arm flew swiftly around him, and the ground was covered with cloven skulls, and limbs, and lifeless bodies. Then the instant came for flight, and with a yell of fury, he struck down the stoutest of the enemy and sprang into the water.

She saw it all. The last blow of her lover's giant arm had made the maiden fatherless! But she waited him on the rock. He nears it. His arm is raised to grasp it. An arrow pierces his wrist. He drops it, and turns convulsively around, clenching his wounded hand; at that instant a shaft passes through his body, and without a moan he goes down in the blue water. The waves had not closed above him, when they opened to receive her, and she was seen no more. They found them not far separate. His hand was grasped in hers, and her small round arm was wound around him. They buried them together; for the Indian never failed to respect the sanctity of love.

IX.

The Mail of the Wind.

THE night was cold. The library shutters rattled so as to make us nervous, till we managed to fasten them, and then we could listen to the wind with less disturbance. And a full-toned, sonorous voice he had, too. There's an old tree above the wing which contains the library, to which the wind always seems to be talking, or the tree is replying, one or the other, for they keep up a noise between them, and we—that is, Willis and I—have so long listened, that we have grown familiar with the language they use. We had listened to it for a half hour or more in perfect silence, when a new voice joined the conversation, and we both started and leaned forward. It was indescribably sweet, but mournful, as if some delicate plant (I think it was the woodbine on the corner of the house) had suddenly wailed out a complaint to the wind of his rudeness. It rose and fell, and rose again, now in a long note of thrilling sadness, and now in disconnected sobs, and at length it died quite away. We remained motionless and silent for a moment, and then Joe spoke:

"Do you remember the last time we heard a sound like that?"

"Yes, I very well remember it. It was in the cabin. You were sleeping, and it woke you. I was writing by the fire-light, and I turned over and listened to it; and when it ceased, I was in dream-land. How I slept that night! and yet there was a tempest abroad. Joe, I wish you would ring the bell—that fire is getting low, and Anthony has forgotten us."

"There is something in that peculiar wail which I do not like. I never heard it yet without some sad affair following it. I'm growing superstitious of late. Twice in my life I have heard it as now. The time you speak of, in the cabin, it lacked the bird-like trill which concluded it. I have noticed the difference. There is something very unearthly in that peculiar sound."

"I heard you say something of the same sort once before. Please explain. I did not know that your life had been marked by any visitations of the supernatural."

"It has not been, except in dreams; and in those how often! I tell you, Phil, God never gave to human intellect a gift so blessed as the power of dreaming. It is a magic surpassing that of the woman of Endor; for it not only calls the dead to life again, and clothes them with familiar looks and smiles, but it has power over that most difficult object of resurrection, a dead affection! and it will bring it from the dead, without the grave clothes, in all its original beauty and ravishing glory. Sometimes it enters the future; not often though (and

Willis spoke musingly now, as if I were not present). I dare not let my dreams go there too often, lest the magic with the fabled power of the olden time destroy the magician! I dare not weave a spell around the things to come, lest the servants of my magic destroy or madden me!"

"A story Joe—I wait," said I, raising my feet to the soft cushion of the footstool in front of the grate.

"Well, listen then. I'll tell you one with which you are not familiar, though you know the chief incidents:

"It is one of those memories that often haunt me as I sit here before the grate when you are gone, conjuring up the past, to keep me company. Ah, Phil, I love to dream!

"Did you know Carrie Graydon? She grew up while you were away. She had an eye like a star, or a blue break in a cloudy sky. Not that her face was cloudy. That it never was, but always sunny. Never was there a fairer or a brighter—save one."

Joe paused for an instant, as he uttered the last sentence; and I saw a shade of suppressed grief pass, like a cloud in a swift wind, across his face. I knew that he then stood in the presence of a holy vision. And as the past went before him with stately tread and solemn mien, as the loved past always goes before us in these lonesome later years, I turned away my face, and left him to the communion of that dream. He remembered the story he was to tell no longer! He remembered only that vision of loveliness, unforgotten and unchanged in the long long

years since he buried it out of his sight. He heard the wind no longer! He heard only that low voice, musical now with laughter, and now with songs.

"Carrie was our village pet; and you know what that means. We all loved her, with right willing love. She was one of those that we love to love. None so full of life, and none so full of gentleness. Children left their play when she came near; and I do verily believe there was not an old man in the town that did not dream of her when he did dream of angels in heaven.

"Well, to my story. I drag on slowly in these recollections; but, in truth, they flood on me so that I cannot get along any faster; for the faster I speak, the faster they flock. The instant I think of Carrie, I think of her father, the stout old man, and her brother, and then of the old minister, Mr. Winter: he was always at Colonel Graydon's in the twilight. You might see them any summer evening in the porch, sitting side by side, talking as familiarly as brothers, of the future and of the past as well. They had lived near each other a long life-time. There, too, was Mrs. Simpson, who used to stop in the street as she passed the Colonel's, and speak a word, if but to hear the two old men's voices; 'They sounded so heavenly-like,' she used to say. And there was Fanny Wilson, Carrie's best friend, almost as fair, and quite as gentle; and then, Harry Wilson too, dearest of all the world to Carrie Graydon.

"And he was worthy the love even of Carrie. A noble fellow he was, with a stout arm and a stout heart,

and ready to die for her at any time, as he did at last. His love was manly, and ennobled himself as well as its object. It was no whining, whimpering love, that thrives in moony nights, and talks of stars, or shivers over grates in the winter, and dreams of summer coming again. It was no ball-room love, that lived in a touch of the gloved finger in a cotillon, or the public embrace of the waltz. No such love as the men and women of this day talk and write of. By all the saints, I would not buy that girl's love that you bowed to in the street the last day we were in the city, if you prized it at a kiss. I press lips now-a-days, as I used to press my father's old aunt's lips, who rewarded me with a fortune for my respectful salutations. The old lady thought there was the air of a gentleman in my kisses! Faugh! I used to kiss with heart as well as lips; but these days are cold, and my heart and lips, too! Phil, touch that fire. I'm shivering.

"What a brilliant love that was. I remember a hundred little incidents now that proved its forbearance and its beauty. They never exchanged an unkind word. From childhood till the end, they placed unbounded confidence each in the other. I believe if Henry had told Carrie it was snowing in a hot August day, she would have put on a cloak to go out, and shivered at that, so firm was her faith in all he said. He never had deceived her, in thought or deed. The hypocritical days were not yet come, though men have been hypocrites from the days of Adam. But hypocrisy is the characteristic of this day, and the whole world is a sort of masked ball.

God only knows what skeletons and death's heads are under the cloaks and masks.

"I was talking about Carrie Graydon, wasn't I? I wander parenthetically. Don't be surprised if I discuss the quadrature of the circle before I finish my story, for I'm in a roving humor.

"The Colonel loved Henry too as his own son, knowing that he expected to be so when Carrie should be eighteen. It lacked a year of that yet.

"It was the afternoon of the seventeenth of August—I remember the date because of my frequent recurrence to it and its history—Henry and Carrie were away on the hills on horseback. They left at two o'clock, and were to return by seven. Carrie had my horse, Zephyr; I often lent him to her.

"She kissed her hand to me gaily as she flew away, and I returned the salute, little thinking of the close of that day's pleasure.

"I dined with Colonel Graydon, and Mr. Winter was also at his house till evening, when an approaching storm warned us homeward. The suddenness with which it came up prevented my going farther than Dr. Wilson's, and there I turned in to wait for the return of my horse as well as the end of the storm. It was a fearful tempest at first, and then followed a flood of rain. The small mountain-streams were swollen to torrents, and the creek became a broad river, shaking the village with its roar and heavy fall over the upper ledge of rocks. The mountains trembled at the noise of the thunder, and the

voice of God shook the earth itself. A tall tree before Dr. Wilson's office swayed to and fro in the wind with a groaning sound, and as the gale increased it bent over, and I stood watching it from the window. Suddenly there came a crash of thunder that shook the foundations of the world, and seemed to rock the old earth to and fro, and the tall tree went down, but silently; for the noise of its fall was overpowered by that deep sound that went rolling away among the mountains, now lower, now louder, echoing from some cliff, or moaning through a far-off glen, till it died away, and a stillness ensued which was more sublime than the voice that preceded it. Not a sound was in the air; not a whisper of the wind, not a rustling branch, not a drop of rain, to break the solemn silence. Then, like the wail of a mother over her dead boy, that wail of a broken heart, than which no voice of human utterance is more sad, stole out on the hushed air the same sweet sound of the wind you heard just now. Fitfully at first, as if the weeper dared not weep aloud; then more distinct, until it swelled into a thrilling wail that made one half-believe an angel was mourning for her love; and then it died away faintly, as if the heart was crushed, and life had departed with the last notes of that unutterably melodious voice.

"I was still standing at the window when a gleam of sunshine broke through the clouds, and a rainbow rested across the glen. Within a few moments the sun went down, and just then Colonel Graydon came in. He was anxious lest Henry and Carrie had been caught among the

hills, and the horses would be restive at the lightning. We sat talking till after dark, and then were aroused by a call for aid, to secure the old bridge below the fall, which the swollen stream had nearly carried away. You remember it was about a half mile from the village, and we hastened there with a dozen hands. The bridge was in a bad condition; so bad that no one dared cross it. It was swaying back and forth, and every instant seemed as if the addition of an ounce weight would send it down. The stream was in wild commotion, leaping along in the moonlight, silvery and laughing, but with terrible fury. The moon shone gloriously on the trees and water. Phil, I hate the moon. She is cold—terribly cold—and she smiles so mockingly on agony, that I don't trust her smiles on joy. The stars are different. They suit themselves to our moods—are sad as we are sad, and gleam joyfully when we rejoice. But the moon is the same calm, cool, smiling moon in woe or gladness.

"I shrank from the stream with a shudder, beautiful as it was, and did not offer any aid to the men who were making that end fast as well as they could. While they were at work I heard the sound of horses' hoofs coming down the opposite hill, and was astonished to see Henry and Carrie emerge from the wood at a rapid trot. They should have come by the other road, but had taken a long route around. We shouted to them, but they did not hear us. They were laughing gaily, as we could see in the moonlight, and Carrie's hand was raised playfully to strike Henry with her whip as they came on the

bridge. They had but crossed half way when Henry saw his danger. Evidently it was a sudden discovery, for he seized Carrie's rein, drew his own close, and shouted, so that we heard him distinctly, "On, on for your life, Carrie," and dashed forward. Side by side the two horses made tremendous leaps, and three more would have saved them. Colonel Graydon rushed forward, but a strong arm held him back, for Mr. Winter was not weak though old and silver-haired.

"Zephyr was a tempest, but it was too late. The noble animals strained every limb, themselves doubtless aware of the fearful danger; the bridge swayed downward, back again—downward—it cracked, it crashed, it thundered over the roar of the stream—they were gone! I saw the white gleam of a hand on the surface of the torrent, among planks and timber, and then the mass rolled downward and separated, and I next saw Zephyr and his rider emerge, the former apparently unharmed, but the latter evidently badly hurt. Harry had deserted his horse, and when he came up, was close to Carrie, so that as she fell from the horse he caught her and threw one arm around her, while he swam with the other. Some loads are easy to bear, and some are lighter than no load at all. I believe that under ordinary circumstances Henry would have buffeted any current better with Carrie in one arm, but he had received a bad blow from a falling timber, and labored much. I could see that his strength failed him, and I struck out more earnestly. I forgot to tell you that I leaped in as the bridge fell. I

don't know how nor where. I was a strong swimmer, as I am still, and I found myself in the water waiting for them to come up. I neared them rapidly, but not so rapidly as to save them. I never before nor since swam with such a prize before me, but it was vain. I saw them go down, I saw Harry struggle, bravely, boldly; I saw her in that moment of agony try to relieve him of her load, and I saw him draw her more closely to him, and the water alone was before me and the mocking moonbeams! I saw a white gleam, as of a hand. It was but a foam-cap. I dove and searched for them, swimming downward with the current. I cannot give you any idea of the intensity of thought which I then felt. It was the responsibility of those two lives which oppressed my brain to madness. I knew that I alone was between them and eternity, and I believe if I had not found the object of my search, I should have gone down myself. Their arms were locked around each other. I succeeded in reaching a jutting point of land where Colonel Graydon and the rest seized me and my precious burden, and I remember nothing farther until returning sensation showed me a group standing sadly around the two forms which I had rescued. God had not given me to rescue both of them. The spirit of Harry Wilson had gone from the torrent to the rest of the blessed. I staggered toward the side of Carrie Graydon. She was beautiful beyond all words, and as I fell at her side, a tremulous motion of her eyelid indicated returning sensation. The usual active remedies were used and she revived, but only to look at

Henry and throw herself on his body and relapse into unconsciousness.

"And the moon smiled on that scene too, and the river laughed wildly at its work, and I laid my hand on the breast of Henry Wilson and knew that his sleep was very deep, even death. And we forbore for awhile to remove the clasp of Carrie's arms, or attempt to restore her, so overpowered were we all by the scene; and one by one in the presence of the noble dead, and at that holiest altar whereat man may kneel on earth and worship God in heaven, they knelt, Colonel Graydon by my side, and Dr. Wilson on the other side of his noble son, and Mr. Winter, the good old minister, bowed his head and murmured with a choking sob: 'It is the Lord,' and wept aloud. Phil! I never wept more bitter tears, never, never."

"What became of Miss Graydon?"

"She never forgave me for saving her. I don't mean by that that she was not grateful as the people of the world ordinarily are, but I have heard that she thought her life not worth the saving. The colonel left this country for the west shortly after that, and his daughter I am told, is the almoner of a new settlement among the prairies. She has never married."

X.

Indian Relics.

A FEW rods from the mansion, on the bank of the river, where we used to play in boyish days, is a singular rock, one side of which is hollowed out, as if by the hand of man. The cavity is so shaped as to form a sofa-like seat for two persons, with a back higher than their heads, and so much elevated as to be above the reach of the tide, although sometimes the water flows up to the base of the rock.

I asked Willis if he had ever formed an idea of the origin of this peculiar seat, or if indeed he supposed it to be the work of man. He replied that he had no doubt it was the work of one of the tribes of Indians who formerly inhabited the country, if their life could dignify them by the title of inhabitants. He supposed he had found other evidence that they had a royal residence near this place; and putting together what material he had been able to collect, he had formed a history of the decay of the tribe which was not a little interesting.

I smiled as he made this remark, and he, observing me, remarked that he might as well acknowledge the

story at once to be fictitious from beginning to end, as I was so accustomed to the manufacture of similar ones, that he had no hesitation in confessing it to me. I thereupon indignantly repudiated the idea that I had ever manufactured history, whereupon he told me I need not be so anxious to disown it; for, had I done so, it would have placed me in excellent company, inasmuch as it has of late become the fashion to manufacture historical facts, wherever truth is not sufficiently interesting. As I was about to add a rejoinder with some acerbity, Willis interrupted me by passing the cigars; and then sinking back into his easy-chair, and lazily watching the smoke as it curled in the still air, spoke in a half musing way; while I, stretched at full length on the couch, listened as I would to a dream,—for both of us were in a dreamy humor.

"I will not say that they are gone, for that is too old a saying; nor will I say they have passed away, for they have not. They either never were other than ghostly visitors flitting about in these solemn forests, or else they were a lordly race, and died man by man, heart by heart, on the ground they loved, before the cabin doors they guarded, and are now part and parcel of the dust under our very feet! I sometimes half-believe that they were ghosts, for if they were not, where are their bodies? Their burial grounds are gone too, and—no, their buried sleep all over the broad land. Last summer, Anthony brought me a skull and the bone of a stalwart arm. The men had found it in the field over on the hill, and I

went there, and found arrow-heads and a stone-hatchet, and another skull. They are both in the lower drawer of that case yonder. I lay here on the sofa all the evening, with one of those skulls in my hand, and sometimes I exchanged it for that other bone. What stout blows it had struck under the guidance of the brain within that now senseless box! I shuddered as I lay here, and thought of the 'bloody savages,' and I turned over uneasily, but grew calmer as I fancied that same arm wound around the neck of some dark-eyed Indian girl. I like better to think of nations as made up of individual affections, than to think of their wars; and yet they live longer by the history of their wars, than by any other stories. The love of Dido would never have immortalized Carthage, had not Virgil chronicled it in poetry. While the African city, had there been no such pens as those of the Roman historians, would have lived forever in legends of Hannibal and Scipio.

"But never was nation so effectually blotted out of existence, as the brave race that owned this soil. There was old Chaldea, that lives yet in the memory of starry vigils. There was Egypt, whose name is blazoned on glorious ruins, around which, like moonlight, linger the rays of a sublime mythology. There was Greece, whose crumbling Parthenon whitens her Acropolis, and whose pure philosophy gleamed through the blackness of the dark ages. There was old Judea, whose children are scattered to the winds, leaving the memory of a temple, which the God of the Temple suffered to be swept away from the

earth, because they had defiled it, and a creed which they rejected to become the light of the nations. But here was a race, no less valiant in war, or loving in peace; a family of giant men and beautiful women, of pure hearts and strong hands, who have left no foot-print on the earth, no names on the rocks, no ruins, no creed, no memory, —unless, as I like to fancy, their creed be written on the face of nature in flowers and fruits, and murmured to us by the soft flow of the river, the songs of birds, and the sighing wind.

"I held that skull in my hand, and then the other; and at length I came to the conclusion that the one was a man's, and the other a woman's, and then I believe I fell asleep, and dreamed out a story of them; for otherwise I cannot account for the presence of it in my brain afterward, as an indistinct memory of something I had heard.

"They lived just here. Precisely where the old house stands, their village stood; and on the mound, out yonder by the grove of chesnuts, stood their fort.

"This was the royal residence; and the chief was an old man, whose years had been years of battling. Swift runners could not, in many days, pass over the lands he had conquered, or through the tribes he had subjugated.

"He was dying. The oak over his cabin was a sapling when he was made chief; and it was now a stout far-spreading tree. But the oak would live a hundred years longer, and be young then, while the chieftain would be dust—forgotten dust. He knew it; he felt it. He gathered the warriors of his tribe around him, and proph-

esied to them the coming destruction: 'Ye shall fly as the snow-flakes before the wind; and, like them, ye shall melt away. I will await your coming in the council of the brave dead. But choose a chief to fill my place, before I go hence.'

"So they chose a young man, grandson to the dying warrior, who had already led them to victory in more than one hard-fought battle. And the old man laid his hands on him, and bade him be brave in the days that he foresaw were coming with the anger of the Great Spirit; and so died. They buried him with the solemn rites due to his kingly race; and the years passed on, unmarked save in the growing trunks of the old oak trees.

"Throw away that cigar, Phil, and light a pipe. I always smoke one when I talk of the Indians."

So saying, Joe took from a drawer a highly-ornamented and elaborately-carved pipe of stone, and filling it with a broken cigar, puffed leisurely, and continued:

"The new chief was a brave fellow. I like to speak of them as we speak of men now-a-days. And, of course, he loved a woman. All brave men love; for he only is brave who has affections to fight for, whether in the daily battle of life, or in physical contests. She was the fairest maiden in all the north country, and well might a brave man love her. Her footstep was firm, but light. Her hand was small; and her arm delicately rounded, but strong. She was not large, for no Indian woman was ever large; but she looked at once loveable and dangerous. She could use her lips as some women I know

of now-a-days, to kiss most deliciously, and to rate most soundly. Her hand would clasp a man's right gently and thrillingly; but if he looked in her eye, he saw a devil there, and knew that that hand could use a knife as well. Women are——"

"Women, Joe!" said I, interrupting him.

"Exactly. She was a noble creature; and you would have loved her had you met her, with her gorgeous robe of the plumage of birds hanging over one shoulder, while the other sunned itself. And so the Chief loved her; and they would have had a lodge together, had not news come suddenly, that the Eastern nations were overrunning the country; and they made ready for battle. It was but little labor for the warriors of that day to prepare for the field. An additional coat of paint on their hideous faces, a few hard rubs of their stone hatchets and knives on a convenient rock, a little tightening of the belt, and perhaps a few new arrows, and all was ready.

"Night came down quietly, as it comes down now; and on the shore, by the old rock seat, were standing the Chief and the Wild Rose of the wood. She did not beseech him, as our mawkish maidens beseech their lovers, to remain at home, and let their brethren fight and die! She did not twine her arms around his neck, and weep on his bosom, and ask him if the hatchet of the Pequot were dangerous, and if the Wolves of the East were fierce in battle. She did not even beg him to stand behind the trees, and not expose himself to the arrows of the foe, as mothers, and sisters, and maidens in these improved

days, beg of their warrior boys. Not she. With loving arm around him, she led him to the rock, and, seated by him there, watched the stars, and begged to go with him to the field, until she prevailed and he consented.

"They went, and they returned. They went swiftly with a thousand men; they returned step by step, inch by inch, beaten back by an overwhelming force, leaving their warriors' bodies strewed along the way. Now, the Rose proved that she had a thorn. Hovering around the Chief, she thrice warned him of danger, and saved him; and she was by his side unharmed, when they at length entered the fort with but fifty of the tribe to defend that last entrenchment. The enemy had swept over the country; had laid waste the land; had burned the villages; had carried away the women and children; had murdered the men at the stake by every torture which savage cruelty could invent; until at length the invaders by thousands, having completed their work, surrounded this gallant fifty, and devoted all their energies to their destruction. Devising, at length, the atrocious plan of starving them from their retreat, or condemning them to a lingering death with hunger, they sat down around the palisade. Within, all was calm despair. No man thought of life; but all remembered the words of the old chieftain, and solemnly prepared themselves to join him in council up yonder.

At length the warrior girl proposed a desperate sally and a noble death. Listening to her, as the Indians always listened to the maidens of their royal line, as one

inspired of God, the hardy band prepared to make a final effort to vindicate their national honor, and to die on the soil they loved.

One by one kneeling at the holy girl's feet, they vowed to die that day; and then with a yell, that I sometimes hear of a windy night in the woods yet, they rushed out on the surprised foe. They hewed down unresisting men by hundreds, and fought their way to the very outer verge of the line of the enemy, when the opposing force thickened before them, and they stood still and fought and fell. The chief was in advance of all, save that matchless girl, who struck blow for blow with him, and before whose demoniacal eye the enemy shrank as from a messenger of heaven. All but ten of their companions were slain, and they fought still, untouched. Arrows flew harmlessly by them. Hatchets were warded off by unseen hands. The dead lay piled about them, and still no blood issued from either of those brave bodies.

Five of their comrades fell; another and another—and they fought alone. For a moment the opposing force shrank back, and they stood idly regarding the eyes of their enemies. Turning to him, the Rose smiled and the woman triumphed for a moment over the fiend. She gently laid her bloody arm around his neck and lifted herself to his breast and clung to him—but only for an instant—and murmuring of the blessed land, and the great council fires, and the love of maidens there, fell on the ground. He fell with her. A hundred arrows had pierced them both, and the old chief welcomed his brave

grandson and his noble wife at the door of his lodge in the distant hunting grounds."

"A very good story, Willis—not bad, for you to have manufactured out of one truth. I believe the Pequot invasion is the only fact in it, is it not?"

"I can't vouch for that," replied Willis.

XI.

Trout-Fishing.

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Trout-Fishing.

THERE are several grand trout streams, about twenty miles from us, among the hills, and fortunately they are so inaccessible and so little known, that hardly any one disturbs our monopoly of the angling. We drive out to a friend's place, which is near the principal stream, and taking him with us, we three form a pleasant party for a day's sport.

Jacob Small is an enormous man. Two hundred and fifty is a moderate estimate of his weight. He lives in a farm-house on the edge of the hill country, where the stream breaks out into the plains and sweeps away in lordly style to the bosom of the great river.

His farm-house is large, and filled with the luxuries of the country, which his acres have furnished; and, with a moderate income to sustain his experimental farming, he manages to be a country gentleman in every acceptation of the term. A good, warm heart, has Jacob Small, and a liberal hand to the poor around him. The mountaineers in his neighborhood would starve in the winter snows, if his farm were not at the foot of the pass, and his door always open to the needy.

It was a cool, soft morning, in the middle of spring. The stars were bright and clear, so that you expected to feel frost in the atmosphere, and were surprised when you stepped out into the air to find it as soft and balmy as a June mid-day. Such an air promised a good day, and, for the water that we proposed to whip, it was preferable to have clear sunshine rather than clouds or rain.

The horses stood at the door, before the box wagon, which has no springs, and rattles musically over mountain roads. A bag of oats and a bundle of hay lay in the wagon, and our rods, which had been carefully examined the evening previous, were standing just within the great hall door, so that we took them as we came out.

"Philip," said Joseph, "take the reins if you please, while I light a cigar. I must have slept too soundly; my eyes are sadly unwilling to open."

"Look up at that sky, Joe, and your eyes will open."

In the east, where the dawn was to come, a star, bright as an angel's eye, was gleaming from the midst of rays of light streaming up over the hills. The scene was enough to rouse one who had no love for the beautiful; and, to as keen an observer as my friend, and as fine appreciation as he possesses, such a morning, and such a coming day, were invigorating beyond all physical appliances.

