

"Wherefore did my angel-mother
Thus enforce her dying prayer?
—Yet what right had I to seek thee,
Thou, thy uncle's wealthy heir!

"Thus my spirit cried within me;
And that inward strife began,
That wild warfare of the feelings
Which lays waste the life of man.

"In such turmoil of the spirit,
Feeble is our human strength;
Life seems stripped of all its glory:
—Yet was duty lord at length.

"So at least I deemed. But meeting
Toward the pleasant end of May
With thy uncle, here he brought me,
I who long had kept away.

"He was willful, thy good uncle;
I was such a stranger grown;
I must go to hear the reading
Of a ballad of his own.

"Willing to be won, I yielded.
Canst thou not that eve recall,
When the lilacs were in blossom,
And the sunshine lay o'er all?

"On the bench beneath the lilacs,
Sate we; and thy uncle read
That sweet, simple, wondrous ballad,
Which my own heart's woe portrayed.

"'Twas a simple tale of nature—
Of a lowly youth who gave
All his heart to one above him,
Loved, and filled an early grave.

"But the fine tact of the poet
Laid the wounded spirit bare,
Breathed forth all the silent anguish
Of the breaking heart's despair.

"'Twas as if my soul had spoken,
And at once I seemed to know,
Through the poet's voice prophetic,
What the issue of my woe.

"Later, walking in the evening
Through the shrubbery, thou and I,
With the woodlarks singing round us,
And the full moon in the sky;

"Thou, my Ellen, didst reproach me,
For that I had coldly heard
That sweet ballad of thy uncle's,
Nor responded by a word.

"Said I, 'If that marvelous ballad
Did not seem my heart to touch;
It was not from want of feeling,
But because it felt too much.'

"And even as the rod of Moses
Called forth water from the rock;
So did now thy sweet reproaches
All my secret heart unlock.

"And my soul lay bare before thee;
And I told thee all; how strove,
As in fierce and dreary conflict,
My stern duty and my love.

"All I told thee—of my parents,
Of my angel-mother's fate;
Of the vow by which she bound me,
Of my present low estate.

"All I told thee, while the woodlarks
Filled with song the evening breeze,
And bright gushes of the moonlight
Fell upon us through the trees.

"And thou murmured'st, oh! my Ellen,
In a voice so sweet and low;
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'Would that I had known thy mother,
Would that I might soothe thy woe!'

"Ellen, my sweet, life's companion!
From my being's inmost core
Then I blessed thee; but I bless thee,
Bless thee, even now, still more!

"For, as in the days chivalric
Ladies armed their knights for strife.
So didst thou, with thy true counsel,
Arm me for the fight of life.

"Saidst thou, 'No, thou must not waver;
Ever upright must thou stand:
Even in duty's hardest peril,
All thy weapons in thy hand.

"'Doing still thy utmost, utmost;
Never resting till thou'rt free!—
But, if e'er thy soul is weary,
Or discouraged—think of me!'

"And again thy sweet voice murmured,
In a low and thrilling tone;
'I have loved thee, truly loved thee,
Though that love was all unknown!'

"And the sorrows and the trials
Which thy youth in bondage hold,
Make thee to my heart yet dearer
Than if thou hadst mines of gold!

"Go forth—pay thy debt to duty;
And when thou art nobly free,
He shall know, my good old uncle,
Of the love 'twixt thee and me!'

"Ellen, thou wast my good angel!
Once again in life I strove—
But the hardest task was easy,
In the light and strength of love.

"And, when months had passed on swiftly,
Canst thou not that hour recall—
'Twas a Christmas Sabbath evening—
When we told thy uncle all?

"Good old uncle! I can see him,
With those calm and loving eyes,
Smiling on us as he listened,
Silent, yet with no surprise.

"And when once again the lilacs
Blossom'd, in the merry May,
And the woodlarks sang together,
Came our happy marriage day.

"My sweet Ellen, then I blessed thee
As my young and wealthy wife,
But I knew not half the blessings
With which thou wouldst dower my life!"

Here he ceased, good Thomas Harlowe;
And as soon as ceased his voice—
That sweet chorsing of woodlarks
Made the silent night rejoice.

[From Fraser's Magazine.]

PHANTOMS AND REALITIES.—AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

(Continued from Page 468.)