So I took the reins, and the grays sprang off from the hard gravel before the door, and went down the avenue as if they were trout lovers themselves, and knew that Jacob Small was expecting them.

Before six o'clock, we drove up to Jacob's great gate, which was opened for us by a passing laborer, and, rattling around the corner of the house, we woke him with a shout under his window.

"Why Jacob—Jacob Small, man—where are you this fine morning—and didn't you know we were coming out? I sent you word by Thompson, a week ago."

"Deuce take Thompson!" muttered a voice in the room, which we could hear through the open window, close to which we sat in the wagon. "I say, Philip, did you send me any word by Thompson, last week?"

"Of course, I did, Jacob."

"Of course you did. Thompson never gets drunk, except when he has some message for me. He stopped at the cross-roads on his way up, drank all the afternoon with some of those scoundrels there, started for here in the evening, drove his team off the long bridge, and lost a barrel of molasses, besides nearly killing a horse."

"And what became of Thompson?"

"Deuce take Thompson—just like him—he broke his neck—no, his back—no, his ribs, or his legs, or something of the sort. The doctor knows what it is: I don't."

"The doctor! what doctor?"

"Doctor Wilson, of course. I sent an express off after him, and have had him here every other day. But what word did you send me by Thompson? Deuce take Thompson, I say."

"Never mind the word, Jacob; but if you are dressed,

come along to the brook. We want some trout for dinner to-morrow; and we are off for the day."

"All right, Joseph; wait a minute, and I'm with you. But let me send Thompson his gruel."

"Where is he, Jacob?"

"Up stairs, to be sure."

Jacob attended to the sick man about whom he was so indignant, and mingled his kindness with scolding, in very fair proportions, as we could hear, while we sat in the wagon.

At length he came out, puffing and groaning with his haste; one hand being occupied in a successful endeavor to penetrate the lining of an old sporting coat instead of the sleeve, while the whole man seemed intent on holding fast under his left arm a case containing his rod and gun. A little negro boy followed him, chuckling and lugging a huge basket, which Jacob lifted into the wagon. He then tumbled in, and deposited himself between Joe and myself, thus forcing each of us into about half of his natural size, and exclaimed, "Drive on Joe, my boy; all ready."

Joe looked comically at him, and handed over the lines; Jacob took them without a word, and drove off. Possibly three minutes might have passed in silence, when I saw that he was taking a road which led directly away from our intended fishing-ground.

"I say, Jacob, if you have no objections, where are we going, and why couldn't you give us some breakfast?"

"Breakfast? Plenty in the basket there, my dear boy, help yourself. Fine cold chicken, ham, bread and a bottle of chocolate. Three of the fattest duck you ever saw, the small sort, and a brace of quail; some hot Johnny-cake, and sundries beside. But observe. The white mill brook hasn't been touched this spring above the bridge. This morning three fellows from the river came over and have just gone by. I'm suspicious they mean to whip the brook up from the bridge, with the wind. Now, if we drive fast we can reach the wolf-hole by seven o'clock, and come down. There'll be no wind up there, and we can whip two rods to their one. There is fun to be had, and we'll just try it. What say you?"

Joe and I replied by attacking the breakfast, while the horses flew as if they knew the hurry Jacob was in. Over the hill and through the wood and down along the hickory swale, and then we dashed into the narrow road that led along the side of the mountain, and after about fifteen minutes of slower travelling, Jacob pulled up in a grove of oak trees, under the lea of a knoll, which protected the horses perfectly from the March wind. Here we made them as comfortable as might be, and left Nora to guard them while we prepared our tackle and approached the water.

About two hundred yards below the grove where we left our horses, the brook entered suddenly a gorge or ravine, and plunged down a series of small and abrupt falls, until it reached a comparatively level country, and thence flowed in a deep stream with occasional rapids

and bends, and some short descents, out toward the white mill, six miles below. Singularly enough, the trout in the upper part of the brook were totally different from those below the ravine; those above seldom growing to half the size of many in the open country. They were apparently of a different breed, although on examination proving to be the same in all respects, except the shape of the body. We commenced our descent of the ravine with some caution, Jacob leading and I bringing up the rear. Our progress was safe until we reached the last step from which the brook dashed, and here I called out to Jacob to stand still, while I threw over his head and tried the basin below. A statue could not be more motionless than he was until I made a second cast, when he saw a good two pounds of fish, with gold and crimson spots on his back, rise at my white fly, and hook himself as desperately as if he meant it. Then, in his delight, Jacob exclaimed aloud, and on the instant of speaking he vanished out of sight. Never was feat of magic more rapid and astounding. The rock on which he had been standing was worn, and the winter ice had cracked it so that the outer edge of it fell with Jacob into the basin in which my trout was struggling. Puffing and blowing he came up to the surface, only to meet Joe's provokingly cool countenance and voice.

"Why, Jacob—Jacob Small, I say, don't be in such a hurry after the trout, man; let's all have a fair chance."

He made the best of his way to the bank, on which he sat down, and the only consolation he appeared to find

was in the fact, that while I had been laughing till my sides ached, the trout had unhooked himself, and was away down the stream to tell his neighbors that we were coming.

The first large fish hooked was about fifty rods below Jacob's bathing place. On the bank stood an oak tree, and in the middle of the stream was a large rock, around which the water gurgled and rushed swiftly. In the wake of the rock, or below it, was still deep water, and as Jacob's hook fell in just above it and passed into the still water below, a fine fish, weighing at least three pounds, took the bait. For Jacob disdained flies until May, and I more than half agree with him.

The tip of his rod was almost as slender as a knitting needle. It was one of his own make, and a graceful rod it was in his hands. The small stick was bent nearly double at times, and swayed to and fro, as the fish tried now one bank of the brook, now the other. We were none of us visible. Jacob's head and shoulders might perhaps have been seen at one moment, but the trout was contending with an invisible foe.

"Keep quiet, boys. There's another one in the eddy there, and I'll have him after I get through with this one. I say, Philip, just cast your fly across the ripple on the other side of the rock; but lie low, while you are about it."

I obeyed, and, at the third cast, pricked a good-sized fish, but did not hook him. Once more, and he rose to it finely this time, but dashed down the stream, under

Jacob's line which was now out some ten fathoms, while his fish lay in the shadow of the bank across the brook.

Passing my rod under Jacob's, I left him working alone, and followed my trout down the stream a dozen rods, and landed him without difficulty. He would not weigh much over a pound and a half; Jacob soon joined me, having secured his fish, and Joe took one out just below me.

For an hour we remained on this brook, and I then proposed to go to the large creek over the hill, as we had originally intended, where I hoped to find larger fish. This was agreed to, and we drove rapidly over the mountain, reaching the usual halting place in an hour or so.

It was in a ravine, down which three several brooks pour from the different mountain-passes, meeting in a basin at the foot of a large rocky bluff, there forming a strong stream that flows through Jacob's farm, three miles below, and out into the level country, and down through the village.

The basin is overshadowed by large trees, without underbrush on one side, and the ripple of the streams entering it, produces a constant disturbance of the kind most favorable to the use of the fly. A half mile farther up one of the streams is a deep hole, at the foot of a waterfall, where sometimes the largest trout are lying in wait for stray flies and worms.

To the latter place I directed my way, while Joe and Small remained in the vicinity of the basin, but reserving it for our united presence. I had not yet reached the

deep hole in the stream when I saw a trout break the water on a swift rapid, and making a hasty cast across the stream, I hooked a very handsome fish, and landed him without trouble, by lifting him as he shot down the current.

Passing directly on to the point which I have mentioned, I approached cautiously, and looking over the edge of a rock surveyed with pleasure the dark surface of the pool, flecked with scattered foam. On the opposite bank hung the rich foliage and blossoms of the rhododendron; and close to the edge of the water were bunches of liverwort, blue violets, and the anemone, growing thickly; while the air was loaded with the fragrance of the woodbine.

A blossom of the rhododendron, not unlike a brilliant moth, fluttered to the surface of the pool, and just before it struck the water, I saw a yellow gleam under it, and a lazy head breaking the surface.

My gray fly was over the water in an instant, and provoked the same large trout to lift himself to the top, but no farther, and he seemed indisposed to try the bait. A dozen times I coaxed him up from his hole under a rock, and failed to hook him. He seemed rather to wish to see the fly than to taste it. I changed it, but without success; and the almost infallible red fly did not even raise him.

I then went back into the forest, and found an old tree which I kicked to pieces with my heel, and I soon had a half dozen small, black active worms, with which I returned to the water. Preserving my gray fly, I passed

the hook through one of these, so as to leave him free to move, and taking in all my line but a fathom or so, held my rod carefully over the water, so that the worm should occasionally touch it, and disturb the glassy smoothness of the pool. This bait took. The first touch of the worm to the surface was answered by a rush of two large fish; of course one only succeeding in hooking himself. The reel flew around swiftly at first, but he took not more than ten fathoms of line, and buried himself under the opposite bank of the basin. I had not felt him yet to judge of his weight and strength, and the capability of my rod to land him. I had but a slight lance-wood and bone tip; and though it would bend double without breaking last year, I feared that it might have become dry in the winter.

Gently drawing on him as he lay in his hole, I had opportunity to weigh him; and thinking that he could not go over three pounds, I determined to try a dead lift on him, and accordingly teased him till he started out, and I reeled in as he came across toward me.

But he was too stout a swimmer for my rod. The first lift I made, bent the tip to a semicircle, and I saw that the curve was slightly broken in one point, which I feared would prove weak, and I let him go.

I had not yet exposed myself, and did not wish to do so. I took a position near the outlet of the pool, behind the trunk of a fallen tree, and endeavored to drown him, but he kept a lively play around the upper part of the basin for ten minutes, and then made a sudden dash di-

rectly toward me. As he came into shoal water near me, I confess that I was guilty of unfairness: I struck at him with the branch of a tree that lay near, and effectually stopped him.

The one that had attempted to seize my hook, and failed, had now a claim on my attention. I prepared another fly precisely as the former one was baited, and hooked another fish at the second or third cast. This was done under the waterfall, and he seemed to be aware of the fate of his predecessor, for with praiseworthy acuteness, he made a straight course down stream. I followed with what haste I could. But he was fast taking out my line, and I gave him fifty fathoms before I had run as many myself.

The bank of the stream was impracticable for me so long as I held my rod, and I took to the water. Checking my fish as well as I could, I followed him down more than a quarter of a mile, when I succeeded in stopping him, and advanced toward him. He had gone under the bank on the side of a rapid, and I approached with care, placed my hand under him, and as he settled into my grasp, I introduced a thumb and finger into his gills, and lifted him into my basket.

At this moment I heard Joe's voice within a few rods of me.

"Why, Jacob, man—what are you about? The second time to-day! Is that the way you do your trouting? Upon my word, Jacob, I'll have you indicted for robbing the brooks, if you go into it in that sort of way."

Hastening toward them, I saw Jacob floundering in the middle of the brook, and Joe standing on the bank and preaching to him. Small had hooked a trout, and zealously followed him down the stream, but stepping incautiously on a rock, which was as smooth as ice, he had plunged feet foremost down a rapid, in which he was lying when I came up. Nothing discouraged, however, he gathered up himself, and his rod which had never left his hand, and coolly and carefully landed a very respectable fish, which, to judge from the quietness with which he allowed himself to be taken, had been astonished into torpor by the unusual invasion of his territories.

Jacob now sought a sunny place in which to dry himself, and found it at an angle of the brook, where it swept around a grassy point on the one side, and under a dark rock on the other. Willis stood by him, professing to watch lest he dissolved—but in fact to talk about certain farm matters, wherein Joe wanted the opinion of a man of Jacob's experience—while I sat on a rock, in the centre of the stream, and threw my fly under the high bank opposite to them.

But here I took no fish, and my exertions subsided into a lazy casting of my fly, until at length I gave over even that, and enjoyed the scene while I listened to the conversation between Willis and Small.

It was very still and calm in the glen, and the sound of the wind in the tree-tops was like distant music. The sunshine stole down through the hemlock and pine branches, and danced on the ripples as lightly as if glad

to find a place to dance after long travel through the blue. The air was life-giving and rich. The sky seemed resting on the tree tops that fringed the mountain ridges; and one could not look up without that longing to be away in the cool rich air, floating, not flying, which a warm spring day almost invariably inspires.

Suddenly, however, Joe interrupted himself in the middle of a sentence, ran toward the stream, and made a swift but graceful cast of his line across a fallen tree that obstructed the flow of the rapid; and by the sharp whirr of his reel, I knew that he had hooked a large fish. For ten minutes he battled with him, and at length conquered. He was a noble fellow, and required the landing-hook to bring him out.

We had now as many fish as we cared for; and we returned to the basin, to finish our forenoon's sport there.

In this large basin the trout abound; and we never failed to hook as many as we had lines in it. But after once hooking a fish, it becomes necessary to expose yourself, and usually to take to the water before you can get your fish out. The result, of course, is, that you are not apt to hook a second one immediately.

But we took our places separately, and each man cast in his own part of the basin. In a moment we had each hooked a fish; and in the next moment, the three had gone to the centre of the basin, swam around each other, twisted up our lines, and made as great a scene of confusion as could be desired. There was but one resource:

we wound the lines still more firmly around each other, and then worked all together. In five minutes I parted my line, and Jacob's followed. Joe had the three fish on his rod; and as the three lines were wet, it was hardly probable they would unwind. It required careful management, however, to kill the three fish; and Joe went to work deliberately.

For ten minutes, or more, he teazed them, and let them teaze each other. After pulling different ways, tearing one another's mouths, and various futile attempts at escape, they grew sluggish, and allowed themselves to be dragged around.

He now led them slowly down toward the rapid outlet of the basin, which spread out into a broad stream, running over gravel and stone. A vigorous and watchful hand led all three into a shallow side stream, where they suddenly found themselves with their backs out of water, and our landing hooks readily secured them.

It was now past noon, and we had taken a large lot of fine fish. We accordingly returned to the wagon, and drove down to Jacob's for luncheon, of which an important part was one of the last three trout we had taken.

The afternoon was windy, but not cold. We had made an engagement to attend a wedding, which was to take place that evening; and we had as much as we could well do, therefore, to reach home in time for dinner, and dress and go over to the village. But the horses were as fresh as at daylight, and we rattled along the road at a good pace, reaching the old house as Anthony was ordering up

dinner. For he had a house full of company, and dinner never waits if there is any one to eat it. Lucy, with her husband and some friends, had come out from the city; and we invited them to accompany us to the wedding, to which they readily assented.

We invited them, for Lucy was welcome everywhere of course, and as to the others, in our country, such invitations are not only allowable, but expected. An invitation includes a family and all the friends that happen to be in the house, and we drove over to the village church with a brilliant party, full of gaiety and assured of a welcome.

The church was sparkling with the beauty and youth of the whole country around, for the wedding of Mary Grant was an event looked for by all who had lived in our neighborhood with interest and eagerness. So great a crowd claimed a right to be present at the ceremony, that, contrary to the usual custom, the church had been selected for its consummation.

Richard Grant, the village schoolmaster, was an old man when I was a boy. He was an older man now by many very sorrowful years. When I left his care and was sent with Joe Willis to college, I believe that the old man could say that he had never lost by death one dear friend. Since that time his wife has lain down in the church-yard, and his son and daughter have found sleep by her side. Three grand-children, the youngest like his daughter Mary in her youth, with the same brown hair and clear complexion, and hazel eyes, were

left to the old man's care. And to aid him in their education, a small fortune opportunely came to them through a distant relative of their father. They grew up into the likeness of their mother, kind, faithful, and loving, and the two sons were placed in excellent positions to prepare themselves for business men in the city. Mary, the grand-daughter, never dreamed of leaving the old man, and as he grew more feeble and wayward she clung to him the more fondly. It was doubtless this one absorbing employment which prevented her from listening to the village lovers who wooed her, and she had reached twenty, and was heart-whole, when an accident occurred which produced a change in her life.

Old Mr. Grant, while coming home from the school one summer afternoon, was passing across the bridge which is in the middle of the village, when a plank which had grown weak and rotten, broke, and threw him down. The accident might not have been serious, had he not fallen so near the edge of the bridge, that in attempting to rise, he made a misstep, and plunged into the creek some twenty feet below. Fifty persons saw the occurrence, and hastened to his rescue. But as usual, of the fifty, forty-nine were willing to shout and direct, while only one was prompt to act, and this one was a stranger, who was crossing the bridge on horseback at the moment of the occurrence. He was a young man, of decidedly prepossessing appearance, and withal was remarkably well dressed. So at least said those who saw him before the accident; after it, his dress was hardly in a condition

to be praised. He swung himself from the bridge, and while the other forty-nine were running for ropes, and planks, and poles, and the old man in the meantime was drowning, he dropped into a deep hole in the water, came up instantly, swam toward the place where he had last seen Mr. Grant, seized him by the collar and held his head up with his right hand, while he swam stoutly with the left, and reached the shore. There, of course, the original number of volunteers was quadrupled, and at least two hundred people were anxiously waiting to carry Mr. Grant home to Mary, who was terribly frightened at the wet and bleeding apparition which she met at the door.

In the meantime the stranger had found his horse, and gone unattended to the tavern, where he was soon cared for externally and internally. He presented a curious appearance, however, in the landlord's clothes, which were a world too wide and a foot too short for him. He did well, under such circumstances, to decline Mary Grant's invitation to change his quarters for the night.

The next day Mr. Grant was evidently feverish, and the stranger was still invisible, his clothes being past all use, and he waiting for the village tailor to fit him out. And a curious fit he made of it. But such as it was, he called at Mr. Grant's in the afternoon of the second day, just in time to meet a committee of the school trustees, who had called to consult the old gentleman on the management of affairs during his illness.

The stranger, who had sent in his card with the simple

name "Mr. Lyon," was in the little sitting-room when Mary Grant returned from her grandfather's room with the committee. He received her warm thanks with becoming modesty, but with all the air of a man of extreme polish.

A single glance at the face of Mary Grant had impressed him; and with a ready ear, catching the conversation of the committee at the same time that he was talking to Miss Grant, he formed a plan that had not entered his brain till that moment, but which involved the decision of his whole future.

A few words, well chosen, sufficed to give to the trustees a hint that he was looking after literary employment. They caught at the idea—asked him a plain question in frank, country style, and received what they thought was as frank and plain an answer. A week afterward he furnished them with satisfactory testimonials of character and ability, from the president of a well-known college, and was installed on the throne of the academy.

All these things passed under our notice, but neither Willis nor myself had any personal interest in the matter, further than to feel anxious after the health of our old friend. We met the new teacher, and endeavored to make his acquaintance, but he rather avoided us, and pleaded his engagements as an excuse for declining an invitation to the old house.

I liked him nevertheless, and said so to Mr. Grant, whereat I saw Mary's eyes sparkle, and I guessed the story instantly.

Three months passed before the old man could go out of the house, and then he walked feebly down to the school-house, where he was greeted with a shout of joy by the whole school, and a half-holiday forthwith demanded and granted. And now the winter was approaching, and the old man proposed to Mr. Lyon to take the entire charge of the school, and allow him to retire from it. To this the new teacher assented, and agreed to return at the end of the autumn vacation.

We were in the city during the fall, and every evening had its engagements. At dinner with O——, we met a large company of friends; and after dinner, found his rooms filled with a brilliant assembly. Conspicuous among them, I was astonished to see the new teacher, not in the plain clothes and demure countenance which he wore in the country, but evidently at home in the crowded rooms, and the friend of half the guests. O—— presented him. I recognised him coldly, not half pleased with the trick which he had played on the villagers, and doubting much his honesty. But he was too frank and hearty in his expressions of regret at our having discovered his secret, for us to resist long the influence of his good humor, and long before we separated, he had removed all doubts as to his honor, by confessing his engagement to Mary Grant, and assuring us that she had always known the whole truth. It was a queer fancy of his to kill three months in a stupid village; but, as he said, no one ever had such an opportunity for wooing as he found, and no three months of his life had been so

quiet or so happy. We kept his secret until the spring, and it was only when the wedding preparations began to be made on a large scale, that it was noised abroad that Mary Grant had married a rich man, and not a poor teacher.

Certainly no one envied her, or would have had it otherwise. She was so well beloved by the young, and her mother had been so well beloved by their mothers, and her grandfather was so reverentially regarded by the elders and the children, that the whole village rejoiced in Mary Grant's prospects of happiness, and crowded the church to see her given away.

There were no tears shed. It was the first and last wedding I have seen so marked. The young pastor made the ceremony very brief; and the deep silence which reigned in the church was unbroken, except by her voice, when she spoke the brief sentence that ended her maidenhood. As the clergyman pronounced the solemn declaration of union, Lyon folded her in his arms, and pressed his lips to her forehead, in the presence of the congregation, and then yielded her to the embrace of his queenly sister, who welcomed her to a warm heart.

What a gay evening it was in the schoolmaster's old house! There was plenty of room; for Richard Gray's house was large, and the kitchen was immense. The dancing commenced in the old kitchen at eight o'clock, and was kept up till long after midnight. Gay airy cotillons, and sober contre-dances followed each other in rapid and constant succession.

The good clergyman looked in on them for a moment reproachfully; but even he had not the heart to find fault at Mary Grant's wedding; and to say truth, his reproaching look was only assumed for the occasion; and I don't think that he objected, in his heart, to the graceful quadrille that served so well the purpose of the young and gay, who, for the time, sought only amusement and merriment.

In the large rooms on each side the entrance of the house, were gathered the more sedate portion of the company; and Mary and her husband stood at the upper end of the north room all the early part of the evening, except only when they opened the cotillons with Joe Willis and Lucy *vis-â-vis*.

The old man was everywhere. Now looking proudly at Mary and her husband, and now directing the dancers, and now superintending the loaded tables in the south rooms.

To him, old times came back with all the freshness of youth. He had not thought to remember those days again so happily, or to see them again so vividly before him. But this was precisely the scene which he had enjoyed in the same rooms twice before: once when he had married the daughter of the old man that built the cottage sixty years ago, and again when a stranger had won his daughter Mary, and he had given her to him for better or worse. I saw the old man pause at times from his busy employment; and from the vacant look of his eyes, I knew that he was gazing through the gloom of

years into a far distant time. For, when men look thus, they look not with their natural eyes, but with the spirit's earnest out-looking gaze.

Once when he stood thus wrapt in a vision of other days, I called Lucy's attention to him. His long white hair was waving over his shoulders; his hand rested on the end of the mantel over the hearth; his head was thrown somewhat back, and his attitude seemed to be one of intense listening. The group of laughing girls that surrounded him were unheard. There was a voice in his ear full of ravishing melody—a voice coming out of the past, and reaching the old man's soul. It was but an instant that he stood thus, and then he relapsed into his ordinary cheerful mood, and resumed the care of his guests.

We left at an early hour, and drove homeward with our party. I fancied—perhaps it was all fancy, but gay scenes among the young are apt to affect him thus—I say I fancied that Joe Willis was sad and silent all the way homeward. But it might have been that he was engrossed with the horses, for the night was cool, and the bays had not been out during the day, and Stephen was not altogether trustworthy as a coachman. The next day, as might be imagined, we were somewhat weary, and our friends, except Lucy and John, left us. In the evening we formed a quiet party in the library.

"Joseph, my dear Joseph," said Lucy, "I wish you would be a little more careful. You have thrown over my basket, wound my ball of silk around your boot, and

brushed my pattern from the table. Phil, help me, please. I am positively ashamed of Joseph's rudeness, and John is asleep, of course. Do help me."

"Philip," said Joe, standing meanwhile motionless in the centre of the library, as I knelt at his feet, and proceeded to disentangle the hopeless mass of embroidery silk in which he had enveloped his foot, "Philip, I was thinking ——"

"Well, Joseph, I wish you would think to more purpose. Only see what a tangle you have made of my silk."

"Philip, I was thinking that ——"

"Joe lift your heel a little; this silk is wound under it."

"Philip, I was thinking that this night is the anniversary of ——"

"Now your toe, Joe. Upon my word I never saw such a snarl."

"Philip, I was thinking ——"

"Lucy, let me have your scissors, if you please; its quite out of the question to get it off in any other way."

"No, no; don't cut it; let me help you. Here, Joe, just hold your foot up on this chair."

"Confound the work, Lucy. What are you spoiling your eyes for, at this time of night, with your embroidering? I'll go to the store and get you a ton of silk, and a cocoonery of silk-worms to-morrow," said Joe, stamping his foot, and demolishing the silk (for all practical and connected purposes), whereat Lucy sank back in her chair

with the most comical little sigh of terror, and John, starting from the sofa, and rubbing his eyes, exclaimed, "Ah—eh—what's that? Phil, Joe, is any one hurt?"

"No, John—go to sleep again, old fellow. Philip, I was thinking ——"

"Joe—for mercy's sake wait a little. Don't you see what a commotion you have literally kicked up in Lucy's work-basket, and how you have spoiled the face of the dog in the embroidery. Think more calmly, my dear boy, and not as you walk, or shoot, or ride—that's no way to think."

Thereupon we proceeded to place things in order, and having at length satisfied Lucy, and stowed her excellent husband away on the sofa again, and drawn our large chairs up to the fire, I waited for Joe's thought.

"Ten years ago to-night I was in Paris, and made an acquaintance that I was thinking of as I walked up and down the floor and into Lucy's basket. And a good fellow he was too, though rather ancient, but he travelled with me for two months after that, and I have never seen him or heard of him since. But I have thought of him a thousand times. I would like to know what has become of him. We met oddly. He came to my rooms, sent his card up, and on entering, frankly told me his errand. He was an invalid, out of health, travelling alone. He had overdrawn his letters of credit, and wanted funds, while waiting for new letters. He said he was rich—that he knew C———, and S———, and H———, and a dozen other good names, and I was so taken with him

that I lent him a thousand dollars the next day. He paid me the following week, travelled with me two months, told me a hundred quaint stories, lost me among the Alps, and for aught I know, lost himself there too. He gave me a story for a memento, which he related in the carriage as we posted across the south of France, and afterward wrote out, when I begged him to do so. Poor fellow, I fancy he did not live long. I'll read you the story to-night, and Philip you shall print it, if you will. Do me the favor to ring—you are nearest the bell."

Enter Anthony. He should have been described before. He was the favorite family servant of Judge Willis, but was always attached especially to Joe. He was taken from a hovel by Mr. Willis, the father of my friend, when a boy of ten years, and his instructions were never to lose sight of his young master, then not more than three or four. He was to devote himself to that boy, and as a reward he was never to want for anything. The duty and the reward have been strictly regarded and fulfilled. Anthony was educated well, and I believe Joe was never out of his sight from that time till he went to college, and when he became a Senior was again joined by him. When Mr. Willis died he accompanied Joe to the judge's, but always remained the attendant of his young master, and was with him in all his travels. He is now major domo, steward of the farm, agent between Willis and the tenants, and confidential servant, all combined. He is black as ebony, straight as an arrow, tall, well formed, with unusually straight features, writes a

good hand, reads considerably, and is in all respects a remarkable specimen for his color. He has always found his master's purse open to his drafts, and I believe has not a wish within the control of money, which remains ungratified. After the removal of the dinner he is the only servant admitted, and always answers the bell, unless it is otherwise indicated by the use of a small table-bell, whose sharp ring through the whole house summons the housekeeper, or one of her aids. To return, therefore, to Anthony, whom we left standing.

"I wish a package of papers from the large drawer of the book-case, yonder. You ought to remember where they are, for you put them up. The package was marked 'Marseilles, 18—, December.' Find them, Anthony."

In five minutes the package was in Willis's hand and he selected the paper he desired, arranged his chair, lit his cigar with Lucy's approbation, and read aloud.

MARY LEE.

"Sweet Mary Lee! The music of your laughter rings from out the lonesome years as the carol of a bird pouring a melodious note through a ruined temple. I call them lonesome years, for they have been such, and since the bright spring morning when I last saw my gentle sister in the fleshly covering that so adorned her, since that day when I forgot to weep, for dear thoughts of all her goodness and gentleness, I have been lonely, very

lonely, and am dying now, alone! My life has been a useless and a vain life, and the years are like a ruin. Every moss-grown stone is an old ambition, every buttress a vain struggle; every window a hope through which I peered longingly out at the far blue sky!

"Sweet Mary Lee! The blue is very far away to-day, and very deep, and serener, purer, holier, than ever before. And I have fancied as I have been gazing into it, that mayhap I can long, and long, and long so earnestly, that I may burst the bonds at length, and soar away into the glory that I used to fancy lay beyond the azure, and to the embrace which I know awaits me there! I have fancied too, this afternoon, that this Italian atmosphere seemed either more penetrable by mortal powers, or else that I am in a more spiritual humor than usual, for I feel as if I could float away on it without much difficulty. It might not be well to try, and yet——ah, that must after all be the reason—the air is full of angels, and they crowd around, and are trying to persuade me away, and I am so anxious to be gone that I can't sit longer in my chair. Now they separate, and now a star-beam falls from out the twilight sky, and—no—it is not a star either—it's a form of beauty; am I dreaming? It is Mary—Mary Lee; only she is more beautiful than my memory of her; and yet it is she, and that must be the beauty I have somewhere read of as given to the blessed dead. She is coming down, down the long line of angels, fairer, much fairer than any of them all—and she is coming here, and her dear arms are once again around me,

and her lips are on mine, and she kisses me, and looks into my eyes with those most heavenly eyes of hers, and, Mary, are you on earth? or is this heaven?

"Ah, me! She is gone, and only a mournful gleam of star-light falls on my watching eyes from the heaven she has gone to. I must have been dreaming. What was I to have written? It is an hour since I took this seat by my table. I remember—a story I was about to tell; well, I will once more tell the story of Mary Lee.

"I am old, but not so old that my heart-strings have forgotten to thrill at the touch of memory. Nay, my very memory is like a wind-breath, and as it weeps over those strings, the sounds are to me as sounds of indescribable melody, but of untold mournfulness. The Eolian of the heart is a harp of fine, of delicate, of very sensitive strings, and its music is in my heart as the songs of spirits over lost loves.

"Mary Lee was the most beautiful child I remember to have seen. She was not large, neither was she small. Her form was one of extraordinary perfectness, and at seventeen I think her beauty of feature and of body without a rival. Her eye was of a dark blue, almost black; the lashes long and jetty. Her hair very dark, and parted plainly on a finer forehead than Canova ever sculptured; her lips chiselled with perfect regularity, and yet if there were any fault in her face, it was in a little too much fulness of those same lips. They were not precisely in harmony with the rest of her face—but you would only notice this on close examination, and perhaps

not then. I had a fancy of watching her lips, as well for the words of love they so gracefully formed, as for the kisses I, and I alone, (in those years,) had from them—for Mary Lee was the adopted daughter of my father, and so my sister. She was the child of my father's old friend. They had been boys and young men, and grew to be old men together. When Mr. Lee died, he left Mary, then but ten years old, to my mother's gentle care.

"It was my father's wish, I have always supposed, that we should marry each other, but somehow it happened that our love was never based on any such hopes. It was the perfect confidence of children, growing with our age, that bound us together.

"I may not pause to tell the history of our childhood. Enough that it was as childhood in the beautiful country must always be, exceedingly beautiful. The earth was one wide source of joy to us, and every flower that bloomed brought a bloom of joy to the glad eyes of my sweet sister. The mountain streams taught her their melody; and she would sit in the glen by the fall, and sing wild songs, or trill melodies which sprang from her heart; and the dash of the water, the sound of the wind in the trees, and her voice, together, made up an anthem of marvellous richness, that the birds were not ashamed to sit and listen to. Sometimes we wandered away up the mountain-side on foot, and she would find a rocky peak, and sitting in the sunshine, twine an oak-leaf crown, and with that on her brow, call herself a queen, and all the earth her dominion. And I, who was the sole representative

of all the earth, would bow meekly at her feet, and she be very gracious, and so would bid me ask what boon I would, even to half her throne; and I, presuming subject, would beg exactly that much; and she, most graciously and gracefully, would move a little to the side, and I would take the seat, and so my arm would boldly pass around her, and her head would fall on my shoulder, and—who in all the world, monarch or subject, could be so happy as we, forgetting, as we did, that there was, in all the world, any boy other than myself, or any maiden other than my sister, Mary Lee. And yet I did not love her as boys love maidens whose names are not their own. She was my sister in every respect. Be this understood. She is gone now—passed like a star into the sky when the morning dawns. And many long years have been buried up in the rubbish of an aimless life since I last held her in my arms, and I am an old man, and weary. My life has been wasted and blasted by seeking after other phantoms; but now, with the cool blood of sixty odd years, freezing in a chilly atmosphere, (I have lived a *cold* life since then, Mary dear,) I say calmly, that I loved her but as a sister—no more.

"Her childhood passed into youth and the full bloom of maiden loveliness.

"One Christmas morning we were in gay spirits at the homestead, and a sleigh-ride was proposed and planned. That afternoon we were away over the hills and through the valleys, and at evening came home by the merry moonlight.

"Pardon an old man's memories which will intrude themselves in the shape of particulars that may be unimportant to others, but to him are full of deep interest.

"There was a party at the homestead in the evening. I had reached my majority a few days previously, and Mary was nineteen. Mary and I returned late from our ride, but early enough for the gathering. The broad hall was brilliantly lighted, and all the rooms were open and filled with the young, glad-eyed, and happy of the country side. We had a joyous time. The dance was kept up in the old dining-room, and every game of merriment in the other parts of the house, while Mary moved like a spirit of light and life through the crowds of revellers, and lent new joy to joy, new merriment to laughter.

"There was a graver assemblage in the drawing-room in the north wing of the house. There the elder persons were gathered, discussing old histories and family reminiscences. In the kitchen, around a blazing hearth, the servants of all the families in the country around were assembled; and an occasional hearty laugh indicated that the maids were not behind their mistresses, and were attracting the full attentions of their masters' men. And once, as the door opened from the broad hall, I saw Mary in there, as everywhere else, shedding joy and gladness.

"At a late hour, when the merriment was at its height, a stranger was announced. A gentleman, booted and spurred, entered with letters from the city for my father.

His business was important, and my father presented him to me for my attention, while he retired to examine the letters.

"Capt. McIvor was a young man, not far from my own age, but more slightly formed, with a remarkably fine face. His forehead was expressive of careful thought, and his lips indicated a life of habitual danger and firmness. As I afterwards knew, he was an officer in the British army, who, young as he was, had seen much service of hazard. But I did not like his face. There was about his lip a something which I did not fancy. But I took him to a dressing-room, insisted on his wearing certain of my own clothes, which in the loose fashions of the period, fitted almost any one, and returning with him to the rooms, presented him to Mary. In the next hour he danced a *contre-dance* with her; and I was somewhat sorry to see how earnest attention she gave to him.

"Again I linger on too small matters.

"Mary loved him. I strove against it as a brother would strive for a sister's happiness. But she was a woman; and once loving, she was woman-like. I did not like his principles—nor his practice, for that matter. But Mary loved him, and her love covered his many sins. I learned to like him for her sake; and during the four weeks he was persuaded to remain with us, we made the country gay with rides and parties of all sorts, and I accompanied him to the city to attend to the completion of my father's business on which he had come.

"This business was the settlement of an estate in Eng-

land, which had fallen to my mother by the death of an old uncle, and Captain McIvor having been sent over with despatches, had been made the bearer of these letters. It soon appeared necessary for some one of us to cross the ocean. In my minority I had travelled much, twice crossing the Atlantic, and it was decided that I should make the third trip in the spring. But not alone. McIvor and Mary accompanied me.

"It was lonely in the homestead when its light was gone. Old Robert, my father's servant, often afterwards told me of the long hours in which the good old man would pace up and down the hall, while my mother sat silently by the grate and worked; and how he would come in and stir the fire, and speak, if only to break the silence which he thought was breaking the hearts of his master and mistress. And then my mother would look up with mournful earnestness in my father's face, and burst into tears, and my father would soothe her with loving words, and talk to her of the old days of their love, and tell her they were not forgotten. Noble hearts that had kept close together all through life, pressed each to the other. Men said my father was cold, and that he was stern and haughty. Perhaps he was so on the world's side, but where his proud heart touched her heart, and Mary's, and mine, it was warm; how warm! It has grown cold with death since then!

"I crossed the sea with Mary. Her husband was kind and gentle, and I had almost forgotten my early suspicions when the ship reached England. He carried her

to a princely home, where I left her while I arranged my business. This occupied the two months next following; and when I next saw her I fancied an expression of care was on her face. The moment we were alone she gave me her usual frank statement of all her troubles. She feared that McIvor was a man of bad habits, and she had reason to believe he had had a disagreement with his father.

"The truth ere long came out. He had long been a gambler, and vices of deeper die stained his fair name. His father, a gentleman of unbending determination, refused him supplies of money, and obtained at length an order sending him on foreign service. In vain did Mary beg on her knees of his father a remission of his sentence. He was firm, and yet lifted her in his arms, assuring her that it was all out of love for her, and for his son, that he had thus decided. His own plans, however, were overturned by an unexpected change in the destination of his son, who was ordered to America.

"Mary's position was now not a little embarrassing. War was declared, and her husband was an officer in the army which was invading her country. McIvor's treatment of her had grown cold and unkind, and she was miserable. She had never known unhappiness before, and her mind again and again went back with involuntary bitterness to the Christmas night a few months before.

"I must hurry on with my history. Her husband sailed to Canada, while she accompanied me to New York. It

matters nothing now how we managed our departure from England. Enough that the old homestead was glad again when we came home, and that fond arms encircled us.

"The war continued, and Mary heard frequently of her husband, whom she loved with a devotion I have never known surpassed. It now became manifest that a fatal disease had seized on her; and at last, worn out with the progress of her malady, as well as with her anxiety, she insisted on going to him. She would hear of no refusal, and the physician at length confessed his belief that it would not harm her. So I accompanied her to Canada, where McIvor then was.

"They met with tears of joy on her part, and impatient anger on his. There were reasons why the presence of a wife was to him eminently unpleasant just then.

"With an idolatry of love, of which none but she was ever capable, she yielded to his wishes and left him. But at the very instant of entering our carriage we heard that he was ordered out on service, and she begged me to stay till we heard the result of that expedition.

"I never knew its object. He, with a small party, entered the forest. Day after day passed, and Mary's suspense grew intolerable. She resolved to follow him; and, unknown to me, provided herself with the necessary conveniences, hired a party of men, and then asked me to accompany her. I could neither prevent her going, nor refuse my services.

"McIvor, with his company, were on their return from

the service which had been completed when they were attacked by an overwhelming force of savages.

"They were but four to twenty; and, with their backs against a rock, fought bravely with these fearful odds. Strangely, the savages had either no rifles, or no ammunition, and it was a hand-to-hand battle, after the English had fired their pistols.

"Stout blows were those their heavy-hilted horseman's swords showered on the swarthy limbs of the Red men, and they went down by fours till only eight remained. But British blood ebbed drop by drop from channels that gave life to those stout arms. Anon one of the brave men fell, struck by a hatchet thrown from outside the ring of the savages, but supporting himself on one arm, as he lay unheeded on the ground, loaded his pistols, and with unerring aim shot down two more of the cowardly foe. Astonished and dismayed, the surviving six fled, and the English remained on the field victors. But at a fearful cost, for McIvor's strength was failing him fast.

"The others assisted his feeble steps to the brow of a hill, and left him there while they hastened to seek aid. A fair and placid river flowed along the base of the hill, and murmured pleasantly to the forest on its banks. A summer twilight came on, and with it came a storm of terrific violence. The dying soldier heard the roar of the thunder, and it entered strangely into his delirious dreams. He murmured as if the battle were around him yet, and sometimes mingled names of endearment with the faint shouts of the fray.

"We who were seeking him came into the valley and encamped during the storm, and at length resolved to pass the night there. Making ourselves as comfortable as we could, we placed our guard, and I slept. Not so Mary; she lay awake, and her quick ear caught, at a distance, the sound of voices, before M'Ivor's surviving friends had reached our camp. She sprang up, heard the first words of their story, caught the direction in which he lay, and flew from us like a spirit, out into the forest. We followed with what speed we might, vainly calling on her to wait for us.

"He was dying in the midst of the tempest. His life had been a long storm of passion, as I afterward knew, and his death was worthy of his life. A thousand scenes passed in confusion before his wandering vision. England, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, all alike furnished material to make up the strange company of ghostly visitants that watched his rocky pillow, as he lay dying in the forest. The thunder and the wind made strange sounds in his ears, and he spoke feebly, as if the life-blood were almost exhausted, and his broken words yet indicated those sudden changes of delirious imagination from woman's arms to battle-fields. His arm lay across his breast; but he lifted it in the air, and then laid it across his forehead, now bared to the wind and rain. Then there was no motion of his body except a faint clutching of his fingers, and a tremulous movement of his lips, which gave utterance to broken murmurs.

"The storm passed on, and in his dreams the roar of

battle died far away, and he fancied triumphantly too, for he smiled, and then he thought he was at home, in merrie England, and listening to the sweetest music in the world, and he said "Mary!" in a low, broken tone, and then a shudder in his frame rattled his sword in the scabbard, and he was dead.

"The waiting stars broke with their glorious beauty through the clouds, and their radiant beams fell on the ripples of the river like the laughter of angels. And the angels were glad. For on the summit of the hill that overlooked the forest and the river, with arms wound in the attitude of passionate devotion around the neck of the fallen soldier, lay a child of earth that might have won the love of one of the sons of God, so ravishingly beautiful was she. But the long lashes drooped on the cheeks, and the closed lids shut in the starry eyes, and no breath came through the just-parted lips, and she was dead, and the angels were glad, for she had come back to them who had been so long a wanderer from her native heaven.

"They slept well! There was none of the formality of death there! There was no folding of the hands, or crossing of the arms, or straightening of the limbs, for the deep and chilling sleep. There was no bidding farewell in hackneyed phrases, made up of words of this earth's coldness, which at the best are frigid. There was no sigh, no kiss, no convulsive grasping of the fingers. But when she reached the brow of the hill, and saw him, and saw that he was dead, she meekly wound her arms around him, and laying her cheek by

his, smiled, and murmured to herself, "Thank God, it is all over, and I may go," and went. The clay smiled yet, though she was gone, and around her lips yet lingered the kisses of the angels.

"Whether he and she met again, I know not; I think not. He was a fiend, if ever man was one, and she an angel; and I never heard that there was any island in that great gulf we read of, on which those two might meet: although, indeed, it seems from the Scripture story, that they may speak from shore to shore, and I have fancied that he might stand at times on that shore, and call, in piteous accents of anguish, to her, on this. But the songs of the angels prevent her hearing.

"In the winter nights I imagine the wind's sounds bring similar wails to our ears, and that I often hear the agonized sobbing of the damned, when the blessed do not reply to their calls."

XII.

Forest Life.

WE had been in our cabin, perhaps, four weeks of an autumn not long ago, when an early snow-storm left a thin covering of white over everything. Coming out of the cabin door in the morning, I observed a track on the snow, which I would have preferred to see elsewhere, for I disliked extremely the proximity of wolves. There was no mistake about this. He was a large one, too, if the footprint could be believed a fair indication; and Black declared that he was one whom he knew well of old, by the peculiar pressure of one of his fore-feet. Black had sent a bullet after him once, with no effect except to draw blood; but he had always observed this peculiarity in his footprint after that. He had been missing now for two years, and his visit was unexpected and not welcome.

We started out after breakfast to look for him. The track was rapid, as if he had been on the run, pausing a moment at the door of our cabin, and then flying on again. I followed him steadily into the forest, until I found a place where he had doubled on his track, and,

coming back a hundred yards, he had taken to a hollow in which we had killed a buck a week previous, and left his fore-quarters. Here the wolf had eaten his fill, and taking the ravine down to the river, had gone up two miles, and there crossed a shoal to the island. Whether he was still on the island was problematical; but after watching on shore, while the dogs scoured it, we concluded he was not there, but had crossed a narrow and deep channel to the opposite shore.

This had occupied the whole day, and it was evening when we turned homeward. The moon was near the full, and everything gleamed in the light, as if a fairy hand had illumined it with special lustre. Joe was in remarkably fine spirits. It was not uncommon for him to be somewhat sad on such a night as this. For in such moony nights, the old familiar faces haunt us, and the old familiar voices fill the air around us, and the hearts which have ceased to beat long ago, seem to be beating close against ours. A marvellous power has a moonlight night in the early winter;—a power to call up the past, and rebuild fallen temples, rekindle altar-fires that have gone out, and gather again worshippers and deities that have been long with their kindred dust, mouldering away.

But now the past was dead, and nothing disturbed its grave. So he was singing a brave old song, and I was trying once in a while to get up a chorus. On the side of the river the rocks were black, and the sun had quite melted the snow from them. There was one spot where

a tall tree overhung the stream; but its branches cast their shadow on the water, and not on the shore. We passed close to it, and as John approached it, he paused and snarled angrily. The sound was sufficiently startling. It always meant something when he thus gave indications of anger. He was a dog who distinguished between different animals with marvellous keenness, and never snarled at any but cross and dangerous game. "That wolf is somewhere about," said Joe. I stooped down to John to get the direction of his eye. It was fixed on the river. At about a hundred yards from us was a small, rocky island, containing not more than sixty square feet of surface above the water. There was no snow left on it, but the rocks were of a lighter color than those on shore, and I saw that John was looking toward them.

Slowly approaching the trunk of the tree which stood near the water, I knelt behind it, while Joe and John walked on down. As I had hoped, I began to see a motion on the island as soon as Joe had left me. The *ruse* was good; and whatever it was that lay there was manifestly convinced that we had gone out of sight. Joe had taken a position a little below, and where he could command the other side of the island, which had a ridge running diagonally across the river.

After a little I saw the movement of a head, and at length a brown body rose from the surface of the rock, and now the wolf was visible. I saw in a moment that he had been carried down in trying to get ashore from the island, and here had made land. He walked restlessly

up and down the rock, trying the water with his feet and nose occasionally, and at length stopped short, and lifted his head as if to howl, but without emitting any sound. At that moment I shot. My ball hit him, as was evident from the leap he made; but he stood perfectly still for ten or twenty seconds afterwards. Then he suddenly broke out with a wail of fury and of agony that surpassed all description. You could have heard it miles away. As it was, we heard the cry ringing through the mountain gorges, echoing from the rocky hill sides, and quivering in the forests as if the fiends were haunting the wild-wood with discordant yells over some fiendish suffering. The sound died away; and scarcely had it ceased, when he broke out again with a cry tenfold as fierce and thrilling. It rings in my ears yet. The river ceased to dash over the rapids, the wind ceased its song in the pine trees, the very moonlight seemed to tremble in that unearthly scream. And now John spoke, not with a bay, but with the wail with which a dog always accompanies a loud sound of pain. He seemed to try to howl, but he could not, and his voice stretched out on the key-note which the wolf gave, only it was broken up by wild, sharp barks and angry snarls, as if he were howling against his will. Then came in a new sound. I could not make it out at first, but at length I found that it was Joe, who, to add to the din, was trying to catch the note, but with poor success. Tired of the noise, I shot my second ball. In an instant, as by magic, a profound stillness took possession of everything.

I never heard a noise more suddenly stilled. Wolf, dog, and Joe, were alike silenced, and the sharp crack of my rifle echoed from across the river, and then all was hushed.

The wolf was running, as if mad with pain, up and down the rocky island. Joe shot, but missed him. I shot, and missed him. For half an hour we kept him moving, and how many bullets we put in him we never knew. It grew tiresome, and we let him alone for awhile. It may be imagined that, in the moonlight, over dashing, sparkling water, with a poor background, and a mark not very different in color from the rock itself, we were not to be blamed for poor shooting.

At length he suspended his swift movements. I had waited for the moment, and having taken a careful aim at his cheek, sent my ball to the mark. I knew it by the crashing sound which I heard (you doubt me?) in spite of the water and the wind. The wolf leaped ten feet into the water, and we never saw a hair of him after that.

"Talking of wolves," said Black one evening, a week afterwards, "I can tell you a story no other man on the river can tell."

It was a cold night, storming furiously, and on the very edge of the window-sill was the surface of the snow; for it had fallen without interval for nearly forty-eight hours, and now the wind was rising, and in the morning the drifts might be over all the cabin. There was a large pile of wood in the corner, and a glorious blaze on the hearth; and as the wind roared outside, the chimney

roared cheerfully and sonorously within; and once in a while a little mass of snow that had gathered on the chimney-top, would come hissing down into the fire, and vanish as it touched the logs. Across the front of the hearth lay Willis, on a pile of deer-skins, over which was thrown a blanket. He was lying with his back to the fire, and watched with curious earnestness the appearance of John's nose as he lay sleeping on the floor. I was, as usual, on my bear skin, in my corner, lying with my eyes dazzled by the blaze into which I was gazing, and supporting my chin by my two hands, with my elbows buried in the fur. Black sat on the stool at the opposite side of the fire, and looked lovingly at us. For Black loved us, as I have said. I will describe him. He is a large-framed man, broad-shouldered and strong, but not stout in appearance. His head is of a fine mould, the ear small, the forehead not very high, but decidedly massive, his lip especially well cut, his eye blue and quick, but not sharp, his features thin, and his complexion pale. He has not shaved for ten years, but his black beard and moustache are trimmed always. Though he does not see any one but hunters like himself from year to year, he is, nevertheless, remarkably careful in this respect, and the effect is to give his face that look of dignity which you see in the old pictures of the cavaliers. He is about forty-five years old, and has passed more than twenty of those years in the cabin, or one on its site. Before coming here, he had been in a highly respectable position, and had made a small property, with the income from

which he supplies his cabin now with every luxury he desires. He is not much given to reading, still less to writing, but his letters are capital sketches of the life he leads, and he tells a story of familiar scenes with the unmistakable skill of an intelligent man. Do not mistake me. Black is a man of character, and were he in the world, would make his mark. I shall not say what keeps him out of it. That is his own concern.

That scene in the cabin is before you. Black's feet are toward the fire, and his eyes fixed on the toes of his moccasons, which he wears in the evenings. The fire-light dances on the varied skins around the cabin and on the cross-poles, the trophies of many a long day's sport. The dogs have selected each his own place, and Nora lies as usual between me and the fire, baking her brain.