PART THE FIRST—MORNING.

VII.

"I AM not about to relate a family history,"
he began; "but there are some personal
circumstances to which I must allude. At
nineteen, I was left the sole protector of two
sisters, and of a ward of my father, whose
guardianship also devolved upon me. It was
a heavy responsibility at so early an age, and
pressed hard upon a temperament better adapt-

ed for gayety and enjoyment. I discharged it, however, with the best judgment I could, and with a zeal that has bequeathed me, among many grateful recollections, one source of lasting and bitter repentance."

"Repentance, Forrester?" I cried, involuntarily.

"You may understand the sort of dangers to which these young creatures were exposed in the spring-tide of their beauty, protected only by a stripling, who knew little more of the world than they did themselves. Upon that point, perhaps, I was too sensitive. I knew what it was to struggle against the natural feelings of youth, and was not disposed to place much trust in the gad-flies who gathered about my sisters. Well—I watched every movement, and I was right. Yet, with all my care, it so happened that an offense—an insult such as your heartless libertines think they may inflict with impunity on unprotected women—was offered to one of my sisters. Our friendless situation was a mark for general observation, and it was necessary that society should know the terms I kept with it. My enemy—for I made him so on the instant—would have appeased me, but I was inaccessible to apologies. We met; I was wounded severely—my opponent fell. This fearful end of the quarrel affected my sister's health. She had a feeling of remorse about being the cause of that man's death, and her delicate frame sunk under it."

"Perhaps," said I, "there might have been other feelings, which she concealed."

"That fear has cast a shadow over my whole life. But we will not talk of it. I must hasten on. There was a fatal malady in our family—the treacherous malady which is fed so luxuriously by the climate of England. My remaining sister, plunged into grief at our bereavement, became a prey to its wasting and insidious influence. You saw that the servant who opened the door was in mourning? I have mentioned these particulars that you may understand I was not alone in the world, as I am now, when the lady you have seen came to reside in my house. At that time, my sisters were living."

"And she?"

"Was my father's ward, of whom I have spoken. During the early part of her life she lived in Scotland, where she had friends. Now listen to me attentively. Gertrude Hastings lost her mother in her childhood; and upon the death of her father, being a minor, her education and guardianship devolved upon my father, who was trustee to her fortune. At his death, which took place soon afterward, the trust came into my hands. It was thought advisable, under these circumstances, that she should have the benefit of wiser counsel than my own, and for several years she was placed in the house of her mother's sister, who lived at no great distance from the English Border. It was my duty to visit her sometimes." He hesitated, and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"Well—I entreat you to proceed."

"Let me collect myself. I visited her sometimes—at first at long intervals, then more frequently. Every man in his youth forms some ideal, false or true, of the woman to whom he would devote his love. Such dreams visited me, but my situation forbade me to indulge in them, and I resolved to devote myself to the charge I had undertaken, and to forego all thoughts of marriage. I never found this conflict beyond my strength until I saw Gertrude Hastings."

I was struck with horror at these words, and shuddered at what I feared was yet to come. He perceived the effect they took upon me, and went on:

"You are precipitate in your judgment, and I must beg that you will hear me patiently to the end. I will be brief, for I am more pained by the disclosure than you can be. Why should I prolong a confession which you have already anticipated? I loved her; and every time I saw her, I loved her more and more. I was justified by the circumstances that drew us together—the equality of our births—the connection of our families. She was free to choose—so was I. I knew of no impediment, and there was none at the time she inspired me with that fatal passion which, when it grew too strong to be concealed from her, she was unable to return."

I breathed more freely; but seeing the emotion under which poor Forrester was laboring, I kept silence, and waited for him to resume.

"I despise what is called superstition," he said, "as much as any of those bald philosophers we are in the habit of meeting. When they, or you, or I, talk of supernatural agencies, we must each of us be judged by the measure of our knowledge. Ignorance and unbelief evade the question they fear to examine by the easy process of rejecting the evidence on which it rests. If the evidence be trustworthy, if it be clear and coherent in every particular, if it be such as we should be bound to admit upon matters that come within the range of our experience, I have yet to learn upon what grounds it can be rejected when it relates to matters of which we know nothing. Our inability to refute it should make us pause before we heap odium on the witnesses who vouch for its truth."