"Talking of wolf-hunts," said Black, "I can tell you a story."

Whereupon Joe turned over toward the fire, and looked up at Black, but in so doing, struck his foot against Nora's nose, who sprang suddenly upon him, thinking it was the commencement of fun, whereat Joe rolled out into the room and woke John, who joined the sport, and while Joe was wrestling with the dogs, Black continued, on this wise :—

"When I first came to the cabin, there was no clearing within thirty miles, and the only neighbor I had, was George B———, who died last year, up by the cedar hill, ten miles or so away. It was a little lonesome, and yet I liked it for a year, and I saw George three times

during that twelvemonth. But the next six months I never saw a man, and I used to sit and look at myself in the still water over the side of my canoe, and like it, for it seemed as if I had company. But one day in November I was tired out of being alone, and I started off toward evening to go up to George's. I crossed the river just here, and went along up the edge of the water, swinging my rifle in my hand, whistling for company's sake, for it made a pleasant echo in the woods. The night was coolish, very clear, and there was a pleasant moon. Just as I reached the Rock brook, close on the side of the pond, I heard a growl that startled me, and stopping short, I saw a wolf standing with his paw buried in the carcass of a deer, while his jaws were full of the flesh. But he was not eating, for he had seen me and seemed to be discussing the comparative merits of his meal before him, and the possible meal which I presented for him. He wasn't any of your dog wolves, but a grizzly rascal, large as John yonder, with longer hair and stouter legs. He snarled once or twice more, and I was fool enough to show fight. If I had let him alone, he would have been content with his feed; for they are cowardly animals, except when there are droves of them, or unless you disturb their eating. I took a short aim at him, and shot. He jumped the instant I pulled trigger, and I missed his breast and broke his fore-paw. Then he yelled and came at me, and I heard, as I thought, fifty more answer him. It wasn't ten seconds before I was in the first crotch of the nearest tree, and four of the grizzly

scoundrels were under it, looking at me, whining and licking their lips as if their mouths watered for me. I didn't understand their language, or I would have suggested the idea of satisfying their appetites on the deer which lay a few rods off. But I couldn't persuade them to take any hints of that sort, and so I loaded my rifle and shot one of them as dead as the deer. There was more for them to eat if they had chosen to devour their own sort, but I couldn't blame them for refusing the lean, bony carcass of such a comrade, especially when a tolerably well-fattened man was in a small sapling close by, and the more especially when, if they had any eyes, they could see that the sapling was splitting in two at the crotch, and I must come down soon, in spite of my repugnance to a closer acquaintance with them. So it was though, and before I had time to reload my rifle and despatch another of them, crack went the tree and I dropped my rifle just quick enough to catch with arms and legs around the tree and hold on for life, till I could get out my knife from my pocket, open it, and shove it into my belt. That done, I watched my chance, and if there ever was a scared wolf, that was one when I lighted on his back and wound my arms around him and we rolled away together. The other two didn't understand it at all, and backed off to watch the fight. A pretty moonlight tussle that was. At length the wolf got me under, and he and I both thought I was done for. He planted his two paws in my breast, and the claws left marks that are there yet,—while he seized my shoulder with his villanous jaws."

Black paused to show us the scars on his breast and arms, particularly the large scar where the flesh was torn from the bone on his shoulder. He continued:

"I was a little faint when his teeth went in. It was unpleasant, and I had time to think of a dozen other ways of dying, any one of which I would have preferred to that, had a choice been possible. The wolf apparently didn't like the hold he had, for he tore out his teeth, and tore out my coat shirt and flesh too, and seized again on my fur cap. It was a lucky mistake for me. I felt his wet lips on my forehead, and had just time to let go my hold of his throat and clutch my knife, when he shook off the cap, and made another attempt to get a mouthful, but his throat was in no fix to swallow it if he got it, for my knife-blade was working desperately across his jugular, and the point of it was feeling between the vertebræ for his spinal marrow. He was a dead wolf, and he gave it up like one fairly whipped.

"I had bled considerably when I rose, but I wasn't weakened a particle. The whole had passed in less than half a minute, and I was ready for the other two, that now came at me both together.

"I seized my rifle and met one with the barrel across the nose and floored him. As he picked himself up, I seized him by the hind foot. If the first wolf was scared when I fell on him, this one was more so. I shall never forget the howl which escaped him as I swung him into the air and struck the other a blow with the body of his comrade. The other one, the first I had wounded,

frightened at the novel fight, vanished in the woods, and I was left with this one in my hands. He seemed to let out his voice with tremendous force as he swung around my head twice. The centrifugal force, as they used to call it at school, forced out his wind, but as I let him fly, his scream was fairly demoniacal. He went a rod from the bank, and the howl stopped only when he reached the water. I was faint and weak now, and my visit to George was of course out of the question; so I seized my rifle, loaded it with difficulty as I ran, and following the water, I at length saw him come up. He struck in for the shore, but seeing me, he didn't dare to land. I teased him so for two miles, and each time he approached the shore I showed myself and he kept off. I saw he was getting tired, but I didn't want to shoot him yet, and I followed him till he went over the rapids, and into the deep hole by the Haunted Rock. Here I had to leave the river bank, and so I watched him swimming along the edge of the rock until he found a little shelf, on which he crawled out and shook his hide. But he couldn't get up that rock,—that was pretty certain; and while he was discussing it all alone by himself, I helped him settle the question with a rifle ball in his side. He gave a mad half-bark and half-yell, and sprang into the river, but didn't rise again.

"How I got to my canoe I don't know. I managed to paddle over and get in here, half dead, with my blood all over me, and my wounds frozen dry. It was a month before I was well enough to hunt again, and I have been shy of wolves ever since."

As Black concluded, I looked at him with wonderment, knowing that this was not the most hazardous adventure of his life by many. He gazed into the fire a little while without speaking, sighed heavily, and then resuming his kindly look again, stooped to pat John, who was sleeping with his broad lower jaw on Joe's breast, while Joe lay on his back, looking up at the bark roof, and listening to the roar of the tempest.

I have so frequently mentioned the hounds, that no one can have failed to observe that we have regarded them always with the affection of old friends: accustomed, as we have been, to relying on them for companionship often for weeks together, this is not strange; and they deserve a separate chapter of biography, in the chronicle of our lives.

Of Leo, I have heretofore written, and I have recounted the death of John. Echo was a younger dog, of the same breed; and Nora, who lies at my feet even now, is a hound of greater value than can be measured by money. John was a dog of unusual tenacity of purpose, and, to use a familiar phrase, had uncommon bottom.

In one of our autumn visits to the cabin, I had taken with me three dogs, John, Hero, and Nora. The two last named were then young. John usually outran all the chase; and having better bottom, lasted longer on a run of some hours. He had never run with Hero nor Nora, and I was uncertain, indeed, as to what their ability might be in a long chase. One morning, however, we left John at the cabin, and took out Hero, Nora, and

Lion, a dog then belonging to Black. Within ten minutes they opened and went down toward the creek, passing between the cabin and the river. John, hearing their voices, broke his rope, and dashing through the little window which was open, overtook them with tremendous leaps, and the whole four went in full cry across the creek, and again out on the mountain. Their voices grew fainter and fainter, and at length died wholly away. Placing ourselves at the runs, we waited patiently two hours before we heard a sound, and then I caught John's voice at least four miles off. An instant afterwards I heard a fainter sound, which was not the same, and yet much like it. Willis, who was lying by my side, said, "Can that be an echo?" "Impossible," said I. The cry approached, and as it came nearer, it was absolutely puzzling, for I could swear to John's voice in both cases. "It is an echo," said Joe. "Then it's a travelling echo," said I, "for it sticks to John." Directly it became more clear, and there was now, evidently, some distance between the two voices, and Joe deliberately insisted on his idea of an echo; and, at length, our discussion was interrupted by the deer dashing down to the water at our run, and Joe shot him. At the next instant, Nora and John came up side by side; and as I saw them, I heard the other sound some hundred rods below, and hurrying down, reached the second run in time to see a deer take to the water, with Hero close on him. "Here is your echo, Joe," said I to myself, as I saw the good dog standing on the river bank, watching

the swimming buck, which was out of my reach. The deer crossed, was shot at on the opposite side by some one, and turned instantly back into the water, and swam towards me. As he came out on my side, he was ready to charge Hero, who was ready to receive him. Already, his hair was bristling forward, and his eye flashing, and he had made the first bound toward the dog, when my ball struck him, and he staggered forward and fell. Hero seized him and held his head till I cut his throat, and thenceforth was called Echo, in memory of his first long run and brave bringing-in of the deer. It proved him and Nora fully equal to John, and their names soon became well known along the river.

Several years after that, a jealousy arose between the hunters on the two several sides of the river, and a threat was made, that if the dogs of either were found on the opposite side, they should be shot. One morning, Nora and Echo brought the deer down the river on our side, but some hundred rods above the run, and the deer crossing, they swam after him. Instantly fearing for them, I crossed in the canoe, and waited the turn of the game, which I judged from the closeness of the dogs at his heels, would not be far off. Ten minutes might have passed when I heard a rifle-shot. Five minutes more, and I saw the deer dash into the river at the run, and swim across. Willis shot him on the eastern bank. But the dogs did not come. I called them with as loud a voice as I could raise, and at length they came out of the cover, and turned their heads toward me. I saw in an

instant that Echo was hurt, and Nora was running forward and then back to his side, as if encouraging him to make a little more exertion, only a little more, and he would be in safe hands. My poor Echo staggered toward me, and as I advanced to meet him, fell at my feet, and licked my shoes. Nora, for an instant, seemed perfectly rejoiced to have got Echo safely to me, and sprang on me, and then around me, barking vociferously. But suddenly catching her companion's eye, she stopped, and coming up to him, licked the blood from his neck, and stood directly over him, looking mournfully into his face, as I raised his head on my hand to examine him.

Echo was shot through the neck, and at the first look I feared the worst. He had been doubtless close on the game, and side by side with Nora, when the ball struck him. And she, gallant dog, when he fell, gave up the chase, and turned to help him. As I knelt by Echo on the shore, I felt a deeper sorrow than you would believe possible for the loss of such a friend. My companion was dying. In countless scenes of my life the good dog had been with me and shared my fare, good or poor, on equal terms. Not a hunter on the river but knew Echo and Nora, and I did not think a man could be found that would shoot either of them knowingly.

Yet, as I knelt there, he came out of the woods toward me. My attention was called to him by Nora's growling and showing her teeth. I turned, and he advanced, saying, with an oath, "You'll learn to keep your dogs in their place after this." "Are you the scoundrel

that shot that dog?" "None of your scoundrels to me. If you don't use better names, I'll teach you the lesson your dog got." "My man," said I, "you would do well to keep your mouth carefully shut until you are in cover yonder; for if you open your lips again to use such language, I'll point my finger at you—nothing more—and that dog will tear you into more pieces than there will be seconds in the next minute. You see her. She would be delighted to get hold of you, and if she makes one leap at you, I'll not take the trouble to call her off." As I spoke, he looked at me; and when I concluded, he began to move his rifle from his shoulder; but Nora crouched for a leap, and her low growl seemed to be full of condensed anger as she fixed her eyes on him. I knelt again by the side of Echo, and paid no farther attention to him. At this moment, unseen by me, Black, who had crossed in the other canoe, came up, and as he approached, the villain turned back into the cover, and we lifted Echo into the canoe, and paddled slowly across.

All our care proved useless, and the next morning, a little after sunrise, he was dead. Nora never left his side till we buried him. Joe selected a place to bury him, at the foot of a high rock, and I spent half the forenoon in chiselling on the rock's side, above the grave, with a broken blade of a knife for a chisel, and a stone for a mallet,

THIS IS THE GRAVE OF

ECHO.

THE HUNT IS ENDED.

To this day, Nora remembers her old companion, and starts when his name is called. One night, last Fall, we were gliding down the river in a swift current. Joe was guiding the canoe, and I lay down and read aloud by the light of a pine-knot, from a chance newspaper we had picked up that day, the incidents of the far-off metropolis. No painter could do justice to that scene. No painter could introduce the ripple of the river, the steady swaying of Willis's tall form to the paddle stroke, the swift gliding of the water by the side of the canoe, the occasional cry of a night bird on the mountain side, the holy stars looking peacefully down on us as we swept swiftly along with the stream. There was a moan of wind on the hill-tops, and we could see at times, tall hemlocks against the star-lit sky, swinging their branches solemnly, as if joining in a mystical worship. But it was perfectly still on the water, until I had finished reading, folded the paper, and laid my head on Nora, who was occupying the extreme stern of the canoe. Then a gust came down the mountain and dashed my fire-light overboard, and we shot swiftly onward. Seeing my position, Joe shouted "Echo!" Nora sprang from under me, and was at his side in an instant. But no Echo was there, and she looked wistfully up to his face, as if to ask if indeed he had called her old companion.

The recollection of that day and night comes to me with startling force now. The day had been a long and weary one, marked by only one incident, yet that one had left a deep impression on both our minds. We had

stumbled on a solitary grave in the midst of the forest, and were started by the suddenness of the discovery. For a grave, wherever found, preaches a short and pithy sermon to the soul.

It was on this wise. Black had taken the long canoe some ten miles up the river, and left it there. The day before, we had left the cabin at an early hour before daylight, and hunted the day out, but found no game, and were fifteen miles from the cabin at dark. So contenting ourselves as well as we could with the hard bread in our pockets, and making a good fire, we sat and talked till the small hours came on, and then after turning over half-a-dozen times to find which side was the softest, I at length succeeded in making myself comfortable, and slept deliciously. I suppose Willis did the same. I asked no questions in the morning when I awoke, and found him lying on his back with his eyes open.

Joe was fortunate in hitting a partridge that was sitting on a tree, and we breakfasted at eight o' the clock, on broiled partridge and cold corn bread. Refreshed no less by the brilliancy of the morning than by the breakfast, we trudged toward the river, which lay some seven miles from us. We were walking some rods apart, when I came suddenly on that grave. It was on an oak-shaded mound, around which a stream bent almost in a circle, and then ran on toward the river. I was laughing aloud at one of Joe's characteristic witticisms, when I suddenly stepped on it. There is no mistaking a grave, meet it where you may. I have sometimes been inclined to be-

lieve the old superstition, that one cannot walk over the dead without a chill at heart. But this was palpably a resting-place of clay that had once been the jailor of immortality.

I paused reverently, and the laugh died on my lip. Joe turned to see the cause of such a sudden stop. "Phil!" No answer. "What's the matter, Phil?" No reply. "What's there?" "Come here, Joe." He came, and looking down, exclaimed, "Ah—I see. Here, as everywhere. Well, well, the dead sleep well. Let's go on."

But I—not so ready to move from that holy spot in the forest, (holy because the entrance to eternity was there, a gate to immortality)—threw myself down on the turf, and sought with my hands among the dried leaves that covered the mound, for some memento of the dead one.

At length I found a rude stone, from which I cleared the leaves and moss, and sought an inscription. But in vain. There was a mark, as if the hand of affection had traced with a rude graver on the rough, unhewn forest rock, the sign of salvation through the Crucified; but whether it was truly a cross, or whether it was a letter T, or simply an indentation in the stone, I could not tell certainly, but I thought it was the former.

I like that cross. Say of it what you will, I like, wherever I meet it, the symbol of our holy faith. I like it on the church-spire, where between the sunshine and the earth, it stands showing to all men that we worship the Son of God, and where the eye that looks to it, with

the same gaze looks on to heaven. I like it on the breast, jewelled and gold, where it makes a never-ceasing acknowledgment of the creed of the Christian. I like it on the grave, and though it be now the property (by adoption) of a church that calls me a heretic, still it is pleasant to me to see a tablet marked with the mark of Calvary, and the initials of His holiest title "I. H. S."

"The dead," said Willis, "sleep well," and I looked for an instant enviously on that shadowy sleeping-place, where the weary one was at rest!

Enviously, I say; for there was a sense of deep repose about it, an utter separation from the labor of living. No heavy roar of carriages echoes in the vaulted sepulchre—no voice—scarce audible hum of humanity, steals down among coffined sleepers. Not even the grief of the living disturbed that profound rest, nor tears of agony, which would, if aught could, make restless in their sleep the buried ones, fall on the mound. The rustle of the leaves in autumn, that low musical rustle, which is the fittingly mournful lullaby of the death-slumber, the ripple of the brook over an unseen rock—these sounds alone broke the deep stillness of the forest sleeper's chamber. That chamber was the temple of God, not made with hands. The arches of the forest trees were its roof, and through the irregular windows that let in the light, I could see the far-away blue of His all-watching eye. "The dead sleep well."

So turning to Willis who had seated himself on the foot of the grave, while I was kneeling at the head, groping

with my fingers about that cross-marked stone, I preached him a sermon from his text.

Aye Joe—they sleep well "after life's fitful fever." It was but a few weeks ago, that we were seated together by the fire-side at home, and some one said of a friend, "she is dead."

Lucy's little Jamie, a bright boy of scarce four years, looked up from his play, and echoed the word in a sad tone, "Dead? Dead?" and then seemed buried in thought for awhile, until, with a deep sigh, he said, "How many are dead!" and coming to his mother laid his head on her lap and named over the friends he, so very young, had missed from their accustomed places. But their weariness is over. In the twilight of a sunny land, when the worshipper of the prophet goes home from toil, as he passes near the walls of St. Sophia, he hears a call, and pausing reverently, obeys the musical voice that falls as from the sky, "To Prayer." In the stillness of their souls, when the labor of life had been toilsome and the twilight of sorrow had fallen grayly and coldly over them, a voice fell from heaven in tones more melodious than ever fell Muezzin voice from Minaret of Omar, filling the stilled air with its winning sweetness, "Come unto me ye weary." They sleep well!

But I was speaking of the hounds, when I was led into this digression. Leo, Echo, and John are dead. A kennel of younger dogs of the same breed, stout, broad-breasted, heavy hounds, make the moonlight nights around the old hall hideous with their baying. Nora, calm

and contented, rests at my feet on the wolf-skin hearth-rug, and loses not a word of the conversation around her. Lucy and the children regard her as their safest companion, and Joe and I look lovingly on the good dog. She is as intelligent as half the men in the world, and has proved her reasoning faculties often to my entire satisfaction.

The very last day that we were at our cabin, I had occasion to go to the Post-office, ten miles down the river, and took Nora for company. We made the walk pleasant by an interchange of sentiments on various subjects —for Nora has a speaking eye, and when anything pleases or displeases her, she will stand and look with as decided an expression of approbation or disapproval in her eye and face, as you can find in many men's countenances. She was running some rods in front of me, and came to a bend in the river where there was a broad and comparatively still sheet of water. I saw her stop and look at the water, and then turn her face toward me with an expression that I am perfectly familiar with. It said as plainly as words could say, "Come here and look. Here's something worth seeing." So I walked up to her, and saw that she was looking at a loon that was sitting on the water about sixty yards from the shore. The moment I saw it, Nora looked up into my face with a sort of smile that was half comical and half satisfied, and I said, "Yes, yes, Nora, I see him." She then turned away and ran on, and I followed her. Nora, the dog, understood perfectly well that that loon was no game,

and so didn't wait to see me shoot, nor wonder why I did not. Had it been a duck or a goose, she would have stood till I shot, and then gone after it, nor could I have called her very easily away from the place if I had not shot. But she had often seen me glance at loons, and she knew that they were worth looking at, but not worth shooting. And her face, as she stood on the bank, was decidedly expressive of enjoyment of the scene.

We strolled along down the river bank, and at length reached a spot in which I have often lingered as one of eminent beauty. The forest is not so dense here, but the trees are lofty, and intertwine their branches far up from the ground; and when the wind begins to rise, as it did when we entered the opening, there is a faint sound as of the murmur of a crowd falling in the air and filling it with an indistinct melody. I have often thought it like that indescribable sound which is always hanging over a great city, (who has not noticed it?) and which is perfectly distinct from the roar of carriages and the tramp of men and horses over the pavements. I have listened to it in a still night, and it has seemed to me to be the mingling of a half million voices, giving utterance to the varied passions and emotions of as many souls. It is the far-off surf roar of the great ocean of life, as one by one its waves break on surrounding shores, or meet and struggle with one another, and fall with fainter murmuring into the deep.

Having gone on to the Post-office without adventure, I obtained my letters, and returned to the same spot,

where I rested on a fallen tree, and became absorbed in the contents of my letters and papers, so that I did not hear a sound until Nora uttered a low ejaculation or whine, and I started up. The dog had seen a deer coming down to the opposite side of the river on a full run, and taking to the water. She knew well enough to keep silent, and had called my attention without too much noise.

The deer crossed and came up with long, graceful leaps as he reached shallow water. I was in an exposed position, but did not dare to move, lest his quick eye should detect me. He was a noble fellow, with head thrown up, and nostrils distended, proving by this last indication that he was chased. Yet I heard no sound of dogs on the other side. At length he reached the shore, but caught sight of me before his body was fairly up the bank, and wheeling instantly, dashed back into the water. I sprang to my feet and sent a ball after him. His head and neck were all that were above the bank, and I shot for the junction of them both; that is, I designed to hit him back of his ear, and, if it might be, break his spine. This I think the safest shot in such cases, inasmuch as a ball in the head is always doubtful, except when deer are swimming and the head is moving in a direct line. But probably in this case the flapping of a large ear prevented my aim from being accurate; and he did not stop, but was out of sight before I could send a second ball after him. Dashing down stream, he re-crossed some thirty rods below, and as he went out on the other side, was

shot by a man from up stream, whom I recognized. By signs he gave me to understand that my ball had passed through the neck; but as it was late, and I was behind my time already, I did not wait for farther conversation, nor did I demand my share, but pushed on homeward.

The wind went down with the sun, and a deep repose appeared to be falling on nature. There was a lazy lolling of the tree-tops on the air, as boats might rock on a heavy ground-swell at sea. But there was no voice nor any appearance of life in all the forest. The stillness was profound, and the hush of nature entered my soul. As I walked slowly along in the glooming twilight, I became strangely sad, or, perhaps, I should rather say, serious, and solemn thoughts filled my mind. The old fancy, and the pleasantest one of all my life, to which I cling with religious faith, returned upon me. I felt that the dead might there visit me again. Their breath was in the charmed air, their voices in my soul of souls! Their invisible forms filled the forest around me, and made holier the rays of the first star that peered down through the branches of the trees. Anon I fancied the stillness broken, by their musical voices singing a hymn of peace. How it floated up into the sky! How it thrilled in the dim arches! How it won my soul with its holy sweetness! I sat down on a rock, and Nora came and lay at my feet. It was dark, and grew darker as clouds swept up the sky and hid the stars. The wind rose, and now moaned in the tree-tops, as when a coming storm foretells its coldness in those low tones.

I had reached a hill, on which I now stood, and looked over the forest. The trees tossed their branches to and fro, and the green hemlocks rose and fell, and dashed hither and thither, looking like the waves of a stormy sea. I fancied myself again on the ocean-shore. The wind-wail grew wilder. Every tone imaginable might be heard. Shouts, as if of sailors on some struggling ship; loud shouts, louder, and now a scream of terror; and at length as the gust grew strong in the branches of a leafless oak above me, I fancied I could hear the whistling of the sea-wind through the cordage of the vessel as she neared the shore, and that grew fiercer and shriller till —crash—a giant hemlock went down on the hill-side, and the wind howled fiercely, and the crash of the great tree through smaller ones, and the howl of the wind, were so wild, that I added my shout to the accumulated noise, and that broke so suddenly on the air that the wind seemed scared and instantly hushed to perfect stillness. It was as if the wind had been a living, longing being, and had been revelling all alone in the dark forest, but was startled at the unexpected presence of a man. At this instant, while my eye was fixed on the surface of the tossing sea to northward, I saw the top of a distant hemlock suddenly grow white, and was astonished, as you may well imagine. In the deep gloom the appearance of the forest had been so sea-like, that but little imagination was necessary to make it perfect. But when I saw a foam-crest on the top of a wave I was not a little startled. Wheeling to the east I saw a rift in the black clouds,

and doubted not that a stray moonbeam had escaped through it, and fallen on the far-off tree.

A half hour later, as I came out on the bank of the creek, and shouted for Joe to ferry me over, I looked up to the sky. It was clear and cloudless. The stars sat silently, calmy, happily on their thrones. The wind was wholly gone, and the moonlight danced on the ripples of the river.

For the memory of a hundred such days in the forest we love Nora, and we love the memory of her brave fellows. There were holier reasons for loving Leo. Of those I have spoken.

XIII.

Wife-Hunting.

XIII.

Wife-Hunting.

ONE winter evening our conversation was about spiritual existence, and the presence of the invisible; and in this, Willis and myself agree substantially on every point; therefore we have no occasion to debate; but when the subject arises, as it frequently does, for it is the pleasantest of all topics to both of us, we sit looking at the fire, and one speaks while the other listens—speaker and listener alternating—until at length we sit silently, and the spirits who have listened to us, I doubt not, whisper to us words that confirm us in our creed.

I mentioned the death of one whom he and I had known and perhaps had loved. For I love many, and so does Willis.