Forrester was proceeding in this strain, apparently under an apprehension that the disclosure he was about to make required some prologue of this kind to bespeak credit for it, little suspecting that there were incidents in my own life which rendered me too easy a recipient of such statements. But I interrupted him by an assurance that I was quite prepared to believe in things much more extraordinary than any which he could have to relate. He then returned to the narrative.

"Gertrude's aunt had been bred up in Scotland, and was a staunch supporter of the old customs, and a stickler for the popular faith in the ceremonies that are practiced there on cer

tain anniversaries. On one of these occasions, Gertrude, whose imagination had, probably, been affected by the stories she had heard concerning them, was induced, half in play and half in earnest, to try the virtue of one of the charms prescribed for the Eve of All Hallows. We might safely smile at these things, if they did not sometimes, as in this instance, lead to serious results. You see I am relating it to you calmly and circumstantially, although it has blighted my existence. The charm worked out its ends to a miracle. The table was laid out with supper, the necessary incantations having been previously performed, and Gertrude, hiding behind a screen, waited for the appearance of the lover who was to decide her future destiny. They say there was a long pause—at least it seemed so to her—and then a footstep was heard, and then the figure of a man entered the room, and seated himself at the table. Trembling with terror, she looked out from her hiding-place, and saw him clearly within two or three yards of her. The chair had been so placed that his face was exactly opposite to her. She scanned his features so accurately, that she remembered the minutest particulars, to the color of his hair and eyes, and the exact form of his mouth, which had a peculiar expression in it. The figure moved, as if to rise from the chair, and Gertrude, struck to the heart with fear, uttered a loud shriek, and fell in a swoon upon the ground. Her friends, who were watching outside, rushed into the room, but it was empty."

"And that figure—has she never seen it since?"

"Never till to-night. *She recognized you in an instant.*"

My amazement at this narrative nearly deprived me of the power of speech.

"What followed this?" I inquired.

"A delusion that has occupied her thoughts ever since. It took such complete possession of her, that all arguments were useless. When she was asked if she believed it to be real, her invariable answer was that it was real to her. I suffered her to indulge this fancy, hoping that one day or another she would recover from what I regarded as a trance of the mind; but I was mistaken. She always said she was sure of your existence; and looked forward to the realization of her destiny, like one who lived under an enchantment. By slow degrees I relinquished all hopes, and resolved to sacrifice my own happiness to hers, if the opportunity should ever arrive. After this she came to London, broken down in health, and rapidly wasting away under the influence of the protracted expectation that was destroying her. Then it was I first met you. I had some misgiving about you from the beginning, and prevailed upon her to describe to me again and again the person of my spectral rival. It was impossible to mistake the portrait. My doubts were cleared up, and the duty I had to perform was obvious. But I determined to make further inquiry before

I revealed to either what I knew of both, and having heard you speak of your birth-place and residence, I went into the country, satisfied myself on all points respecting you, and at the same time learned the whole particulars of your life. Still I delayed from day to day my intention of bringing you together, knowing that when it was accomplished my own doom would be sealed forever. While I delayed, however, she grew worse, and I felt that it would be criminal to hesitate any longer. I have now fulfilled my part—it remains for you to act upon your own responsibility. My strength exerted for her has carried me so far—I can go no further."

As he uttered these words he rose and turned away his head. I grasped his hand and tried to detain him. He stood and listened while I expressed the unbounded gratitude and admiration with which his conduct inspired me, and explained, hurriedly, the fascination that had held me in a similar trance to that which he had just described. But he made no observation on what I said. It appeared as if he had resolved to speak no more on the subject; and he exhibited such signs of weariness and pain that I thought it would be unreasonable to solicit his advice at that moment. And so we parted for the night.

VIII.

I pondered all night upon the history related to me by Forrester. In the desire to escape from the clouds which still darkened my judgment, I endeavored to persuade myself at one moment that Forrester was trying to impose upon me, and at another that he must be laboring under a mental aberration. The pride of reason revolted from the incredible particulars of that extraordinary narrative; yet certain coincidences, which seemed to confirm their truth, made me hesitate in my skepticism. If I had related to him what had happened to myself, he would have had as good a right to doubt my sanity or veracity as I had to doubt his. This was what staggered me.

I sifted every particle of the story, and was compelled to confess that there was nothing in it which my own experience did not corroborate. The fetch, or wraith, or whatever it was that had appeared to Gertrude, was a counterpart illusion to the figure that had appeared to me. Upon her memory, as upon mine, it had made so vivid an impression, that our recognition of each other was mutual and instantaneous. That fact was clear, and placed the truth of Forrester's statement beyond controversy. It was competent to others, who had no personal evidence of such visitations, to treat with indifference the mysteries of the spiritual world; but I was not free, however much I desired it, to set up for a philosophical unbeliever. All that remained, therefore, was to speculate in the dark on the circumstances which were thus shaping out our destiny, and which, inscrutable as they were, commanded the submission of my reason and my senses.

It occurred to me that, as Gertrude's residence beyond the border might not have been distant many miles from the spot where I imagined I had seen her, it was possible—barely possible—that her appearance there might have been a reality after all. This supposition was a great relief to me, for I would gladly have accepted a natural solution of the phenomenon, and I accordingly resolved to question her upon the subject.

I thought the next day would never come, yet I shuddered at its coming. I was eager to see her again, although I dreaded the interview; and I will frankly acknowledge, that when I approached the house I trembled like a man on the eve of a sentence which was to determine the issue of life or death.

The blinds were down in all the windows, and the aspect of the whole was chill and dismal. Where sickness is, there, too, must be cheerlessness and fear. The passion which had so long possessed me was as strong as ever, but it was dashed with a hideous terror; there was so much to explain and to be satisfied upon before either of us could rightly comprehend our situation.

I knocked faintly. There was no answer. I knocked again, more loudly, but still lowly, and with increasing apprehension. The door was opened by Forrester. He looked dreadfully haggard, as if he had been sitting up all night, worn by grief and watching. I spoke to him, something broken and hardly articulate: he bent his head, and, raising his hand in token of silence, beckoned me to follow him. He was evidently much agitated, and a suspicion crossed my mind that he already repented the sacrifice he had made. But I did him wrong.

When we reached the door of the room in which we had seen Gertrude on the preceding night Forrester paused, as if to gather up his manhood for what was to follow; then, putting forward his hand, he pushed open the door.

"Go in—go in," he cried, in a choking voice; and hurrying me on he retreated back into the shadow, as if he wished to avoid being present at our meeting.

The room was in deep twilight. The curtains were drawn together over the windows, and there was less disorder in the apartment than when I had last seen it. The evidences of illness which I had observed scattered about were removed, and the furniture was more carefully arranged. The atmosphere was heavy, and affected me painfully. But I thought nothing of these things, although the slightest incident did not escape me. Gertrude still lay upon the sofa, and appeared to be more tranquil and composed. There was a solemn hush over her as she lay perfectly calm and motionless. I fancied she was asleep, and approached her gently. Her hands were stretched down by her sides, and I ventured to raise one of them to my lips. I shall never forget the horror of that touch. A thrill shot through my veins, as if a bolt of ice had struck upon my heart and

frozen up its current at the fountain. It was the hand of a corpse.

In the first feeling of madness and despair which seized upon me I ran my hands wildly over her arms, and even touched her face and lips, doubting whether the form that lay before me was of this world. Some such wild apprehension traversed my brain; but the witnesses of death in the flesh were too palpable in many ways to admit of any superstitious incredulity. The violent surprise and emotion of the night before had proved too much for her wasted strength, and she had sunk suddenly under the fearful re-action.

The shock overwhelmed me. Not only was she taken from me at the very instant of discovery and possession, but all hope of mutual explanation was extinguished forever. Upon one point alone had I arrived at certainty, but that only rendered me more anxious to clear up the rest. I had seen her living, had spoken to her, and heard her voice; and now she was dead, the proof of her actual humanity was palpable. It was some comfort to know that she to whom I had dedicated myself under the influence of a sort of sorcery, was a being actuated by passions like my own, and subject to the same natural laws; but it was the extremity of all conceivable wretchedness to lose her just as I had acquired this consoling knowledge. The phantom had scarcely become a reality when it again faded into a phantom.