"Speak lower, Phil; he hears you."

"Joe, why is it that we have a way of speaking lower when we talk of the spiritual? Do you think it matters anything to them how loud or how low we speak?"

"No—doubtless not. And yet when we talk of matters of deep interest to the soul it seems to be desirable to reduce our conversation as nearly to the spiritual as

is possible. I would never speak of the dead in other than gentle language, nor of heaven in tones of earthly enthusiasm. I do not believe that on them our voices make any impression, for they know and read our thoughts before we utter them. It is their holy communion with us to-night that has so subdued me; and sometimes I have fancied, even while sitting here, that I should burst into tears, though I have not wept since—since——But let that pass. They are here. Be sure of that, Phil. I heard a voice but a moment since with my spiritual ears, which was none other than the voice of my sainted mother. Her voice has passed away from the earth a score of years. Its very memory exists not save in my own heart. But it was not the memory of it that startled me just now. It was her own self bending lovingly over me, and saying to the troubled waters in my soul, 'Peace, be still;' for they are still, and memory would not have prevailed thus.

"And if you would convince me that I am wrong in my firm belief, you must invent some power to lay the spiritual visitors I have o' nights in this dear old house, and unweave the wizard spells that so surround me here, and charm away the kisses that wake me so joyously at midnight, and the white arms that so fondly enfold me. I know, as you know, Phil, that the forms I see in dreams, not sleeping, but broad-awake dreams, are long since mould; aye, dust—dust—scattered, mayhap, on the wind. I know those lips that so gladden me are ashes, and that the arms whose meek embrace awakes

me, have lost their whiteness and their roundness. It is not those lips and arms I feel. It is not those forms I see. But it is the same kiss, the same fond clasp, my soul receives!"

"And wherefore not, Joe? I am as well satisfied of this as you. I doubt not their presence. A spirit knows no distance, exists *no where*. It is, so far as space and distance are concerned, omnipresent. It does not change place, it has no motion; it is not as we used to say, in analytical geometry, related to any axes. Thus, if at this moment, a spirit is in communion with you, it is not necessarily in this room, so far from the sides, and so far from floor and ceiling. In short, spiritual existence knows no space, and hence, if your gentle mother be in communion with the inhabitants of the faintest star that glimmers yonder through the old oak tree, and desires to whisper joyful words to you, she has but to turn her attention to you and she is with you instantly, and as instantly may return to her converse with the inhabitants of the star. To her, as to all who have passed from the material to the immaterial, America and Asia, the earth and the sun, stars and the material universe, all are present, and she present with all.

"There are distances in the existence which is hers; but like that existence they are spiritual; such for example as exists between heaven and hell—a vast gulf of impassable width, yet so near are they who stand on its two shores that they may easily converse. Distance is not measured there by the passage of sound or of

light, but God is the centre, and all distances depend on spiritual nearness to him.

"Something similar may be true even in this world, and psychological investigators profess to believe that there is no distance between any two souls even in the body. I am much inclined to think so too, for I certainly cannot so strain my idea of soul, or spirit, as to imagine it as residing in a brain or a body. These senses and features of mine are the means my soul has of communion with the world, and my soul has some way of using them, and when I say 'I am here,' I mean my body is here, but as to my soul its locality is no more here, in this spot, than it is by the side of a dear one far away, or in heaven with the sainted; in other words, locality is not one of its properties."

"By-the-by, Phil, talking of spiritual communion reminds me of a story my old friend Mr. Stewart told me, about the way in which he won a wife. There was an odd part of the history which I never believed exactly, for the old man was, I think, a little cracked on that point, but it is worth the telling nevertheless, and the supernatural part let him believe who chooses. A man who was swimming all night long by the side of a wreck, was in no condition to philosophize. But I'll give you his story in his own words as nearly as I can recollect them. I have his manuscript autobiography, but that contains much that is dull. He told me this once on his piazza, when we were smoking away a summer evening.

MR. STEWART'S STORY.

"I was a lonely sort of a bachelor, and had never yet known what young men style 'the passion.' Of passion I had enough as my old man yonder can tell you. I broke his head twice, and his arm once, in fits of it, but he has always seemed to love me all the better, and he clings to me now, very much as two pieces of the same ship cling together when drifting at sea. We are the sole survivors of a thousand wrecks; and of the gallant company that sailed with us years ago, no other one is left afloat. I had been a sailor from boyhood, and when I was twenty-five I may safely say no man was more fit to command a vessel among the mariners of England. And at this time my old uncle died, and left me his fortune. I had never seen him, and hardly knew of his existence, but I had now speaking evidence of the fact that he had existed, and equally good proof that he existed no longer. I was young, strong in limb, and I think stout in heart, and I was possessed of a rental of some thousands per annum. What bar was there to my enjoyment of the goods of life? No bar indeed, but I felt sorely the lack of means of enjoyment. I was a sailor in every sense. My education was tolerable, and I had read some books, but my tastes were nautical, and I pined on shore. You will easily understand then why it was that I built a yacht, and spent most of my time on her. She was a fine craft, suited to my taste in every respect, and I remember

with a sigh now the happy days I passed in the Foam—I used to read considerably in my cabin, and occasionally, indeed weekly, invited parties of gentlemen to cruise with me. But the foot of a lady never had been on the deck of my boat, and I began to have an old bachelor's pride in that fact. Yet, I confess to you a secret longing for some sort of affection different from any I had heretofore known, and a restlessness when men talked of beautiful women in my presence.

"One summer evening I was at the old hall in which my uncle had died, and was entirely alone. Toward sunset I was surprised while over a book, by the entrance of a gentleman, hastily announced, and giving indications of no little excitement.

"'Your pardon, sir, for my unceremonious entrance. My horses have run away with my carriage, and dashed it to pieces near your park-gate. My father was badly injured, and my sister is now watching him. I have taken the liberty to ask your permission to bring him to your residence.'

"Of course my consent was instantly given, and my own carriage despatched to the park-gates.

"Mr. Sinclair was a gentleman of fortune, residing about forty miles from me; and his father, an invalid, fifty years or more of age, was on his way, in company with his son, to that son's house, there to die and be buried. They were strangers to me, but I made them welcome to my house, as if it were their own, and insisted on their so using it.

"Miss Sinclair was the first woman who had crossed my door-stone since I had been the possessor of the hall. And well might she have been loved by better men than I. She was very small and very beautiful—of the size of the Venus which all men worship as the perfection of womanly beauty, but having a soft blue eye strangely shaded by jet-black brows. Her face presented the contrast of purity of whiteness in the complexion, set off by raven hair, and yet that hair hanging in clustering curls, unbound by comb or fillet, and the whole face lit up with an expression of gentle trust, complete confidence either in all around her, or else in her own indomitable determination. For Mary Sinclair had a mind of her own, and a far-seeing one too. She was eighteen then.

"Her father died in my house, and I attended the solemn procession that bore his remains, over hill and valley, to the old church in which his ancestors were laid. Once after that I called on the family, and then avoided them. I cannot tell you what was the cause of the aversion I had to entering that house, or approaching the influence of that matchless girl. I believe that I feared the magic of her beauty, and was impressed with my own unworthiness to love her or be loved by her. I knew her associates were of the noble, the educated, the refined, and that I was none of these. What then could I expect but misery, if I yielded to the charm of that exquisite beauty, or the graces which I knew were in her soul?

"A year passed, and I was a very boy in my continual thoughts of her; I persuaded myself a thousand times

that I did not love her, and a thousand times determined to prove it by entering her presence. At length I threw myself into the vortex of London society, and was lost in the whirlpool.

"One evening, at a crowded assembly, I was standing near the window in a recess, talking with a lady, when I felt a strange thrill. I cannot describe it to you, but its effect was visible to my companion who said instantly, 'You are unwell, Mr. Stewart, are you not?' 'Not at all, madam; why did you think so?' 'Your face became suddenly flushed, and your hand trembled so as to shake the curtain.'

"It was inexplicable to myself, but I was startled at the next instant by the announcement of Mr. and Miss Sinclair. I turned and she was entering, on her brother's arm, more beautiful than ever. How I escaped I do not know, but I did so.

"Thrice afterwards I was warned of her presence in the same mysterious way, till I believed that there was some link between us two of unknown but powerful character. I have since learned to believe the communion of spirit with spirit sometimes without material intervention.

"I heard of her frequently now as engaged to marry a Mr. Waller; a man whom I knew well, and was ready to honor as worthy of her love. When at length I saw, as I supposed, satisfactory evidence of the truth of the rumor, I left London and met them no more. The same rumors followed me in letters, and yet I was mad

enough to dream of Mary Sinclair, until months after I woke to the sense of what a fool I had been. Convinced of this, I went on board my yacht about mid-summer, and for four weeks never set foot on shore.

"One sultry day, when the pitch was frying on deck in the hot sun, we rolled heavily in the Bay of Biscay, and I passed the afternoon under a sail on the larboard quarter-deck. Toward evening, I fancied a storm was brewing, and having made all ready for it, smoked on the taffrail till midnight, and then turned in. Will you believe me, I felt that strange thrill through my veins, as I lay in my hammock, and awoke with it, fifteen seconds before the watch on deck called suddenly to the man at the wheel, 'Port—port your helm! a sail on the lea-bow. Steady! so!'

"I was on deck in an instant, and saw that a stiff breeze was blowing, and a small schooner, showing no lights, had crossed our fore-foot within a pistol-shot, and was now bearing up to the north-west. The sky was cloudy and dark, but the breeze was very steady; and I went below again, and after endeavoring vainly to explain the emotion I had felt in any reasonable way, I at length fell asleep, and the rocking of my vessel, as she flew before the wind, gave just motion enough to my hammock to lull me into sound slumber. But I dreamed all night of Mary Sinclair. I dreamed of her, but it was in unpleasant dreams. I saw her standing on the deck of the Foam, and as I advanced toward her, the form of Waller would interpose. I would fancy, at times, that my arms

were around her, and her form was resting against my side, and her head lay on my shoulder; and then, by the strange mutations of dreams, it was not I, but Waller, that was thus holding her; and I was chained to a post, looking at them, and she would kiss him, and again the kiss would seem to be burning on my lips. The morning found me wide awake, reasoning myself out of my fancies. By noon I had enough to do. The ocean was roused. A tempest was out on the sea, and the Foam went before it.

"Night came down gloomily. The very blackness of darkness was on the water as we flew before that terrific blast. I was on deck, lashed to the wheel, by which I stood, with a knife within reach to cut the lashing, if necessary. We had but a rag of sail on her, and yet she moved more like a bird than like a boat, from wave to wave. Again and again a blue wave went over us, but she came up like a duck, and shook off the water, and dashed on. Now she staggered as a blow was struck on the weather bow that might have staved a man-of-war, but kept gallantly on; and now she rolled heavily and slowly, but never abated the swift flight toward shore. It was midnight when the wind was highest. The howling of the cordage was demoniacal. Now a scream, now a shriek, now a wail, and now a laugh of mocking madness. On, on we flew. I looked up, and turned quite around the whole horizon, but could see no sky, no sea, no cloud—all was blackness. At that moment I felt again that strange thrill, and at the instant, fancied a

denser blackness ahead; and the next, with a crash and a plunge, the Foam was gone! Down went my gallant boat, and with her another vessel, unseen in the black night. The wheel to which I had been lashed had broken loose, and gone over with me before she sank. It was heavy, and I cut it away; and seizing a spar, went down in the deep sea above my boat. As I came up to the surface, a hand grasped my coat. I seized it, and a thrill of agony shot through me as I recognized the delicate fingers of a woman. I drew her to me, and lashed her to the spar by my side; and so, in the black night, we two alone floated away over the stormy ocean.

"My companion was senseless—for aught I knew, dead. A thousand emotions passed through my mind in the next five minutes. Who was my companion on that slight spar? What was the vessel I had sunk? Was I with only the body of a human being, or was there a spark of life left? and how could I fan it to a flame? Would it not be better to let her sink than float off with me, thus alone to starve or die of thirst in agony?

"I chafed her hands, her forehead, her shoulders. In the dense darkness I could not see a feature of her face, nor tell if she were young or old—scarcely whether white or black. The silence on the sea was fearful. So long as I had been on the deck of my boat, the whistling through the ropes and around the spars had made continual sounds; but now I heard nothing but the occasional sprinkling of the spray, the dash of a foam cap, or the heavy sound of the wind pressing on my ears.

"At length she moved her hand feebly in mine. How my heart leaped at that slight evidence that I was not alone in the wild ocean—I redoubled my exertions. I passed one of her arms over my neck to keep it out of the water while I chafed the other hand with both of mine. I felt the clasp of that arm around my neck tighten, and I bowed my head toward hers. She drew me close to her and laid her cheek against mine. I let it rest there —it might warm hers, and so help to give her life. Then she nestled closely in my bosom and whispered, 'Thank you.' Why did my brain so wildly throb in my head at that whispered sentence? She knew not where she was; that was clear. Her mind was wandering. At that instant the end of the spar struck some heavy object, and we were dashed by a huge wave over it, and to my joy were left on a floating deck. I cut the lashings from the spar and fastened my companion and myself to a part of the new raft or wreck, I knew not which, and all the time that arm was wound around my neck and rigid as if in death. Now came the low wild wail of the wind that precedes the breaking of the storm. The air seemed filled with viewless spirits mournfully singing and sighing. I had conceived a strange mad affection for my companion of that night. I never thought of her as anything but a human being. It was that humanity, that dear likeness of life, that endeared her to me. I wound my arms around her, and drew her close to my heart, and bowed my head over her, and in the wildness of the moment I pressed my lips to hers in a long, passionate kiss of in-

tense love and agony. That kiss again unlocked the prison of her soul. She gave it back, and murmuring some name of endearment, wound both arms around my neck, and laying her head on my shoulder with her forehead pressed against my cheek, fell into a calm slumber. That kiss burns on my lips this hour. Half a century of the cold kisses of the world has not sufficed to chill its influence. It thrills me now as then! It was madness, wild idol-worship of the form God gave us in the image of himself which in that hour I adored as never God! I feel the unearthly joy again to-day, as I remember the clasp of those unknown arms, and the soft pressure of that forehead. I knew not, I cared not, if she were old and haggard, or young and fair. I only knew and rejoiced with joy untold that she was human, mortal, of my own kin by the great Father of our race.

"It was a night of thoughts and emotions and phantasms that can never be described. Morning dawned grayly. The first faint gleam of light that showed me a driving cloud above my head, was welcomed with a shudder. I hated light—I wanted only to float on, on, over that heaving ocean, with that form clinging to me, and my arms around it, and my lips ever and anon pressed to the passionless lips of the heavy sleeper. I asked no light. It was an intruder on my domain, and would drive her from my embrace. I was mad.

"But as I saw the face of my companion gradually revealed in the dawning light, as my eyes began to make out one by one the features, and at length the terrible

truth came slowly burning into my brain, I moaned aloud in agony, 'God of heaven, she is dead!' And it was Mary Sinclair!

"But she was not dead.

"We floated all day long on the sea, and at midnight of the next night I hailed a ship and they took us off. Every man from the Foam and the other vessel was saved with one exception. The other vessel was the Fairy, a schooner-rigged yacht, belonging to a friend of Miss Sinclair, with whom she and her brother and a party of ladies and gentlemen had started but three days previously for a week's cruise. I need not tell you how I explained that strange thrill as the schooner crossed our bow the night before the collision, and which I felt again at the moment of the crash, nor what interpretation I gave to the wild tumult of emotions all that long night.

"I married Mary Sinclair, and I buried her thirty years afterward, and I sometimes have the same evidence of her presence now that I used to have when she lived on the same earth with me."

"Not a bad story, that," said Willis, rising and lighting a candle. Then standing with his hands in his pockets, and his back to the mouldering fire in the grate, he mused for five minutes, while both of us were perfectly silent. At length lifting his eyebrows, and smiling somewhat cautiously, as if he feared the smile might be too apparent, he said, in a pleasant tone of cheerfulness,

"Believe it, Phil—believe it. I've had a thousand

proofs of it. And why not? If we may commune when freed from the body, by the swift wings and subtle intelligence of thought, why not as well when the clay detains us? The soul is superior to the clay."

"I'll not dispute it with you, Joe. Doubtless there is much truth in it, and, as in all our speculation about the immaterial, much of poetry that is not truth."

Joe walked to the window and looked out.

"Speaking of an odd way to get a wife, what a glorious night it would be to hunt for one," said he at length, "especially if one could win such a one as our old friend did. Suppose we try it, Phil;" and he turned and looked into my face with a smile.

"Remind me of the history first, and we'll discuss the propriety of the experiment afterward."

"Fred Van Brunt."

"Ah, yes; and a good and beautiful wife, too."

It was a terribly cold night. The highland wind was piercing, but the sky was mockingly clear. Old men said they had never known so cold a night in the valley, and the river closed so tight that they crossed it with horses the next morning. It had snowed three days before some two feet deep, and the sleighing was capital; but he must have courage who would venture into a sleigh that night. And so had Fred Van Brunt.

He was rolled up in robes so that you could see but the tip of his nose, and that was occasionally plunged below the furs that were around him. His hands alone were not encased in fur; on them he had only a pair of

light kid gloves, allowing his fingers to be perfectly flexible while he managed the reins. Two of the most magnificent blacks to be found in America, were before his sleigh, and dashed along the road at a splendid pace. There were no bells on them: the motion of the sleigh was rapid but noiseless; and had it been the evening before Christmas, instead of Christmas evening, a child might have fancied the holy Nicholas himself passing by. But when his horses suddenly sheered from the track, and he sprang to his feet, grasping the reins more firmly, you could have seen that he was a veritable specimen of humanity, aged about nineteen; and from his eye you might possibly have supposed that he was in good spirits. For he was, and his eye should have shown it.

Fred sprang to his feet, and it was well for him that he did, for the next instant he sprang to the ground as his sleigh went over under the fence, and the horses, noble fellows, stopped instantly. Very naturally, too, before looking at the effects of his mishap, he looked at the cause, and was not a little astonished at finding, in the middle of the track, a bundle of rags, containing a child, sound asleep. Now Fred was a boy of rapid thought, and an idea came instantly into his brain, that this child belonged to a woman whom he had met on the road about a mile back, and wondered at seeing her in such a cold night. No sooner, therefore, did he see the child, than he turned about, righted his sleigh, shook the snow out of the robes, and rolled the child up in one, placed it in the bottom of his cutter, and, springing in, turned

his horses' heads back up the road, and in about five minutes had returned a mile toward home. But the woman was not there, so he drove on, and was approaching the avenue-gate when he caught sight of a dark object in an angle of the rail-fence on the road-side. Reining up instantly, he approached it, and was again surprised at finding a resemblance of humanity in rags. But it was only a resemblance, the clay mould, wherefrom the vivid likeness, the essence of humanity, life, had gone. The form of a woman was there, but she who had possessed the form was not. Throwing back the folds of a tattered shawl that enveloped her shoulders and head, he was startled at the marvellous beauty of her face. A calm broad forehead was shaded by raven hair, and her thin features were chiselled with all the lines of aristocratic beauty. About her mouth a smile lingered, as if an angel had kissed her before her lips grew rigid.

Astonished, but not at all discomposed, for Fred was cool-headed, he lifted the fragile form of the dead woman in his arms, and laid it gently in his sleigh, covering it up with the robes that had been wrapped around himself, and drove rapidly homeward. As he passed the avenue-gate the old porter wondered what Mr. Fred had been filling his sleigh with, and as he reached the front of the house, a matronly lady, accompanied by a young girl of rare beauty, came hurriedly to the door. The latter lady spoke first.

"What now, Fred? Where are the ladies? Couldn't

they come? What brings you back so soon? Why didn't you stay? Are they gone out?"

"Softly, softly, Nelly; I have a queer load here. Life and death strangely mixed. You had better go in"—

So, advancing to his mother, with the child in his arms, he explained the matter to her, and under her directions the body of the mother—for such she doubtless was—was conveyed to a room, and the child sent to the nursery for attention.

In the pocket of the ragged dress, which was almost the only covering to the body of the dead woman, was found a small leather wallet, containing only two pieces of paper, on one of which was written in a delicate and beautiful female hand, the commencement of a letter, thus: "Dear my father, when this reaches your hand, if it ever does, I——" and that was all. On the other paper was the certificate of the marriage of Mary Eston and Philip Eston, in the parish church of ——, in the county ——, Ireland, by the priest of the parish. An inquest, held the next day, elicited the facts, that the mother had been seen the day previous carrying her child in her arms, and it was supposed that she was insane from the peculiar manner in which she looked at passers-by, as if afraid that they intended to harm her or her child. The most rational conclusion seemed to be, that she had wandered on in that state of mind until night overtook her, and then, with the thought thus to save her child's life, she had laid her down in the road, and

pushed on to find shelter and send some one to the child whom she, in her weakness, could no longer carry. She had laid her in the road, doubtless, that she might be found and saved should any one pass. Her plan succeeded, as has been seen.

The mother's body lay in the grand room of the old mansion. I have heard those who saw it say that there was never seen a more beautiful form in the robes of the grave. She could not have been more than twenty years of age, and the youth and beauty of the dead girl lent a hideousness to her abject poverty. Long, dark eyelashes contrasted strangely with the marble complexion of the cheek on which they lay, while the same smile, of which Fred had spoken at the first, was still on her faultless lip. She was buried in the family vault, where the Van Brunts were wont, generation after generation, to take their last repose; and Fred, who had fallen deeply in love with her marvellous beauty, insisted on adding to the list of names, already carved on the door-post, that of Mary Eston. His mother adopted the child, now nearly two years old, and under her care she grew up as one of the family.

Mary Eston's childhood was as beautiful as a dream. Her eye was the very soul of pure loveliness, and her forehead had never a darker shade than was thrown there by the tresses that clustered over it. A thousand memories of her childhood cling around me now. I knew it well, and when I left, for a few years, the valley in which I was born and lived till I was sent to travel,

she was of surpassing beauty. Tall and erect, with a mould of limb that was matchless, and features that were like the features of the seraphs in the paintings of the old masters. Her face was one of those which wins you to gaze and gaze until you are lost in wonderment at the exquisite perfection of every part. And yet it would have puzzled you to define that beauty. Her forehead was neither very broad nor high. Her complexion was not brown nor yet alabaster. Her lips were red, but not strangely or uncommonly so. Her eyes, indeed, were beautiful. You were lost if you looked into their depths. It was in them, perhaps, after all, that the great attractiveness of her face lay. You saw in them a pride, a sort of consciousness of nobility of birth, or a hereditary right to homage, yet so softened as you gazed, that it was rather the mournful look of a princess dreaming of a lost throne. She was not proud nor haughty. Her face was a joy to all the country. The children paused in their play if she passed by, to catch one of those sunshiny smiles that were a gladness to their young hearts. Old men turned to gaze after her, and blessed her for the gentle, loving look with which she bowed to them, and young men loved her. All loved her. No one refused to give the homage of pure love to Mary Eston. It is a sublime thing this human love. It is star-like in its calm radiance above all clouds, sky-like in its breadth and depth, and immovable all containing beauty.

Fred remained unmarried fifteen years, and a few

years ago you would have been unable to fix his age between twenty-five and forty, but you would have first said twenty-five. Mary Eston, after refusing a dozen offers, frankly confessed to Mrs. Van Brunt that she loved Fred, and he had been too stupid to perceive it, although, poor fellow, he vowed he had been dying for love of her since he had seen her mother's beautiful face. The scene would describe very well, but I pass it. The result was as might have been anticipated, and I believe Van Brunt is now hunting through Ireland for his wife's ancestry. I hope he may find them.

But I have taken more time in recounting this story than we devoted to it then. After a brief allusion to the history, Joe turned toward the table on which he had placed his candle, and then rang for Anthony.

"The old fellow always outsits us," said he. "I must send him to bed. It is nearly midnight."

"But, Joe, I thought we were to go out and try our luck at finding wives."

"If you say so, it's agreed. Anthony, tell Stephen to have the horses at the door in four minutes. Wrap up well, Phil, for by Jove you shall have a night of it, since you wish it."

In ten minutes we were on the road under a fine moon, and in an hour, after an exhilarating drive, we had reached a country village and an inn at which we had before found tolerably good provender. We here discussed a cup of coffee and a broiled chicken, and a passage from a new

book, which had been our last topic of conversation in the sleigh.

> "The beautiful are never desolate,
> But some one alway loves them—God or man.
> If man abandons, God himself takes them."

There is poetry and truth mingled in the remark, although perhaps it may not be exactly truth, as the writer designed it to be understood. God loves not the beautiful more than others; but, by some strange design of his Providence, it appears that when man abandons, He does often take them.

Perhaps the lovely are less used to coldness, and more accustomed to gentle care, so that desolation is too great a burden. There is a stern pride in some human hearts, that helps those hearts to bear wrong without yielding, and to stand erect under heavy loads of misery; and, in my experience, it has always been true that such stout hearts were in the end crushed by some overwhelming agony for which they were wholly unprepared, and before which they were too proud to bow.