A few days afterward, for the second time, I followed a hearse to the grave. The only persons to whom I had consecrated my love were gone; and this last bereavement seemed to me at the time as if it were final, and as if there was nothing left for me but to die. My reason, however, had gained some strength by my rough intercourse with the world; and even in the midst of the desolation of that melancholy scene I felt as if a burden had been taken off my mind, and I had been released from a harassing obligation. At all events I had a consciousness, that as the earth closed over the coffin of Gertrude, I passed out of the region of dreams and deceptions, and that whatever lay in advance of me, for good or evil, was of the actual, toiling, practical world. The exodus of my delusion seemed to open to me a future, in which imagination would be rebuked by the presence of stern and harsh realities. I felt like a manumitted slave, who goes forth reluctantly to the hard work of freedom, and would gladly fall back, if he could, upon the supine repose which had spared him the trouble of thinking for himself.

Forrester bore his agony with heroic endurance. I, who knew what was in his heart, knew what he suffered. But his eyes were still and his lips were fixed, and not a single quiver of his pulses betrayed his anguish to the bystanders. When the last rites were over, and we turned away, he wrung my hand without a word of leave-taking, and departed. A few days afterward he left England. The associa-

tions connected with the scenes of his past life—with the country that contained the ashes of all he loved—embittered every hour of his life, and he wisely sought relief in exile. I was hurt at not having received some communication from him before he went away; but I knew he was subject to fits of heavy depression, and his silence, although it pained me at the time, did not diminish the respect and sympathy inspired by his conduct.

I will not dwell upon the immediate effect which the dissolution of Gertrude, and the phantoms connected with her, had upon my mind. Shattered and subdued, I re-entered the world, which I was now resolved, out of cowardice and distrust of myself, not to leave again; taking mental exercise, as an invalid, slowly recovering from the prostration of a long illness, tests his returning strength in the open air. I had a great fear upon me of going into the country, and being once more alone. The tranquillity of Nature would have thrown me back into despair, while the crowded haunts of London kept me in a state of activity that excluded the morbid influences I had so much reason to dread. Of my new experiences in the second phase of my life, as different from the former as light from darkness, I shall speak with the same fidelity which I have hitherto strictly observed.

PART THE SECOND—NOON.

I.

When I had deposited Gertrude in the grave I was a solitary tree, singled out by the lightning, from the rest of the forest, and blasted through every part of its articulation. There was no verdure in my soul. I was dead to the world around me. I lived in what was gone—I had no interest in what was to come. I believed that the fatal spell that had exercised such a power over my thoughts and actions had accomplished its catastrophe, and that there was nothing further for me to fulfill but death. My Idol had perished in her beauty and her love. She had withered before my eyes, destroyed by the supernatural passion which had bound us to each other. How then could I live, when that which was my life had vanished like a pageant in the sky? I thought I could not survive her. Yet I did. And seeing things as I see them now, and knowing the supremacy of time over affliction, I look back and wonder at the thought which desolated my heart under the immediate pressure of a calamity that appeared irreparable, but for which the world offered a hundred appeasing consolations.

I went again into the bustle—the strife of vanities, ambitions, passions, and interests. At first I merely suffered myself to be carried away by the tide; my plank was launched, and I drifted with the current. But in a little time I began to be excited by the roar and jubilee of the waters.

For many months Gertrude was ever present to me, in moments of respite and solitude. As certain as the night returned, the stillness of

my chamber was haunted by her smiles. The tomb seemed to give up its tenant in the fresh bloom and sweet confidence of life, and she would come in her star-light brightness, smiling sadly, as if she had a feeling of something wanted in that existence to which death had translated her, and looking reproachfully, but sweetly down upon me for lingering so long behind her. By degrees, as time wore on, her form grew less and less distinct, and, wearied of watching and ruminating, I would fall asleep and lose her; and so, between waking and sleeping, the floating outlines vanished, and she visited me no more. At last I almost forgot the features which were once so deeply portrayed upon my heart. Poor human love and grief, how soon their footprints are washed away!

I resided entirely in London, without any settled plan of life, tossed about upon the living surge, and indifferent whither it swept me. I lived from hour to hour, and from day to day, upon the incidents that chanced to turn up. People thought there was something singular in my manner, and that my antecedents were ambiguous; consequently I was much sought after, and invited abroad. My table was covered with cards. I was plagued with inquiries, and found that ladies were especially anxious to know more about me than I chose to tell. My silence and reserve piqued their curiosity. Had I been a romantic exile, dressed in a bizarre costume, with an interesting head of hair, and an impenetrable expression of melancholy in my face, I could not have been more flattered by their inconvenient attentions. Out of this crush of civilities I made my own election of friends. My acquaintance was prodigious—my intimacies were few. Wherever I went I met a multitude of faces that were quite familiar to me, and to which I was expected to bow, but very few individuals whom I really knew. I had not the kind of talent that can carry away a whole *London Directory* in its head. I could never remember the names of the mob of people I was acquainted with. I recognized their faces, and shook their hands, and was astonished to find how glibly they all had my name, although I hardly recollected one of theirs, and this round of nods and how-d'ye-do's constituted the regular routine of an extensive intercourse with society. The clatter, frivolous as it was, kept me in motion, and there was health in that; but it was very wearisome. A man with a heart in his body desires closer and more absorbing ties. But we get habituated to these superficialities, and drop into them with surprising indifference; knowing or hoping that the sympathy we long for will come at last, and that, if it never comes, it is not so bad a thing after all, to be perpetually stopped on the journey of life by lively gossips, who will shake you by the hand, and insist upon asking you how you are, just as cordially as if they cared to know.

There was one family I visited more frequently than the rest of my miscellaneous ac-

quaintance. I can hardly explain the attraction that drew me so much into their circle, for there was little in it that was lovable in itself, or that harmonized with my tastes. But antagonisms are sometimes as magnetic as affinities in the moral world. They were all very odd, and did nothing like other people. They were so changeable and eccentric that they scarcely appeared to me for two evenings in succession to be the same individuals. They were perpetually shifting the slides of character, and exhibiting new phases. Their amusements and occupations resembled the incessant dazzle of a magic lantern. They were never without a novelty of some kind on hand—a new whim, which they played with like a toy till they got tired of it—a subtle joke, with a little malicious pleasantry in it—or a piece of scandal, which they exhausted till it degenerated into ribaldry. Their raillery and mirth, even when they happened to be in their most good-natured moods, were invariably on the side of ridicule. They took delight in distorting every thing, and never distorted any thing twice in the same way. They laughed at the whole range of quiet, serious amiabilities, as if all small virtues were foibles and weaknesses; and held the heroic qualities in a sort of mock awe that was more ludicrous and humiliating than open scoffing and derision. In this way they passed their lives, coming out with fresh gibes every morning, and going to bed at night in the same harlequinade humor. It seemed as if they had no cares of their own, and made up for the want of them by taking into keeping the cares of their neighbors; which they tortured so adroitly that, disrelish it as you might, it was impossible to resist the infection of their grotesque satire.

One of the members of this family was distinguished from the rest by peculiarities special to himself. He was a dwarf in stature, with a large head, projecting forehead, starting eyes, bushy hair, and an angular chin. He was old enough to be dealt with as a man; but from his diminutive size, and the singularity of his manners, he was treated as a boy. Although his mental capacity was as stunted as his body, he possessed so extraordinary a talent for translating and caricaturing humanity, that he was looked upon as a domestic mime of unrivaled powers. He could run the circle of the passions with suprising facility, rendering each transition from the grave to the gay so clearly, and touching so rapidly, yet so truly, every shade of emotion, that your wonder was divided between the dexterity, ease, and completeness of the imitation, and the sagacious penetration into character which it indicated. Acting, no doubt, is not always as wise as it looks; and the mimicry that shows so shrewd on the surface is often a mere mechanical trick. But in this case the assumptions were various, distinct, and broadly marked, and not to be confounded with the low art that paints a feeling in a contortion or a grimace. During these strange feats he never spoke a word. He did not require language to

give effect or intelligence to his action. All was rapid, graphic, and obvious, and dashed off with such an air of original humor that the most serious pantomime took the odd color of a jest without compromising an atom of its grave purpose. Indeed this tendency to indulge in a kind of sardonic fun was the topping peculiarity of the whole group, and the dwarf was a faithful subscriber to the family principles.