We slept soundly, and breakfasted at nine o'clock—our landlady sat down with us, a pleasant, pretty, country girl, whose husband had a small capital invested in his hostelry. The conversation turned to the same subject as at our late supper the night before, and on my quoting the passage again, the blue eye of the good girl at the head of the table filled with tears, and we looked at her for an explanation of her emotion.

"Ah Sir," said she, in somewhat simple, yet pure lan-

guage, "Ah Sir, I think ye're right about it. God always takes them when men give them up. There was Alice Brown. They say she is dying to-day sir. She was left by the only man she cared to love, and is going to God." And our poor hostess fairly sobbed.

At length I gathered the particulars of the brief story.

Alice Brown was the fairest and the fairyest girl in all the country. Her voice was as musical as the gush of the spring in her widowed mother's garden, and in truth Alice learned to carol gay songs as she sat on the bank by the spring side, and looked up into the serene sky. Her hair was dark, and hung in those glorious tresses that the wind always falls in love with, and her eye had borrowed its beauty from heaven. All loved her, for she loved all. She was the village pet, and who does not know what that means? Almost every country village has a pet, but no other had such an one as she. Her form was dream-like, so beautiful was it; and when it passed you could not believe that you had seen such a perfect human being. That she was the light of her mother's cottage, I need not say; and every mother will believe that she was the light as well of her old heart. They beat warmly together, those two gentle hearts, and ever in unison. All this said our hostess.

Alice loved one, her equal in fortune or in poverty, and as most persons thought, worthy of her love. At all events, Harry was a noble fellow, and ambitious, and had only one check to his ambition, which was his love for Alice Brown. They had been children together, and had

grown to youth and strength, as well of body as of love, side by side.

But Harry was not content with the quiet life he led in the village, and at length his ambition conquered, and he left for the sea. Then came days and years of trial. Sometimes they heard of him, but not often, and it was whispered about that he had forgotten his old love—and Alice grew pale, and one stormy night in the early autumn, she took a severe cold in crossing the street to the post-office after the mail had arrived, and then slowly faded.

Some said she had a letter that night, and that it was its contents that changed her so much. However that might be, it was reported soon after, that Harry was in a wild way of dissipation, and at length came the terrible news of his loss at sea.

Alice bore it calmly, but its effects were soon visible, and the heavenly eye grew bluer and deeper, and holier, and in the dreary winter time they thought she was dying.

"Mother," said she, "I thought not to have saddened you by going first, but so it is. God be my witness, I will come to you if I can; and in the lonesome twilight I will sit beside you, and when you sleep I will lie down too, and wind my arms around you. I did not think to die thus either,—but it's not so very hard. In the morning, mother, we shall know why God made the night so dark."

And many other such kind and gentle words they told

us of her saying to her old mother day by day, as she lay ill in the cottage down the street.

Before our horses were ready, I missed Willis from the house, but thought little of his absence while I pondered on the story I had heard. Such village histories I had known, and I could well imagine the end. I had, in fact, called up before me all the scenery of the death and burial of the sweet girl, whose history had made such an impression on us. I pressed my face against the window and looked out, and, for a half-hour, watched the driving snow, all the time imagining a sad end to her story.

"Why Phil, I say, Phil, come with me, my boy. Here's a glorious scene for us, worth coming a thousand miles to see."

I started from my reverie, and looked around at the face of Joe Willis. It was fairly radiant with pleasure.

"Come down the street with me, Phil. Alice Brown's lover has come back over the sea, and I was there just too late to witness the meeting; but the girl is cured to a certainty. There's no mistaking the look of her face now!"

"And if I might be so bold, Joe, what took you to the Widow Brown's?"

"Joe did not deign me any answer, but I knew his good heart, and that he had gone to offer consolation and aid to a lonely house, which he chanced to find full of joy.

He dragged me along, and nothing loth I followed his lead, and in a few minutes, stood within the door of the

cottage. The pale face of the sick girl was lighted up with serene joy. The mother was full of gladness, her old heart well-nigh breaking with its fulness.

"Ah Sir!" she exclaimed as we entered, "Ah Sir, ye've brought a friend to the house of rejoicing, and it's welcome he is, and welcome any one to a house like this. We've had so much of grieving and sorrowing, that we want to share our joying with all the world. You see, sir, Henry has been telling us that he has always loved Alice, and never thought of leaving her; and the letter she got wasn't from him at all, but from Stephen Gore, the man she said *no* to three years ago, and he sent the bad stories about Henry, and Alice didn't know Henry's writing, and Stephen burned his letters all up. But Stephen was drowned, and Henry wasn't, and he has been wandering the world over since then."

The sailor, a fine-looking fellow, stood near the window, listening to Joe Willis, who was whispering in his ear, and who at length advanced to the widow and Alice, and addressed them:

"Mrs. Brown, I have a very pleasant little house on the bank of the river, which will suit you well, and be pleasanter than this village, by far. My friend, Mr. Phillips, and myself, have a yacht, which requires a careful steady man for keeper and sailing-master. Once in awhile we take a cruise, and then we shall want him with us. But we are not apt to be away many weeks at a time; and Miss Alice will be better able to spare him for our short voyages than to go to sea again. What do

you think of my plan, Mrs. Brown? Will Henry do for our boat-keeper? and will you and Alice keep house for him in the little house?"

The hue of health had begun to return to Alice Brown's cheek when Willis began to speak, and it was a deep blush of crimson before he ceased, only growing pale for a moment, as he spoke of Henry's going to sea again. It was all arranged in an hour, and we returned to the inn; and as we drove rapidly homeward, Joe, full of the joy proceeding from the joy conferred on others, sang verses from old songs all the way.

"I say, Joe, what do you think of going out wife-hunting at midnight?"

"A capital idea, Phil, that was; and I propose we try it again some day?

"Phil, what are you thinking of?"

"'The beautiful are never desolate, for some one always loves them.' Let the quotation end there this time, Joe."

One thing we did get by that adventure, and that was a capital boat-keeper.

XIV.

The Old Church, and Old Friends.

NO calm in all the world is so profound and holy as that which rests in the soul on a summer Sabbath morning in the country. Everything partakes of it. The birds never sing loudly; the winds never wail harshly; the trees shake their branches quietly, and with a musical murmur. The sky seems near the earth, and the sunshine falls with a softness and a balmy sweetness that tells of heaven.

Possibly a citizen might not feel it thus; but even the citizen cannot altogether escape the influence of the quiet which reigns everywhere, and surprised and awed by the stillness to which he is unaccustomed, his soul gradually, but certainly, yields to the holy spell which is over all the world around him.

We rise at the usual hour, and breakfast separately. I do not think we have taken coffee together, at home, on a Sunday morning, in two years. If there is company at the hall, they find their own way to the breakfast-room, at their own hour, and take care of themselves during the day. But Joe and myself always meet on the lawn

after breakfast, and usually stroll a little way from the house into the woods, and sit on the grass, or on the rock seat near the river-side, and talk quietly, in a lower tone than on other days. One habit we have that may be note-worthy: it is, never to appear in dressing-gowns or slippers, nor in a careless dress on a Sunday, at any hour of the day. Toward church time we hear the sound of the village-bell rolling up musically across the forests and over the farms; and at the regular hour the horses stand saddled before the door, and the carriage if there is any one to use it, and we ride slowly down the avenue. Sometimes we do not ride, but walk the few miles to the village, and then we leave the road and find our way among the flowers and along the brook-sides, not loitering, but hastening through pleasant scenes to the most beautiful scene of all,—the village congregation.

If we ride, it is along the country road, half way through the forest, and the remainder by fields of grain or waving grass. Wagon load after wagon load of the families of the congregation are passing along the same road. The long farm wagons, each holding three or four seats, with six or eight persons, are never used except on Sunday, or for an afternoon visit on a week-day.

There is a remarkable uniformity in the dresses of all the different people that you see in these wagons. Black silk dresses abound among the elderly ladies, and pure white muslin is the prevailing style for the children and girls. The young ladies, and the matronly young wives of farmers, have a peculiar style of bonnet and shawl,

from which few vary; while the men, young and old, have the same heavy cloth dress coats with high thick collars, pushing their hair up to the tops of their heads, and destroying the equilibrium of their hats.

Each wagon load that we pass, greets us pleasantly, and we exchange inquiries about the families and family affairs, and part without a good-bye, or even a bow; for are we not all on a pilgrimage together, and all going to the same house?

The bell is tolling as we enter the long village street, and each little white gate is thrown open for the exit of a small company, dressed in gayer apparel than the farmers wear. At the church-door a group of men surrounds the chief entrance, and the ladies alone are in their pews. The men meet to discuss the crops, and the weather, and the few incidents of the six days. It is not till after the first prayer that they enter, and then there is a pause in the service while they pour in at each of the doors, and walk heavily to their seats.

We enter the church door reverently. May it never be otherwise.

That old church is the holiest spot on this earth to us; and those old square pews are the dearest resting-places for our weary bodies and souls that we shall ever find this side heaven.

We were children together; and Joe Willis's father and mother, and my father and mother, used to sit in those pews adjoining each other; and Joe and I used to hold whispered consultations under the curiously-elevated

rail that separated us. There were the same books that they used; the same cushions, now old and faded, but still the same; the pulpit unchanged in any particular, even to its high sounding-board, and the window, half in each pew, was there, with the same old sunshine stealing in on us in the sermon time. Outside the window there was evidence of change. There lay the sleeping congregation, except only those that were buried in the north graveyard, and there lay the old pastor with his people.

Across the church was the seat occupied by Judge Willis, until the death of Joe's father, when the judge took his pew. There, in the olden time, we used to see of a Sabbath morning the saint-like face of Ellen Willis, now gone to God, and there we used at times to hear, above all the congregation, the music of her bird-like voice, soaring away before her to the heaven she was approaching. There, under the pulpit, one by one we have rested the forms of those we had loved, and thence we have carried them, father, mother, brother, and sister, (and dearer than all these) out to their rest in the burial ground.

I say that church is the holiest place on earth to us. Could it be otherwise? There were other scenes to make it holier still, that may not be mentioned here. Scenes when the soul had wings given it to penetrate the distance that separates us from heaven—had eyes to behold clearly the glories that now visit us but faintly in dreams—had power to feel somewhat the breadth and depth of that love which sustained our lost ones, every one, in the trial of the dark hour.

For were they not sustained? When the gloom of night gathered around them, was there not some good hand guiding them, some life-giving voice cheering them, some stout arm for them to lean upon? Else how was it that without fear or faltering, they all entered the unknown country, and spoke words of cheer, and promise, and joy, even when the cloud received them out of our sight?

Blessed be the memory of the old church forevermore.

Blessed, too, be the memory of the old pastor. Mr. Winter was a man of God. For fifty years he walked before that people in meekness and gentleness, but with all the dignity of his holy profession. I can see him now as when I saw him last, his white locks flowing down over his shoulders, his serene eye resting on mine with a look of deep affection; and I can hear his voice full of love, uttering that simple benediction on the departing boy.

"May the God of Joseph bless you, Philip, and strengthen you, and prosper you. I loved your father, and your father's father. I love you too, Philip. May God bless you, my son."

Good old man! When I am weary of the vanity of the world I remember him. When I incline to doubt the existence of true holiness of life, I am glad to remember him. When I am disappointed, harassed, and ready to yield, I remember him, who, after fourscore years of suffering, of wandering and homelessness, was as

calmly confident of the truth of God and his eternal rest, as if he had but yesterday come from that home and were now returning.

His voice was clear and full even at eighty. It trembled sometimes, but with emotion, not with weakness. His step was feeble for many years, and I have known him on a Sunday afternoon to enter the chancel and not go up into the pulpit, and then his voice sounded greater depths in his hearer's hearts than at other times, for they felt more at such periods how near the old man was to his departure.

One morning he was too feeble to preach. It was the last day that I ever saw him in the church, for I left home shortly after that, and was absent for a long time, wandering up and down the world. I believe it was the last day he was ever in the church. He drove up to the door in his low-wheeled gig, and helped himself out, while George Stevens, the son of a wealthy farmer in the congregation, took care of the horse, and Mr. Stevens himself gave him an arm as he reached the ground. He entered the church with a slow and heavy step, but as he entered his form grew erect, he lifted his hat reverently from his head, and looked with a bright eye up to the ceiling of the old house, and felt the inspiration of the place so evidently, that his face assumed a new and almost supernatural glow.

He needed no help down the long aisle, for the strength he had so suddenly acquired sustained him thus far. But as he approached the altar, at which he had offered Sab-

bath sacrifice morning and evening through so many long years, he seemed to feel again his mortality, and reaching out his hand feebly to the rail that enclosed the chancel, he supported himself on it and leaning forward, appeared for a moment to be about to fall. But he advanced at length to a chair, and when he was seated there, his eye roved over the congregation. It sought finally the elders' pew on his right, where sat the old men who had been his counsellors and assistants since he was young. One of them, Solomon Pierson, understood his wish and approached him. To him the pastor communicated his inability to preach, and after a few moments consultation, Solomon resumed his seat, and Mr. Winter rose and offered prayer. There was a profound stillness in all the congregation during the brief invocation of the Divine Presence, and then followed the usual rush of the men who had been waiting without the doors. He lifted his eyes to them sadly, for he had long striven in vain against that heathenish custom. The last one who entered, bringing up the rear, was a boy, with an exceedingly old look in his manner and dress. He wore the usual blue dress coat, with brass buttons and high collar, in which his head was lost, and his boots were of that heavy, noisy sort, that I think are unknown except in our neighborhood. He went with a lingering step down the side aisle, and there was something painfully ludicrous in the gaze with which the old pastor followed him to his seat, before he rose to read some verses of the 107th Psalm.

In those days we had no choir, but the precentor

whose seat Mr. Winter occupied that day, stood near his side and sang, while with one voice the whole congregation joined; and there was never such music in any other place on earth, as was heard in the old church that morning. There were voices that could be distinguished from the rest as they reached the more mournful passages; and the old man himself joined in the last verses, and sang with a clear, rich tone, the words:

"The storm is changed into a calm,
at his command and will,
So that the waves, which raged before,
now quiet are, and still.

"Then are they glad, because at rest,
and quiet now they be;
So to the haven he them brings,
which they desired to see.

"Oh that men to the Lord would give
praise for his goodness then,
And for his works of wonder done
unto the sons of men."

But after that Mr. Winter arose and spoke to the people. He said that he had thought, that morning, to have addressed to them some words of faith and promise, which had reached his heart with much force as he meditated on the events, of which that day was the anniversary. Then, for the first time, it occurred to many present, that this was the day for his annual sermon, since it was the date of his installation, fifty-one years before. There were not many there, he said, who remembered

that day. He saw but four persons in the church who could recall its incidents; and only one was present, who took part in the proceedings as a member of that church. And here he turned toward an old man on his left, and with deep emotion, uttered one sentence in the hearing of us all that impressed itself on my mind indelibly. "They are all gone, my friend, and the church-yard congregation is well-nigh full. Let us go to them." And he paused and bowed his head very low; and before he lifted it, a fear had taken hold of the entire congregation that he would never speak to them again.

A sob broke the stillness. It came from his son Philip's pew; and the old pastor turned his eyes fondly toward it, and then to his people, and, in a few words, told them to go home, for he could not preach that day, and might never preach again, and bade them remember his last words to them so long as they lived; and then his eye kindled again, and his head was uplifted, and his form grew erect, and he looked up steadily, as if through the little semicircular window in the gable of the church he could see that whereof he spoke; and now, in a voice of pure sweet tone and great power, especially above the solemn silence which prevailed, he said:

"These are my last words to you, my people: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God!'"

Many years after that Sabbath morning, I was in a

lordly hall, in the midst of an assembly of noble men and fair ladies. And for the pleasure of the throng, a singer, worshipped by half of Europe, was to pour out her melody. I had heard her, and, like all the others, I waited in profound silence for her utterance. That scene is before me now. I remember the gorgeous hall, the magnificence of apparel, the heavy tapestries, the splendid appointments, the oppression of princely presence. At length her voice was heard; low, bird-like, unutterably sweet; and it thrilled through the hearts of those who listened, till unchecked tears gave evidence of the power of the melody. That opening note was all that I heard; and as she glided through the magnificent strains with which Handel has clothed that sublime passage of the prophet leader of Israel, I was away in the old church in the village, and listening to the last words I ever heard in it from the lips of the old pastor.

Blessed forevermore be his memory! And blessed, too, be the memory of those who were his friends and companions, and counsellors, and supporters. Of Simon Gray and Solomon Pierson, I have spoken. They have gone to their reward. So, too, William Denton, a good man, and holy, has sought another and better country, even a heavenly. We can never enter the old church without thinking of him. He was never tall, and, in his old age he was so bent down as to seem almost deformed. He used to enter the church by the middle aisle, and always paused a moment after he had entered, in silent prayer. Then with a quaint swing of his body, and an

eye singularly turned upward toward the pulpit, he would walk up and take his seat in the elder's pew, and sit there, motionless as a statue, until the benediction.

He was a man of peculiar intellectual power, and had accomplished more reading and study than all the rest of the congregation together.

On the left side of his forehead was a scar which necessarily excited the curiosity of those who saw him. It was the mark of an occurrrence which he never mentioned, and which he would have desired all who had heard of it to forget; but it was an interesting story, for it was startling to think that that old and bent man, tottering feebly to his pew, had once been the leader of all the gay young men in the congregation, and had been himself a young stout man of elegant form and exceedingly beautiful countenance. Such, indeed, he had been fifty years before. He was then the indulged nephew of an old aunt, who supplied him freely with money, wherewith to involve himself in all the difficulties into which money usually leads young men.

There was at that time, living in the house next the church, a family consisting of a father and his two children—a son and a daughter. The former had once been a rival of William Denton in the leadership of the young men; the latter was unrivalled by any other of the village maidens for beauty or for gentleness.

Stephen Grandison had some good, but more bad traits of character, and among other evils he had a taste for somewhat low society. In the city he had formed

alliances with not a few disreputable characters, and had even introduced some of unknown name or fame to his father's house, and the acquaintance of his sister. Mr. Grandison was a weak man, of idle, careless habits of life, and paid no sort of attention to what his son and daughter were doing. Hence, Alice had no means of knowing the contamination of such acquaintances, except as her own pure heart instinctively recoiled from some of the men that her brother presented.

My story must be brief. William Denton had known Alice from her childhood, and had loved her always; but Alice, though she prized him above all her friends, could not say that she loved him. I believe that such was the state of affairs between them, at the time of the occurrence I am about to relate. They fully understood each other, and were excellent friends.

Stephen had become bound in some nefarious transaction to a man from the city, doubtless an accomplished scoundrel, and as it subsequently appeared had sold to him his sister and her fortune. But it was a sale which was not easily effected without the consent of the merchandise disposed of, and Alice was peremptory in her refusal to know the proposed suitor, other than as the friend of her brother. As such she treated him politely, and only politely.

Denton had watched the proceeding with a keen eye, and penetrated the whole. Stephen had quarrelled with him as an excuse to make his visits at the house unpleasant, and thus diminish their frequency. But the eye of

the lover was on all the plot, and with singular ability he had so far discovered the intentions of the two who were plotting against Alice Grandison as to have taken precautions against them, that had hitherto prevented their accomplishment.

The plot however ripened, and a time was fixed for her abduction. The unsuspicious girl was to take an afternoon drive with her brother, and in a lonesome road the pair were to be set upon by a sufficient force to render the brother's pretended resistance entirely futile, and to save him from all appearance of connivance at his sister's fate.

William Denton's close observation had been attracted that forenoon as he strolled in his usual lazy way down the village street. He caught sight of the strange suitor of Alice, talking with a black looking scamp, who stood on the tavern steps, and who, with three companions looking like him, drove out of town five minutes afterward. An hour later, from his usual seat at the window of his aunt's house, he saw Stephen Grandison and Alice drive by in the same direction.

He sprang up and the whole plan was before him instantly. Hastening to the stables he saddled his own horse, while Sam, a lithe and active slave, was getting ready and mounting another, and the two went out together on the south road. Five minutes swift riding brought him within sight of the carriage, and he then slackened his pace:—

"Sam—can you fight?"

"Guess I can, Massa William."

"Do you like to fight two to five?"

"The more, the better, sah."

"Very well, Sam—we are going to do a little fighting this afternoon, and all you have to do is to thrash any one but the lady. You understand, do you?"

"Guess I do."

Sam was entirely trustworthy; and the conversation had scarcely ceased and Sam fallen back to the rear, when the carriage turned into a road which led along the river-bank and suddenly stopped while Stephen Grandison sprang out as if to examine a lynch-pin. This was the preconcerted signal for the advance of the men from the forest, and one seized the horse, while two threw Stephen down and held him as two others approached the carriage. Alice was at first astounded, but recognizing one of the advancing men, she saw that the object of the attack was herself, and prepared to resist so far as she was able, even to death.

But before any one had touched her, William Denton and Sam came up at a thundering pace, and sprang from their horses in the midst of the group. The struggle which commenced was brief and severe. The first blow of Denton's heavy whip-handle prostrated one of the scoundrels, but the whip was wrested from his hand on the instant, and he closed with the second. Sam protected his rear, and a blow from the same whip handle rung on the boy's head with a clear sound, but did him no manner of harm. As Denton closed with his adversary,

he gave him a back trip that sent him flying into the ditch, and at the same instant received a blow on the head which well-nigh despatched him. But rallying to meet a new foe, he had only an instant to see that it was the suitor of Alice himself, when he was blinded by the flash of a pistol in his eyes, and stunned by a ball which passed, grazing his head and plowing a furrow as it went along the temple, and thence by a strange fatality entered the shoulder of Stephen Grandison, who had been released from his pretended durance by Sam's stalwart arm, which had demolished both of his captors. As Grandison fell, the horse sprang over him and dashed down the road with the carriage and Alice, who was by this time insensible from horror.

For a moment the attention of the group was drawn to the flying horse, and in that moment Denton had time to seize his own horse which stood motionless near by, and, springing into the saddle, gallop down the road in pursuit of Alice.

Lifting his horse over the fence at the road-side, he crossed the country for a half mile, and regained the road in time to head the flying animal and to stop him. Then taking measures to restore Alice, which he soon effected, he mounted the carriage by her side just as Sam came up with intelligence that the scoundrels had gone off in a boat, and were pulling down toward the city under the shadow of the river bank, having left Stephen in the road, apparently bleeding to death. Alice did not dream that her brother had any connec-

tion with this affair, but begged William to hasten to his assistance. They drove back by the scene of the fray, and took Stephen, who had fainted, into the carriage, and drove homeward.

The romance of the affair would be ruined if Alice had not loved William Denton after that. He kept the secret well, so that his wife never knew the truth until twenty years later. Stephen Grandison, under the fear of exposure, submitted himself to William Denton's care and management, and they grew old together, and were honered men in the village councils.

But I have wandered far away from the old church in this story. William Denton has long ago joined the congregation in the graveyard, and rests in hope with his Alice.

John Maclean was another of the elders, who died when I was but a boy. He was a stern, harsh man, one of a class that I am thankful is now almost extinct. Religion with him was a duty and not a pleasure. It could scarcely be called bigotry, but it had no grace or beauty. It lent no gentleness to the man, gave no tinge of heaven to the soul. On the contrary, he who would otherwise have been a harmless, inoffensive being, became a terror to the young, and almost an enemy to the old. He had no friends, no allies in life, but walked along his own path, in which no one disturbed him, proud of his own professed humility. No one had fault to find with him, and no one was ever heard to speak well of him.

When the iron-handed and iron-hearted farmer was

advancing toward the prime of life, his wife died, leaving him four sons, who grew up to be strong men, and were married and settled on farms near the village. Not many years later he married a slight, pale girl in a distant city. There was mystery about it; and it was said that she was poor, and had married him for a home and a support, not for love. Others thought it was not so, and that she loved him. Certain it is that in the few years she lived with him, harsh, cold, and stern as he was, she had learned to love him with all the trusting faith of a woman. It was a beautiful picture in the life of the hard man, that clinging love of his young wife; and like all very beautiful things it soon faded, for she died.

What a death was hers! She spoke no last sobbing words of anguish, no reproaches for coldness or unkindness. She only looked into his face from the pillow on which her white cheek rested, one long, long gaze full of the agony of rending love, and meeting only those calm, cold eyes of his, she felt the fluttering of the caged soul. The prison seemed now, as never before, cold, icy cold; and the winds appeared to be driving through it, and the storms pouring down on it; and then she felt as if that driving wind were bearing her away, away; for now he seemed to be more distant from her—now farther off, and not as though he went, but as though she were passing, gliding swiftly, coldly, away from him.

She would speak, but she could not; she would kiss him, but her lips would not move; she would put her tiny white arms around his rugged neck, but her arms

were bound. She wished he would come near to her, but he sat in his chair unmoved. She would smile at him—and she could do that—and she did smile, and the smile was like the blessing of an angel looking back from the threshold of heaven—and even as she smiled, the wind bore her away, away, and she lay there dead, and he sat in his chair and slept; and when he awoke she was with the blessed in heaven, and he was alone on the earth.

But even this only served to harden his features and his heart. She left him two children, a son and a daughter, and he brought them up with iron rule. It was like flowers blooming out among rocks or ruins, to see those two children springing up into youth with all their natural beauty, and purity, and freshness of character unchanged, and almost unaffected by the stern subjection under which they were kept.