I suffered myself to be most unreasonably amused by this daily extravagance. The dwarf was a fellow after my own fancy: an irresponsible fellow, headlong, irregular, misshapen, and eternally oscillating to and fro without any goal in life. He never disturbed me by attempts to show things as they were, or by over-refined reasoning upon facts, in which some people are in the habit of indulging until they wear off the sharp edge of truths, and fritter them down into commonplaces. In short, he never reasoned at all. He darted upon a topic, struck his fangs into it, and left it, depositing a little poison behind him. His singularities never offended me, because they never interfered with my own. He turned the entire structure and operations of society to the account of the absurd; and made men, not the victims of distaste as I did, but the puppets of a farce. We arrived, however, at much the same conclusion by different routes, and the dwarf and I agreed well together; although there was an unconfessed repulsion between us which prohibited the interchange of those outward tokens of harmony that telegraph the good fellowship of the crowd.

From the first moment of our acquaintance I had a secret distrust about my friend the dwarf. I shrank from him instinctively when I felt his breath upon me, which was as hot as if it came from a furnace. I felt as if he was a social Mephistophiles, exercising a malignant influence over my fate. Yet, in spite of this feeling, we became intimate all at once. As I saw him in the first interview, I saw him ever after. We relaxed all formalities on the instant of introduction, when he broke out with a gibe that put us both at our ease at once. We were intimates in slippers and morning-gowns, while the rest of the family were as yet on full-dress ceremony with me.

II.

After I had known this family a considerable time, a lady from a distant part of the country, whom I had never seen or heard of before, came on a visit to them. She was a woman of about twenty-five years of age, with a handsome person, considerable powers of conversation, and more intellect than fine women usually take the trouble to cultivate or display, preferring to trust, as she might have safely done, to the influence of their beauty. Her form was grand and voluptuous; her head, with her hair bound up in fillets, had a noble classical air; and her features were strictly intellectual. She had never been married; and exhibiting, as she did at all times, a lofty superiority over the people by whom she was surrounded in this house, it opened a

strange chapter of sprightly malevolence to observe how they criticised her, and picked off her feathers, whenever she happened to be out of the room. They affected the most sublime regard for her, and the way they showed it was by wondering why she remained single, and trying to account for it by sundry flattering innuendoes, with a sneer lurking under each of them.

The men had no taste—this was said so slyly as to make every body laugh—or perhaps they were afraid of her; she was hard to please; her mind was too masculine, which made her appear more repulsive than she really was; she did not relish female society, and men are always jealous of women who are superior to themselves, and so, between the two—hem!—there was the old adage! Then she aimed at eccentricity, and had some uncommon tastes; she was fond of poetry and philosophy, and blue stockings are not so marketable as hosiery of a plainer kind: in short, it was not surprising that such a woman should find it rather difficult to suit herself with a husband. But whoever did succeed in overcoming her fastidiousness would get a prize!

These criticisms, probably, awakened an interest in my mind about this lady. She was evidently not understood by her critics; and it was by no means unlikely that, in attributing peculiarities to her which did not exist, they might have overlooked the true excellencies of her character. In proportion as they depreciated her, she rose in my estimation, by the rule of contraries. It had always been a weakness of mine to set myself against the multitude on questions of taste, and to reverse their judgment by a foregone conclusion. I then believed, and do still in a great measure believe, that persons of genius are not appreciated or comprehended by the mob; but I occasionally committed the mistake of taking it for granted that persons who were depreciated by the mob must of necessity be persons of genius.

Astræa—for so she was familiarly called, at first in the way of covert ridicule, but afterward from habit—was thoroughly in earnest in every thing she said and did. She could adapt herself to the passing humor of vivacity or sarcasm without any apparent effort, but her natural manner was grave and dominant. Beneath the severity of her air was an unsettled spirit, which a close observer could not fail to detect. It was to carry off or hide this secret disquietude of soul (such, at least, it appeared to me), that, with a strong aversion to frivolity, she heeded all the frivolous amusements; but then it was done with an effort and excess that showed how little her taste lay in it, and that it was resorted to only as an escape from criticism. She had no skill in these relaxations, and blundered sadly in her attempts to get through them; and people tried to feel complimented by her condescension, but were never really satisfied. And when she had succeeded in getting up the group to the height of its gayety, and thought that every body was fully employed, she would take advantage of the general merriment and relapse into her

own thoughts. It was then you could see clearly how little interest she took in these things. But she was too important a person to be allowed to drop out, and as she was well aware of the invidious distinction with which she was treated, she would speedily rally and mix in the frivolity again. All this was done with a struggle that was quite transparent to me. She never played that part with much tact. Yet her true character baffled me, notwithstanding. There was an evident restlessness within; as if she were out of her sphere, or as if there were a void to be filled, a longing after something which was wanted to awaken her sympathies, and set her soul at repose. Of that I was convinced; but all beyond was impenetrable obscurity.