Allan was a slightly-formed boy, with a keen, quick, black eye, and a thoughtful cast of countenance. Jessie, the youngest, was like him, and was maidenly and beautiful. They used to walk down the road under the elm row, every Sunday morning, to the church, and sit together in the corner pew behind that in which their father sat in frowning gloom. After her mother's death, Jessie shed many tears, and was very lonesome, for John Maclean was not a man to win love from his children. They feared him, and had none of that affection for him which makes a home happy. They trembled when he came in, for he seldom spoke pleasant words, and usually found fault with Jessie and scolded Allan, and sat gloom-

ily before the fire all the evening. At nine o'clock he called all the household in for prayers, and then saw that every light in the house was out before he retired.

One night, when the bell was rung for prayers, all were present but Allan, and he was not to be found. Jessie professed ignorance of his whereabouts, and none of the servants had seen him since dark. A frown gathered on the Elder's face as he commenced, and his voice was uncommonly harsh.

While he was yet reading, Allan entered, and took his seat in silence. His father paused and looked at him.

"Where have you been till this time?"

"I have been at Mr. White's, sir, spending the evening."

Now, Mary White was one of the prettiest girls in the neighborhood, and a smile passed over Jessie's face at this explanation. But a smile during prayer-time was unpardonable, and the anger of the Elder descended on both of them with a voice of thunder.

Allan had long been growing impatient of his father's severity, and his condition now bordered on madness. He rose from his chair while his father was speaking. His face was pale, and his eye flashed insanely He walked across the room to Jessie, stooped low, and kissed her, saying, "Good-bye, Jessie," and without a look toward his father, who sat motionless with surprise, walked swiftly out of the door. The father, pale and terror-stricken, rushed from the house and called "Allan, Allan," but received no answer.

Through many a lonely year after that, John Maclean called his wandering son, but he returned to him no more.

Jessie was left alone, saddest of all that her selfish brother should have so forgotten her. And the fire blazed on the hearth through five winters, and five times the spring flowers bloomed on the bank of the stream at the foot of the garden, and Jessie Maclean was twenty-one, and very lovely.

But the hour had come for John Maclean to enter the scenes he had so long spoken of. True to his life, his death-bed was calm and confident. He had been somewhat changed by Allan's departure, and Jessie had found him once or twice in tears. His treatment of her, too, was in a measure kinder, but the world saw nothing to indicate that he was not the same stern man.

It was at evening in the summer, and the clergyman who had been his pastor many years, stood by his side, and Jessie knelt at his feet. His large hand, now pale and thin, lay outside the sheet, and his gray hair was carefully combed back from his forehead over the pillow. He had sent for his children, and they were coming. One by one they entered his room, and stood around his bed. The twilight gathered around them, and the Elder's voice broke the stillness.

It was softer than ever before, and they said it trembled as he spoke of days long passed. He recounted much of his life, telling them of its trials, doubts, and difficulties, and spoke penitently of his errors. Most of all, he longed to see Allan, but he came not; and having

charged his children solemnly for their future lives, he prayed earnestly for his wandering son. His voice grew fainter and fainter, and more and more broken, and at length ceased entirely. An hour passed, during which he seemed to sleep heavily. Then a sound of a horse's feet was heard, coming swiftly toward the house, and he woke suddenly, and staring wildly in Jessie's face, said, "Tell Allan I blessed him;" and a shiver passed through his giant limbs, and so he died.

At the moment Allan entered and threw himself down by the bedside; but there was no mistaking the countenance of death, and deep silence reigned in the room, broken at length by Allan's sob.

It was dark, but Jessie felt her way along the bedside to Allan, and knelt by him, and put her arms around his neck and whispered, "He blessed you, Allan;" and Allan thanked God audibly, and they two wept together while the pastor prayed.

The bell tolled sixty-nine in the solemn night time, and all the people knew by the passing bell that Elder Maclean had gone from among them. Old men woke and turned restlessly, and were afraid to sleep again, and rose, and sat at their windows till the morning dawned, watching the clouds that drifted across the stars. It was strange, unpleasantly strange, to think of John Maclean as dead and standing before God. Children crept from their rooms to their mothers' doors, and asked who was dead; and hearing that it was the gaunt and harsh old man, rejoiced heartily, and slept more soundly for the re-

lief they felt. No one wept for him but Jessie; and she not much nor long.

A week after that Allan and Jessie left the village together. They had some difficulty with the older brothers, in which Allan impetuously silenced them, and took his sister away with him. Years passed, and no one heard of them, and the village changed, and the church grew older.

One autumn day a hearse entered the village, followed by a single carriage. They passed down the street to the church, and a servant left them, to inquire for the sexton. He was easily found, and, with his aid, a coffin was lifted from the hearse, and carried up the aisle, and placed under the pulpit. Shortly afterward the sexton was seen digging a grave by the side of Elder Maclean's, and old Mrs. B——, who lived across the street, instantly suspected the truth. Putting on her shawl and bonnet, she walked across to the church door, and entered. Two men and a lady were kneeling by the open coffin of a child. Jessie Maclean brought her first daughter to sleep by the side of the old Elder.

Her husband and brother, with herself, were the mourners. Slowly, and after the usual custom, the people began to fill the church, and the clergyman who had been sent for, came up the aisle. The older brothers had left the village two years before. A prayer was offered, and there were many tears shed; and every one passed by the coffin, and looked on the beautiful sleeper; and then they laid her in the grave, and left her.

"Will you go with us, Allan?" said the husband of Jessie. Allan stood by the head of his father's long grave, looking steadily down at the grass above it.

"Will you go with us, Allan?" he repeated, but without reply.

"Come, Allan, come," said he, at length, seizing his arm.

"Robert, promise to bury me here."

"I will exchange the promise with you."

"It shall be so."

Grasping each the other's hand, they strode rapidly to the carriage, whither Jessie tearfully followed them, and they drove away.

I have met Allan frequently, of late years, in the city, and Jessie sometimes comes to the village; but Allan, never. In the church in the city, one Sunday, not long ago, I sat by her side, and starting up from a dreamy listlessness (*mea culpa!*) I was for an instant carried back to the old church in the olden time, and turned my eye swiftly around, half fearing that the elder had seen me sleeping. But I saw only the cold, calm face of Allan, who was seated near me, and looking up at the lofty roof, and around at the stained windows and massive pillars, and then at Jessie's face again, I realized how far away was the boyhood that I dreamed of.

It is such memories as these that throng around the old church. Sometimes I dream of it by night, and in my visions see eyes that have long ago dimmed, and cheeks that blush no more. Sometimes in a deep sleep,

after toil, I hear, as in former days, a brave old psalm of the covenanters sung to a grand tune, and as I listen I separate the voices as I used to do in the old church, and at length the sound grows fainter and holier, and holier and fainter, as if it were floating away to heaven. I listen and awake. Still receding, yet still more heavenly, I hear those voices in such songs as seraphs sing, until at length they die away in the far-off harmonies that the freed spirit alone is capable of hearing.

What wonder that the old church seems like a sacred place, or, that when we enter it on a calm summer morning, and sit in the old pew that is so lonesome now, we should be lost in such memories as these?

We have a younger pastor since the death of Mr. Winter, and, as he rises to open the service, we wake from our communion with old times, and listen with due reverence to the voice of prayer. The village choir make pleasant music aided by an organ of not too great force, and the sermon is heard by an attentive congregation. The open windows let in the clear, rich air from under the shadow of the trees that stand immediately around the church. Sometimes a stray bird enters and flutters around the ceiling and dashes out again. Often a bee is seen, humming and buzzing around the walls, and sometimes a commotion among the children indicates that a wasp has fallen into a pew and startled them. And at length the service is ended, and the pastor remains in the pulpit until all but a few of the congregation have left; then he descends, and holds a brief conversation

with those that remain, and joins his wife and child who wait him in their pew near the pulpit; they walk out together, and down the street, bowing to the people as they pass through the crowd at the door, where the wagons are standing, and where the ladies are talking awhile before they separate.

We return to the old house more rapidly than we went; usually at a fast trot; and speak to no one on the way. Then follow luncheon and the usual afternoon employments for the day, and dinner ushers in the twilight. That Sabbath twilight is an hour of deep calm and peace. We usually sit on the river shore for an hour, watching the last rays of the daylight as they slowly recede from the sky, and, returning to the house, we close the day with singing, in our way, some of the fine psalms and brave tunes that used to fill the old hall with music and praise in other days, when voices sang them that are now unheard here but in memory, since they have learned the language and the music of heaven.

But it is not alone on Sabbaths in the old church, nor on Sabbath evenings, that we remember our old friends, the companions of former years.

Where a man has lived from his boyhood in the same place, and has seen the same trees grow green and sere autumn after spring, and spring after autumn, in succession for one or more scores of years, it is to be supposed he has formed attachments to the families in his immediate neighborhood, and that he has some intimacies which will last him to his grave. For life in the country

is very much made up of such attachments and intimacies. But in our case it has not been as in others, for strangely the old families are scattered, and the friends of our childhood and youth are almost all gone.

The retrospect is sometimes a mournful one. From any window of the Hall we can see the residences of the companions of our younger days, occupied now by strangers with whom we have no acquaintance. The only places still in possession of their original proprietors are some miles distant from us, and, as a result of new ties, our family associations are less intimate than formerly.

Of those who are gone, it is pleasant to talk, and sometimes in the evenings we sit and relate the incidents of earlier days with a great deal of the freshness of their occurrence, and thus renew the memories of the friends that are not.

But in the histories of those families there have been sorrowful pages, and he who will attempt to relate the half of the stories of pain, suffering, and bereavement that any one circle can furnish within a score of years, will have a task for a life-time. For sorrowful incidents are brief and swift in occurrence, but long as moonbeams, and as beautiful in recollection.

Sometimes we linger on such stories, and sit till the small hours grow long, remembering how one and another and another has silently entered the unknown country, and left a vacant place and a holy memory.

Some old men that were fine specimens of the olden time in the days I speak of, who gathered around them

the dignities, and honors, and rewards of good long lives, and departed in peace to the possession of better inheritances. Some young and gentle ones who left their loves and hopes, and all the bright joyances of life by the dark road of death. Some matrons that slept, spite of the agonizing voices that would wake them. Some strong young men that acknowledged the power of decay, and the strength of bonds of dust, that stout youth could not prevail to loosen.

Doubtless, to some it has appeared strange that these pages should have recorded so many deaths; and I can only explain it by supposing that our circle has been more bereaved within the years that we remember, than have others.

And of the living I can say little, for they like not to see themselves named in such pages as these. But the dead cannot reproach me with naming them, except in dreams, and I take care so to speak of them that I have no fear of night visions. And the dead, their fame, their lives, their pleasantness, and their gentleness, all belong to us who live. If then I would give a faithful picture of life in the old house, I must tell of those that were, or of those that are our friends; and since I may not speak much of those now surrounding us, lest I give offence, I have told, and will continue to tell, of those who have gone from us, but who revisit the old house in the calm and pleasant evenings. Thus you may appreciate somewhat the beauty of a dim firelight in the library, with a silver moonshine lying across the carpet, and the curious

old chairs standing in shaded corners, into which, one after another, steal the forms that have occupied them in other days.

Such ghostly visitants never frighten us. You might think the evening very stupid, were you to see us keeping profound silence hour after hour, as we do sometimes. You could not think that we were sleeping, for our eyes never close, but rove around the room incessantly, seeking the eyes of our guests. But such evenings are never stupid, nor sad. The memories of the past are not sorrowful, though that past be full of sorrow. There is always something to cheer in it, and we remember it cheerfully; and there is one comfort, even a sublimity, in the past. It is its immutability. There it stands, stern, calm, changeless. There at least the eye and the heart may rest, assured that it will never change, that what you love in it will never be less worth loving, its beauty will be forever radiant, its clouds and skies grand in their immutable gloom, or immeasurable glory.

I call into yonder old carved oak chair a ghost, and proceed to sketch his lineaments.

Years ago I had a friend whose name is recorded on earth only on his grave-stone. He was a brave boy, of stout heart and flashing intellect. He was my junior by a year, and my superior in everything. His heart was warmer and less selfish, his arm stronger, his eye clearer, and his life better. He was the only son of his father, who owned a large place within a mile of our houses. He had a sister, whose good soul was the guide of his life,

and if I mention the name of Minnie Winter, the granddaughter of the old clergyman and daughter of an older brother of Philip Winter, you will understand all, without my writing the story of their love.

He was our close companion in younger days, and accompanied Joe and myself in many of our wanderings.

We had then a boat, by no means equal to the Phantom, but a gallant little craft, in which we weathered not a few storms. In one of our longest summer cruises he accompanied us, as was not uncommon, and for a fortnight he enjoyed it with the keenest delight. After that his eye grew dull, and he seemed to be listless and inactive, so that I became convinced that he was ill, though he stoutly denied it. In spite of his assurances we put the helm up for home. At the end of the second day after that he gave up entirely, and took to his berth. I grew exceedingly anxious and remained all night on deck. The breeze was fresh, and though the sea ran high, the little boat flew swiftly through it.

Toward daylight Henry crept out on deck, and looked over the wild sea. Poor boy. He was in a raging fever, and the sea-air was at first delicious, but then it chilled him, and wrapping his coat around him he rested his head on the taffrail, and asked me when I expected to reach home.

"To-night, Harry," said I; "keep up your spirits."

"To-night," said he, with a sort of convulsive delight, "why, I thought we were two days out yet."

"We have come like the wind itself all night, and if

this breeze holds ten hours we shall be under the bank at home."

His joy seemed excessive, and I believe that his mind began to wander from that moment, for his next words were a half shout of exuberant mirth, and then he sank into a stupor, and I directed the men to carry him below. He was delirious long before we reached home that night. During an illness of two weeks he never lost the idea that he was still at sea, and the dash of the waves was constantly in his ears. I say never; it was not till the last day of his life that the idea left him at all, and then only for a little. Minnie and his sister sat by him. Minnie held his hand and bathed his forehead, and pressed her lips to his hot cheek.

"How she rolls!" he muttered. "How she rolls! Where's the wind now? Blowing seaward did you say? We shall never, never reach land again; never, never! What will we do Minnie, out at sea in this craft, and the wind blowing off-shore? Out into the blue sea, and the blue waves around us, and the blue sky above us, and away, away, on, on!——Why, this is strange. I thought that was a wave, and its a mountain. I thought that house was a sail. Isn't it queer Minnie that I shouldn't know that I was at home? I have been dreaming all sorts of strange dreams about wandering all over the world with you, and I thought we were at sea, and those blue hills seemed to be waves, and we were rocking on them."

It was evident that his mind was still wandering, for the room was dark and no hills were within the range of

his vision. His eye gleamed with unnatural light, as he continued:

"It's hot. Summer is not often so hot on the river. I say Minnie, let's take a walk down toward the shore."

He ceased again for awhile, and then the ocean dream returned, and again he was on the sea, and flying swiftly from the shore. An hour after that he was out of sight, and the waves of life that were tossing around us hid him from our view.

Minnie Winter has searched for him all over the ocean of life since then, but has not found him. Sometimes she hears a glad shout, borne to her across the waves, and turns toward it, for she knows his voice. Sometimes she catches the gleam of a white sail on the horizon, and the glad thrill of her heart tells her his bark floats there. For I thank God that the horizon of life is the horizon of that other land too, and sometimes, often, floating on this sea, we catch sight of vessels upon that, and oftener hear the voyagers as they sing joyous songs.

I was out on a knoll near the house toward evening, just before the moon rose, and, lying on the grass, I looked up at the sky as the stars came into it. Was it fancy, or was it true, that I heard his voice again as I heard it in the last words that he uttered before his reason quite left him. It floated, rang through the air with a clear, triumphant shout, not as in the fevered dreams of his dying hour, but as if he were strong again, and stood with me by the tiller of my boat, and the breeze was fresh on the starboard quarter, and we were flying swiftly,

joyously, as of old. It must have been my fancy; for I have often, since he died, heard a melodious cry coming out of some blessed distance, some hallowed dream-land, some far-away resting-place, shouting those same glad words—"On, on, keep her up; keep her up; how she flies through the blue. We shall reach land to-night, and then, hurra for home and Minnie!"

Lo, the ghost of my friend hath departed, and now in the deep shadow of the heavy curtain, sits another form.

The moon to-night is shining on my forehead, and on my paper, and my hand, and my pen; but its silver light falls on thy grave, thou fairest of our childhood's friends! In such a night "I cannot make thee dead." I know the grave has won the clay, I know the silence that has fallen on the melodious voice, the solemn seal that closes the ruby lips. Yet from the years, the hoarded years, come faintly now the songs and sounds of younger days, and, among them all, that voice is pure and clear and very melodious, and it floats away from me now into the far deep sky. Thou art gone to God! Pure as an autumn morning star-beam, thou didst not fade from the sky! Thou art only hidden from us by the grosser light which our senses cannot penetrate, and when the night comes to us we shall see thee again!

If you could go with me now to a glen not far away, and a willow-shaded nook, I would point out to you the very spot where, years ago, there stood a rude bench, on which many times I have seen the fair girl I now write

of sitting, and by which I once saw her kneeling. That old cottage under the hill which has echoed many a time the sounds of our young and glad voices when Joe Willis and I knew little of the hardships of the world, and loved with all the impulsive love of childish days, is occupied by strangers, and its broad hall and large rooms now ring to the laughter of those that knew not her whose gentle spirit haunts their very chambers.

She was as pleasant as a dream. I was a mere boy then, and with the privilege of a boy and a near relative, used to lie at her feet on the grass, and gaze into her face, and watch the play of her exquisite features. It was there I learned first how high, and pure, and worshipful, humanity may be.

She has passed now into the presence of her God, and if to-night she is seated on the margin of some glassy lake, or by the bank of a prattling stream of the living waters of that land, and yet can hear, as I believe she can, the words which our souls whisper, if our lips do not, then am I sure she smiles as she listens, and looks up to God and blesses him with new songs, that she was permitted to pass hence, as she was, long, long ago. And yet she loves us! The blessed ones forget us not, and she has been here to-night, and has kissed my forehead as of old.

And when I look into the eyes of a comparative stranger, which nevertheless have a familiar gleam, I cannot resist the impulse to gaze, forgetful quite of the long lapse of years, and the consequent decay of beauty.

None who were so lovely then remain as lovely now. The lines of life are deeply marked on many countenances, and griefs and cares have hollowed their rosy cheeks, and dimmed their merry eyes. The voices of those days are pleasant only in memory. Sometimes, indeed, a child, (the child of one once young and lovely,) will warble a note from an old song that with magical effect recalls the hushed melodies of our childhood. But a look, a thought, a heart-pang, teaches us that we are changed, and they are changed, and all is changed; and then, oh! how we long for the time when there shall be no more changes.

She was young and beautiful. What need to add that she was loved. Surely I need not add that she loved, for such as she live on affection, and die for lack of it. Her father devoted his fortune and his life to her; and she was heiress to a large estate. As might be expected, she had numberless suitors of every rank and variety. I cannot now remember all of them, although I then kept the run of them tolerably well. But of all, there were only two that appeared to have any prospect of success; and the village gossips were occupied in discussing their relative chances.

Frank R—— was the gayest, best-hearted fellow in the world; and had you seen him on his horse by the side of Sarah D——, you would have said he was made for her, so wild was his laugh, and so joyous her response. Yet, had you been behind the closed shutter of the window in the front of the large white house on the hill, as

they rode by, and had you there watched the compressed lip, the broad, calm forehead, the pale face, and the speaking eye of Joseph S——, as he saw them passing, you would have prayed to God that that fair girl might belong to that noble man, even as I, a boy, then prayed.

God has answered my prayers. When the long way was travelled over, and the rugged and difficult steep surmounted—when her fairy foot was pressed on the rock at the summit of the hill of life, and her eyes gazed into the blue deep sky with longing gaze, there, even there, beyond the blue, his outstretched arms received her, and his embrace was Heaven!

Go preach to blocks and stones, ye who believe that love is of the clay! Go preach to the dead, ye who deny the immortality of the affections. Go reason with trees, or hills, or images of wood, or with your own motionless, lifeless, icy souls, ye who believe that, because there is no marrying yonder, there shall be no embracing, or because we may not use the gentle words "my wife," we may not clasp these sanctified forms in our own holy arms! I tell you, man, that immortality would be a glorious cheat, if with our clay died all our first affections. I tell you that annihilation would be heaven, if I believed that when my head at length rests on its coffin-pillow, and my lips sink to the silence and repose of death, these loving eyes will never look into mine again, this pure clasp never be around my neck, this holy caress never bless me more!

But see how I hasten in advance of my story. And

yet, like Canning's knife-grinder, I remember now that I have no story to tell, or at best it is a simple history.

She loved Joe. His calm and earnest way of loving her, won her whole soul. He did not say much to her in company, nor of her, but when they were alone, or only some of the children near, his low voice would be musical, and she sat entranced with its eloquence. I have seen them seated on the bench by the side of the stream, and have heard him lead her gentle soul, step by step, with him from earth to stars, and then from star to star, until she seemed to be in heaven with him, and listening to the praises of the angels.

I am unable to tell how it happened that Joseph S—— left his profession (which had been law), and entered the ministry. The father of Sarah D—— was one of a small class of men, who not only deny the truths of our most holy creed, but take every opportunity to cast ridicule on its teachers. It was, therefore, with great pain that his daughter observed his coldness and rudeness to Joseph S——, and she was not surprised, however much she was grieved, when an open rupture rendered the suspension of his visits at the house absolutely necessary.

They had never spoken of love. Each knew the secret of the other's perfect affection, and what need then of words to tell it. It would have been but the repetition of hackneyed phrases. And yet there is no music in the world so sweet as those three words, "I love you," from the lips we love to kiss. But the father of our gentle

friend had feared the existence of some bond between them, and peremptorily required his daughter to break it if it did exist. She replied to him, relating the simple truth, and he desired her to refuse thenceforward to see or speak to Joseph. A month of deeper pain than can well be imagined succeeded this command, during which they did not meet.

It was on a moony night in August that she walked out with me (then a boy five years her junior), and sat down on the bench by the side of the stream. The air was clear, the sky serene, and no sound disturbed us; but the soft voice of the wind among the tree-tops made a pleasant music, and we listened and were silent. The stillness was broken by the voice of Joseph S——.

I will pass over that scene. I dare not attempt a description of it. It was my first lesson in human suffering, and though I have learned it over and over since then, yet I have never seen more agony than those two felt, as they parted that night to meet no more on earth.

He bowed his lips to her forehead, and murmured the solemn word "Forever." She woke at that word, and exclaimed with startling vehemence, "No, no, there is no such word, Joe."

"We shall not meet again on earth, my gentle one."

"And what is earth? Her tall form grew more queenly, and her dark eye flashed divinely, as she rose and exclaimed, in clear and silvery tones: "And what is earth? These things must end. I will name a tryst, dear Joe, and you shall keep it. If you pass first into

the other land, wait for me on the bank, and if I go hence before you, I will linger on the other shore until you come. Will you remember ?"

"I will live and die in this memory."

She lifted her face to his, and her arms to his neck, and they clung together in a long, passionate embrace. Their lips did not separate, but were pressed close together, until he felt her form cold, and her clasp relaxed, and he laid her gently down on the old seat, bowed over her a moment, in prayer, and was gone. I heard him say, "Take care of her, Phil," and so I strove to recall the life that had gone from her lips and cheeks and eyes. It came slowly, and she woke as we wake the morning after death has entered our charmed circle, with an oppression on the brain, and a swimming swollen senselessness of soul.

At length she remembered all; and raised herself with a half-articulated exclamation of agony, broken by a sob; then fell on her knees by the bench, and buried her face in her hands, and remained thus for nearly half an hour.

When she arose, her face was calm and serene. It wore that same exalted look until she died.

I think she took cold that night, she was never well afterward, and the next winter she passed at the south, returning in the spring, very fragile, but very beautiful.

Joseph S—— was sent abroad by one of the Boards of Missions of the Church, but his health failed, and he resigned his commission, while he travelled through the Eastern world.

Three years fled with their usual swiftness. To Sarah D—— they were very slow and painful years, yet she was happy in her quiet way, and no one dreamed of the strange tryst she was longing to keep on the other side of that dark river, which men so shrink from. She grew feebler daily as the summer and autumn advanced, and in December she was evidently dying.

One day her mother had been out of the house, perhaps making calls; she returned at evening, and among other incidents of news which she had learned, she mentioned to Sarah the death of her old friend Joseph S——.

The fair girl was reclining in her large arm-chair looking out through the closed windows at the snow on the ground, and the pure moonlight which silvered it. There was no startling emotion visible as her mother mentioned the fact which to her was the most solemn, yet most joyful news the world could give; for now, how much nearer was their meeting! I saw a smile flash across her face as the joyful news reached her ear. I saw her lips move as if she invited even then his spiritual embrace. I saw her forehead raised to feel the caress which I know she felt! She was silent for many minutes, and then spoke in feeble, yet very musical accents, and I, boyishly, wept aloud! Then she smiled, and looked at me with finger upraised, and said, "Wait a little while longer, dear Phil." And then, after a moment, she said, "Mother, is the snow very deep?"

"Not very, dear; why did you ask?"

"Because, if it were deep, I thought it would be difficult for old Mr. Smith to find our lot in the graveyard. Are all the head-stones covered, mother?"

"What is the matter, Sarah? What if they are covered?"

"Mother, dear, it is useless to conceal it from ourselves, or from one another. You know, and I quite as well, that I am dying. I have not wished to live, only for one thing I did long for life, and I dreaded to meet death all alone! but now I shall not. Philip will tell you what I mean when I am gone. Yes, gone, dear mother. I shall not be here any longer. You will be here, and father, and you will rise and walk about, and visit, and go in and out, and sleep and wake again, and so on day after day, and I shall have no part any longer in your cares and joys;—Dear Mother"——and as she uttered the last two words, she put her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her fondly, and sank back into her chair again. I sat at her feet watching her matchless features. A smile was flitting across them, now there, now gone, yet each time it appeared, it lingered longer than before, until it became fixed, and so holy, so very holy, that I grew bewildered as I gazed, and a strange tremor passed through my body.

The breath of peace was fanning her glorious brow! Her head was bowed a very little forward, and a tress escaping from its bonds, fell by the side of her pure white temple, and close to her just opened lips. It hung there motionless! No breath disturbed its repose! She slept

as an angel might sleep, having accomplished the mission of her God.

Oftentimes since then I have heard a voice from heaven as melodious as that which the prophet of old heard declaring the blessing of the righteous dead! To-night I have been hearing it—it is faint, indeed, but clear, and oh how thrilling, and it sounds like her voice chanting a grand old psalm!

> "And thou shalt walk in pure white light,
> With kings and priests abroad!
> And thou shalt summer high in bliss,
> Upon the hills of God!"

I know not under what palm tree of Chaldea, or by the shadow of what rock in Hindoostan, or under what ruin in time-hallowed Egypt, the clay which once was my friend, of mine own kindred, awaits the resurrection. I have knelt in the silvery moonsheen of the highlands by the grave of that other friend of early, holy years! But when, as last night, Joe and I speak of them, our thoughts linger not long, either at the one grave, or at the other. We only think of the rending veil and the embrace which awaited her when she became an angel!

But there are some friends of later years than those I have named, who are now but memories. Of the old families I have mentioned as remaining in the neighborhood, that of my cousin, Mr. Wilton, is to us one of the most valuable. I have returned this very evening from his house, where I have been unexpectedly and sadly de-

tained for more than a week, by the most mournful task of life, that of watching till one of the angels of the earth is permitted, after much pain, weariness, and longing, to escape into the still and more congenial atmosphere of heaven. One more is added to the list of our departed friends, and at the risk of wearying my readers with sad stories of death-scenes, I will add this one here, for it was verily Euthanasia.

She is gone! No longer shrinking from the winter wind, or lifting her calm pure forehead to the summer's kiss, no longer gazing with her blue and glorious eyes into a far-off sky, no longer yearning with a holy heart for heaven, no longer toiling painfully along the path, upward and upward to the everlasting Rock on which are based the walls of the city of the Most High; no longer here, she is there; gazing, seeing, knowing, loving as the blessed only see, and know, and love.

Earth has one angel less, and heaven one more since yesterday. Already, kneeling at the throne, she has received her welcome, and is resting on the bosom of her Saviour. If human love have power to penetrate the veil, (and hath it not?) then there are yet living here a few who have the blessedness of knowing that an angel loves them.

Her sister has not moved from the coffin-side since she was placed in it. The bright-eyed boy has sobbed himself to sleep; and Effie, her pet, is even now demanding leave to kiss aunt Effie's lips once more; and yet again and again, while her big tears drop on the marble cheek of the silent and beautiful sleeper.

Twilight has fallen on the lonely earth. The stars are mournfully clear and calm. A little while ago, as I stood on the piazza, a wail as of a soul in agony fell on my ear. That wail that Joe and I were speaking of not long since. It was the wind in the lofty pine trees shading the house; and the wail changed sadly, and then with a wild melody, into a sound as of the far-off songs of the triumphant ones who may hold her now in their embraces; and while I listened, it passed away, away among the stars.

As I entered the door again, I heard a sudden burst of grief, and looking up, saw old Simon, the colored coachman, sitting in one of the large hall chairs, with his face between his hands, and his head bowed quite down between his knees, weeping uncontrollably. Going up the stairs to my own room, I perceived the door of the little reception-room on the landing place standing open; and turning in, I met Mr. V——, the young rector of the parish; and as he advanced to take my hand, he burst into tears, and could not speak.

You might search the country through, and find no one so universally loved as Effie Wilton. She is mourned sincerely by all. More tears have been shed in the village to day, than in months before, for every family has lost a friend.

A message came over to the hall last week that she was failing; but when, in accordance with the wish of her father, who has always depended much on my friendship and support in hours of trouble, I drove over to see her,

I was astonished at the great change that had taken place since I last saw her; and as it was impossible to leave her, I sent back my horse with a note to Joe that I should remain with Mr. Wilton until the end. It was her wish also. "You alone know my heart," said she, "and to you alone, in these last days of my lingering, I would talk of the blessed visions that beguiled my younger days, of the pleasant dreams and hopes I then cherished, and of the better and brighter hope I now have of meeting and realizing them all—those dreams and visions, I mean, in the land to which I go." So I lingered by her side until she left me there; and I lingered a day longer to watch her clay, and to offer such consolations as might be, to those who have better right to mourn for her than I.

She was a child of fairy beauty, marvellously so in the lustre of her deep blue eyes. As she grew older, there was observable an increasing purity of complexion, and at the age of fifteen her face was "dazzlingly beautiful." Her hair was dark, not black, but clustered in tresses, or masses, rather than curls, around her forehead. She usually drew it back plainly, however, so as to expose a massive temple very pure and white, and a brow that was strangely calm and imposing in so young a child.

A painful disease of the spine began about this time to be perceptible, and the great wealth of her father was devoted to visiting all parts of the world in search of a cure for the terible malady. This cure was but partially effectual, and at the age of eighteen Effie's form had lost its

perfect shape and was in fact distorted. She knew it. She knew that she was no longer queenly. She knew that her noble forehead, and her speaking eye, and her finely-shaped head contrasted fearfully with her body; but she never murmured at God's will, only asking him to teach her how to remove her soul farther and farther from her body, and from all things of earth. Her life became an exquisite study. It was worth all the romances in the world, to see that noble girl schooling herself into a forgetfulness of the things she once loved so well, and into a knowledge of those higher and holier things which those who have not long to live know how to appreciate. Her success was gradual, but certain. There were as you may well imagine, not a few struggles of the spirit, not a few suppressed griefs, not a few nights passed in wakeful and prayerful agony. There are struggles of this sort going on in the world daily of which men do not dream. There are rivers of woe, pent up in great broad souls, until they spread to oceans; and storms are blowing over them, and tempests toss them, and they dash wildly to and fro under sunless, moonless, starless skies. And then the hand of God is stretched over them, and the "Peace, be still" of his melodious voice floats above them on a gentle wind, and sunny days and nights not starless, resume their alternation across those souls.

So it was with her. And though the ocean never subsided, yet the voice of God had been heard to say, "thus far and no farther shalt thou go," and the waves obeyed Him.

Who could help loving her? Imagine her then at nineteen the idol of her father and of a brother and sister, each one of whom would have won your love in spite of you, and tell me if there be in all your knowledge, a picture of more sublime and perfect beauty.

But there remained a cup for her to drink which was more bitter than all she had tasted before. I know that I have already in this volume rendered myself liable to be laughed at by some, and scoffed at by others, for the opinions I have indicated about human love. Be it so. I know no subject in the range of my pen which I better love to linger on, and I ask no readers but such as believe with me that God's last gift to Eden was given with a smile. Scoff on! But could you stand with me to-night by the coffin of Effie Wilton, and look at the slumber which is so holy and so profound, and know her history as I know it, you would seek some still place where you could ponder on the lesson of that life and its end, and you would not again deny that there are in this world many wrecks of early hopes and early aspirations, many fallen temples in which young hearts have worshipped fervently, many altar-fires gone out, nay, many crumbling altars on which lie the ashes of high hearts that were burned for incense there.

He who loved Effie Wilton deserved her love, but that was all. He never knew even that much. She had always received him as a friend, but never as a lover. He used to read to her, and she has told me of the throbbings of her heart when his fine voice gave such feeling

expression to the songs of Uhland, or the divine minstrelsy of Goëthe. I betray no confidence now when I say that she loved him, for he knows it now, though yesterday he did not. She told him herself last night, and this morning I handed him a package from her which contains, I doubt not, a fuller story than I can give.

Briefly then, she knew that death was her only inheritance. There was a voice within her warning her of that. She determined resolutely, nobly, to resist his desire to link his life to hers. "If I live three years longer, I will marry him," said she to me one day.

"And if he changes?"

"Out on you, my friend! You wrong his nobleness. He will never change."

She was right. This conversation with me was after he had made known his love. The communication was to her the most stunning blow she had received. She had no idea of it, until one evening when she was walking under the great trees in the park, with her shawl wrapped around her, although it was a summer evening, and leaning, as was her wont, somewhat heavily on his arm. His voice grew tremulous and very low, and at length the story of his love was told in a few swift words. He felt her tremble at the first, then she pressed closer to him, and closer, and closer, and his arm stole around her, and at the last word he bent over to look into her face, and held her up in his arms. She had fainted. He carried her hastily to the house, made some hurried excuse, and she was at length restored, and retired. Next

day she wrote to him a carefully-worded letter, and the next day he left for Europe.

Sneer or scoff if you dare, hack of the world, whose soul is broken and galled, and made utterly worthless by the harness you have been working in so long! Sneer or scoff at her, if you dare! Your God disdained not to be with her in her agony, and His strong arm was around her all the night, and thenceforth all along her pilgrim path, until He drew her closer, close to His breast; and she rests there—oh, how peacefully—to-night!

She grew feeble so slowly that it was scarcely noticed, and she spoke little of it. It was a blessing to sit and look into her meek and saintly eyes. She read much, and rode out in the carriage daily, visiting the poor when able, and bestowing her smiles wherever she went.

Two years more stole from many a village maiden's cheek its bloom, but she grew more beautiful as she faded away.

At length S—— returned from Europe, and was again at her side. Six months more passed, and she no longer left the house. When I went over to the house, last week, she welcomed me with a pleasant smile as she lay on a couch in the large parlor, saying, "Ah! you are come, whom I much wanted to see."

Last night she was evidently dying. At nine o'clock S—— was sent for, by her request, and she saw him alone. When we were again admitted to her room, he was seated on her bedside, holding her hand in his own, and he looked up at us with a mournful smile as we

entered. He had discovered his right to hold that hand, and to be the last on earth to give her up to heaven.

Were I to paint the scene which that room presented, I should make but a miserable caricature. It was not to be painted. There were tones that would be lacking, and varying expressions of countenance, and flitting smiles of heavenly beauty and sweetness. Then there were sacred words of love, and some sublime verses of an old hymn chaunted in the silver voice that was next hour to be among the purest of the Seraphim; and there were kisses and farewell words, yet not like other farewell words, as if she were going and yet not going; and there was a long embrace, and a whisper of the matchless lips, and a faint kiss; and then we knew that God loved her better than we, and had gathered her to his holy assembly.

We will bury her in the old church-yard when the Sabbath evening twilight comes down, for so she wished it. We will plant flowers there, too, and watch them carefully, and not without tears, so that the stranger who passes her grave may read her name, and say that some one lives who loved her. There the village maidens will lead their rustic lovers, and tell them the story of her holy life, and pledge above her repose that love, of whose joy she (thou, angel girl, knowest how true this is!) died ignorant.

Thither, should God ever give to me one of gentle faith to cling with woman's love to me, thither I would direct her footsteps in that hour of all hours most

sacred, and as the Sabbath stars come into the sky, look up to heaven from her resting-place, and pray for such strength to live and to die as was graciously given to Effie Wilton.

XV.

Later Years.

FOR a week the rain had poured down without ceasing, and the streams had risen beyond all precedent. Never had there been such a freshet within the recollection of Jacob Stimson, the father of Hugh the village landlord, and Jacob was by far the oldest inhabitant left in the county. At length the storm was over, and on the seventh afternoon from its commencement, the sun broke out through the clouds, and flooded the valleys and the mountain sides with indescribable glory. I had been waiting for a pleasant day to drive over to the village; and, taking the box-wagon and the bay horses, I drove down the valley, and up the long street to the store; and while Stephen sat outside, I went in to make some small purchases.

The group of worthies who sat on the counter with their feet swinging, or on the heads of nail kegs, and the edges of boxes of goods, was a group that I desired not to be among; but my entrance seemed opportune to them, and a subject of debate was referred to me for an opinion. Pending my delivery of this, a dark cloud

came over, and Stephen drove the horses under a shed, and came into the store to tell me that a thunder shower was approaching.

This announcement created a sensation, and I learned that intelligence had been received from the upper part of the creek, that the large dam below Jacob Small's farm was weak, and could not bear much more of a freshet. If the thunder shower should prove heavy, it might add the drop too much; and if that dam gave way, it was impossible to tell how many of those below it would stand the pressure.

But the dam had not waited for the thunder shower, and even while we were talking of it, a loud cry from the side of the creek indicated some new catastrophe, and a boy ran in to say that the strong current was over its banks and carrying away mills and houses.

The terrors of that evening will not soon be forgotten in the village. It was a scene of wild confusion until all the houses near the banks were emptied, and then a short respite was allowed while we watched the rising stream.

I had of course remained in the village, and when the shower was over I sent Stephen out with the horses to explain my delay, directing him to return for me in the morning, as I intended to remain during the night.

The sun had set with unclouded splendor, and the night was almost as light as day. The moon was not quite full, but its rays were brilliant and clear, and we worked till nine o'clock at various points along the stream. Just when we had finished and were resting for

a space, a messenger came into the village saying that the creek had overflowed the island and swept away the hut of old Abram, a negro, who lived there with a single grandchild.

Old Abram had been a family servant in his youth, and was now a sort of village property. He had a peculiar faculty at a hundred different employments, and no one seemed to imagine it possible to get through a spring without his services in one or another of his capacities. Universally known as he was, it was with a thrill of horror that we heard of his danger and possible death, and the whole village population hastened down to the island.

About a half mile below the village was a point where the creek divided, running in a broad, shallow stream on the one side of a barren patch of land, while on the other it found its way through a deep and dangerous channel. The upper end of the island was covered with willow and alder bushes, that usually protected it from the wash of the creek. Near the lower end were three trunks of old trees long since dead, which stood in gigantic decay, while between them Abram had erected a cabin in which he had lived for many years, and which his friends had made as comfortable for him in every respect as could be desired. His only companion was his grandson, a boy of fifteen, who was the veriest imp in the country, and was as universally detested as his grandfather was valued. Their access to the island had been over a long piece of drift timber which Abram had elevated to the dignity of a bridge across

the deep and narrow channel. How he had allowed this to be swept away while he was on the island I know not, unless it was the sudden effect of the rush from the broken dam. But as we approached them it was manifest that Abram and his boy had little chance of again reaching the main land. The creek was sweeping furiously over the entire breadth of the island, leaving in sight only the cabin and the three tall trunks of trees, now swaying to and fro in the fierce current. On the roof of the hut, leaning against one of the trees, was the old man, while, cat-like, the boy sat perched in the crotch over his grandfather's head, grinning and chattering as we could see even at the distance of nearly a hundred yards. All near approach was impracticable, and the idea of bridging the torrent was preposterous.

A hundred plans were suggested, but the only feasible one, that of drifting timber over to them, seemed too dangerous to attempt, for one heavy plank might carry them away, with the hut and the trees, into hopeless destruction. Now one cried one plan, and another another. The women wept, and wrung their hands, as if their own children were in the stream, and the men ran foolishly up and down the bank shouting to Abram to hold on for his life, as if he needed any such advice. But all help of man seemed vain, and the old man appeared to feel it, for he lifted his hands in the moonlight, and I saw that he was praying. It was not the first time either that I had seen Abram talking to his God; and in that hour of his trial it was comforting to us, who loved the

poor old man, to know that his lips needed no teaching in words of supplication to Him who holds the waters in his hand.

Years ago, when Joe Willis's mother entered the dark valley to pass through, that old man was the most sincere mourner among the servants. He had lived in her father's house since she was a child, and had been freed from slavery by her desire. The memory of his faithful affection for her had preserved him from ever wanting aught in this world that money could supply, while his own simple, yet earnest faith had, I doubt not, prepared him long ago to enter that world which he seemed now to be approaching in a scene so terrible.

At length some of the men selected a long piece of timber, and a rope was secured to the end to guide it. Contrary to the earnest solicitations of the wiser, they launched their craft, and it swept down over the island. At first it seemed to approach the old man with a slow and easily-managed course, but suddenly whirling in an eddy it dashed against the frail hut and stove it into a hundred pieces, which went whirling down stream, while Abram clung with both arms around the trunk of the tree on which the boy was perched, and which now swayed more heavily downward with the increased weight. A cry of horror went up from the crowd, and at that moment the thunder of a horse's hoofs was heard as he came down the road at a long gallop. The next instant I saw Joe Willis on Ibrahim his black horse, and I did not doubt that the old man was saved.

Willis's keen eye took in the whole scene, and without pausing or even drawing his rein, he rose lightly in his stirrups, swept the river with a quick glance, turned Ibrahim on the same swift gallop up the river road, and, at a hundred rods distance, lifted him over the scrub oak hedge, dashed down the abrupt bank, and into the flood.

For a moment I doubted, as the swift current whirled them around and downward, but only for a moment. Ibrahim and his master had breasted such floods before, and heading the stream gallantly, the good horse resisted its course, and advanced slowly, but steadily, toward the middle, so that he reached the upper end of the island, and after a desperate struggle planted his fore-feet on the edge. Here, after two ineffectual attempts, in which the soft muddy bank, now covered with a rushing torrent, yielded to his weight, he at length obtained foothold, and lifted himself and his rider to the level of the plain which used to be called jocularly, "Abram's corn-field." Over the entire surface the water was pouring in a strong flood, but though the bottom was soft and uneven, Willis succeeded, without farther difficulty, in riding down to the trees. He was just in time, for Abram's hold was relaxing as Joe caught him, and shouted to the boy to jump. The boy refused. "Jump, you dog, or I'll leave you to swim for yourself," we could hear Joe shout; and the boy now obeyed. Swinging the old man across the pommel of his saddle, and directing the boy to sit firmly behind without holding fast to him, Joe guided the horse carefully toward the edge of the island, and as he

plunged into the deep and wild current, Joe threw himself from his back, and laying one hand on his mane, swam by his side, while the boy, with his usual impudence and skill, assumed the saddle.

The intense interest of the whole populace assembled on the bank had produced profound silence during all this time, and they now followed the struggling group down stream, as they were swept along slowly nearing the shore. When within a rod of the land, Abram fell from the horse. He had lain prostrate across the pommel of the saddle, and Joe had kept him on; but his feeble grasp relaxed, and Joe failed to catch him.

"Let the reins alone, you young scoundrel," I heard Joe shout as he left the horse, and dove for Abram. He seized him the next instant, and by a violent effort, succeeded in reaching land, at almost the same moment with Ibrahim, who stood neighing and pawing the ground as if he felt all the greatness of the work he had accomplished. And then a shout went up in the forest that drowned the roar of the torrent.

By the time that all this was over, the air had grown cold; and as Joe laid the old man on the bank, I could see that he was himself in a condition to need assistance. For several weeks I had fancied that he was not well, and before the next evening after this gallant adventure, he was in a violent fever.

For three weeks I watched by him from morning till morning, and then he was pronounced convalescent; but he had suffered much, and was far from believing him-

self to be mending. On the contrary, he insisted that he had within him some deep-seated disease, which crushed his spirits, and prevented his regaining his accustomed vigor and health.

The summer passed slowly along, and we never left the old house from May to September.

Seated on the old stone steps, under the deep shadow of the large pine trees which overtop the front of the house, and reach almost a hundred feet into the sky with their dark impenetrable green, we whiled away the forenoons of the summer, reading or talking; and when the evening came down with all the twilight glories of our American summer evenings, we returned to the library, and looking out of the large window, watched the fading light in melancholy silence. We grew sadly stupid, both of us; but sought no remedy for the blues, rather loving them and cherishing them.

Sometimes, but not often, we drove out in the carriage. We never went on horseback. Ibrahim was in the stable constantly, except when the groom took him out for exercise; and then we would often sit and watch him flying across the park, or up the long avenue of elms; but I do not think that Willis felt one moment's ambition to be again on him.

But one evening when the autumn chill had suggested a fire of wood on the broad hearth in the south room, and we sat before the crackling logs, and enjoyed the warmth and ruddy beauty of the flames, Joe suddenly appeared to rouse himself, and resume his accustomed cheerfulness.

"There must be an end to this, Philip."

"To what, Joe?"

"To this miserable way of living, rather of dying; for I haven't been more than half alive for six months."

"I have been hoping that the autumn air would invigorate you."

"No, Phil, it will not. I believe that one thing only has oppressed me, and that is the fear of dying. I confess to you frankly that I have been all summer long bowed down with the idea that I should never get well. It would be romantic, sentimental, poetic, for me to say that I do not care to live since those I love best are dead. And you know well that those I love best of all, not even excepting you Philip Phillips, are on the other side of the deep river. But I do love to live. I do desire health and strength, and long life. I have no wish to rest yet. It is cowardly to shrink from living only because the companions we thought to live with are gone; it is weakness to desire to join them before we have accomplished anything here. I trust that when the hour and the moment arrive, I shall be found ready, and the staff on which I lean will stay me then. But for the present I would live. I have much to do here, much to plan, much to complete, and well as I love the pleasant company in the other country, I love the old house and the people here too, and by my faith I love this body and breath of mine. Phil, we must take advice. Let us ring for Anthony and send him after old Doctor Wilson. We will have a talk over it."

So the Doctor came the next day, and examined Joe, and gave no opinion about his case, but returned the day after with a friend, a physician of some note in the city, and they two formed a clear diagnosis of the complaint. And the conclusion to which they came was that no medicine would effect a radical cure, but that a sea-voyage, and a long journey of pleasure, would renovate the whole man. "You must make up your mind to it, Joseph," said Dr. Wilson as he was leaving; "We can't spare you here, but we can do without you better for a year or two than forever."

And so it was settled. The old house must be deserted and we must go on far travel. I say we, for it never occurred to either of us then that one could travel without the other, and it was a sad blow to both when the circumstances arose which made it necessary for me to remain at least a few months longer, and that with a faint hope of joining Willis in the following spring. And we made all ready for the departure. The evenings grew more pleasant and gay. The old house was filled with company, all the country around coming to see us before we should leave them; and Lucy and her family made their home with us. Long and pleasant were the talks we had of distant countries and the scenes through which we were to pass, and when the necessity for my remaining became apparent, we talked the more of our probable meeting at Alexandria or in Palestine.

He sailed from New York. The Phantom kept us company till Fire Island light gleamed on the larboard

beam in the early evening, and I then hailed Henry to send me a boat, and pressed my old friend's hand and left him. As my little boat danced across the water to the Phantom I looked back and saw him leaning over the rail, with his heavy coat buttoned up to his chin, and the dark look of sorrow on his face reached me even then. I gained the deck of the Phantom, and he was still there; and as I took the helm and we came into the wind and bore away for our old home, he lifted his hat once and waved it toward us, and I saw him no more.

I returned to the old house and closed it, leaving the housekeeper in charge. Anthony had as usual accompanied his master. Years rolled on and Joe Willis remained a wanderer, and long ere he returned, the new employments and enjoyments of life in the city had ensnared me, and our pleasant life in the old house was forever ended.

Sometimes we go there, but it does not appear as it used. Joe and myself think we are unchanged, but we cannot enjoy the calm, quiet life, we used to love so well, and a week at the old house ends in a fit of ennui. Our city homes are full of life and gaiety, and we hasten back to them. In the winter we have sometimes taken sleigh-loads of laughing, boisterous children, or young people from the city, and driven out to the bank of the river. The housekeeper, having notice of our projected visit, has opened the rooms, and the fires are blazing gloriously in the fire-places.

So it was in the only sleighing that we had last winter.

We went out with a pleasant company of friends to show them the old house whereof they had heard so many stories. It was dinner-time when we arrived, and Willis did the honors of his old home with all the grace and dignity of the stately judge who preceded him. But after dinner was over, and when they were beginning to make merry in the large drawing-room, and the sound of music, and the laughter of young, gay, light-hearted boys and maidens rang through the hall, I thought it sacrilege, and stole out and up the stair-case, with noiseless foot-step, to the door of my own rooms; and as I passed along I saw the door of Willis's room open, and by the blaze of his hearth-fire saw the same old drapery, and the dark furniture, and the massive carved bed, and in the deep window stood my friend with his arms folded, looking out into the white moonlight, and down the leafless avenue, and away toward the spire of the village church and the resting-place of Ellen Willis.

THE END.