The mystery that hovered about her manner, her looks, her words, attracted me insensibly toward her. She was an enigma to the world as I was myself; and a secret feeling took possession of me that there were some latent points of union in our natures which would yet be drawn out in answering harmony. This feeling was entirely exempt from passion. Gertrude had absorbed all that was passionate and loving in my nature—at least, I thought so then. And the difference between them was so wide, that it was impossible to feel in the same way about Gertrude first and Astræa afterward. Simplicity, gentleness, and timidity, were the characteristics of Gertrude; while Astræa was proud, grand, almost haughty, with a reserve which I could not fathom. If it be true that the individual nature can find a response only in another of a certain quality, then it would have been absurd to delude myself by any dreams of that kind about Astræa. If I had really loved Gertrude, I could not love Astræa. They were essentially in direct opposition to each other. As for Astræa, she appeared inaccessible to the weaknesses of passion; her conversation was bold, and she selected topics that invited argument, but rarely awakened emotion. Energetic, lofty, and severe, her very bearing repelled the approaches of love. He would have been a brave man who should have dared to love Astræa. I wondered at her beauty, which was not captivating at a glance, but full of dignity. I wondered, admired, listened, but was not enslaved.

She treated me with a frankness which she did not extend to others. This did not surprise me in the circle in which I found her. It was natural enough that she should avail herself of any escape that offered from that atmosphere of *persiflage*. I was guided by a similar impulse. But the same thing occurs every day in society. People always, when they can, prefer the intercourse which comes nearest to their own standard. It does not follow, however, that they must necessarily fall in love. Such a suspicion never entered my head.

I soon discovered that her knowledge was by no means profound; and that her judgment was not always accurate. Setting aside the showy accomplishments which go for nothing as mental culture, she was self-educated. She

had been an extensive reader, but without method. She touched the surface of many subjects, and carried away something from each, to show that she had been there, trusting to her vigorous intellect for the use she should make of her fragmentary acquisitions. It was only when you discussed a subject fully with her that you discovered her deficiencies. In the ordinary way, rapidly lighting upon a variety of topics, she was always so brilliant and suggestive that you gave her credit for a larger field of acquirements than she really traversed. This discovery gave me an advantage over her; and my advantage gave me courage.

One evening we were talking of the mythology, one of her favorite themes.

"And you seriously think," I observed, in answer to something she said, "that the story of Hercules and the distaff has a purpose?"

"A deep purpose, and a very obvious moral," she replied.

"Will you expound it to me?"

"It is quite plain—the parable of strength vanquished by gentleness. There is nothing so strong as gentleness."

This reply took me by surprise, and I observed, "I should hardly have expected that from you." I was thinking more of the unexpected admission of the power of gentleness from the lips of Astræa, than of the truth or depth of the remark.

"Do you mean that as a compliment?" she inquired.

"Well—no. But from a mind constituted like yours, I should have looked for a different interpretation."

"Then you think that my mind ought to prostrate itself before a brawny development of muscles?"

"No, no; remember, you spoke of gentleness."

"That is the mind of woman," she answered, "taking its natural place, and asserting its moral power. For gentleness, like beauty, is a moral power."

"Beauty a moral power?" I exclaimed.

"That is its true definition, unless you would degrade it by lowering it to the standard of the senses," she replied, kindling as she spoke. "It elevates the imagination; we feel a moral exaltation in the contemplation of it; it is the essential grace of nature; it refines and dignifies our whole being; and appreciated in this aspect, it inspires the purest and noblest aspirations."

This creed of beauty was very unlike any thing I had anticipated from her. If any body in a crowded drawing-room had spoken in this style, I should have expected that she would have smiled somewhat contemptuously upon them.

"Your definition is imperfect," I ventured to say; "I do not dispute it as far as it goes, but it is defective in one article of faith."

"Oh! I am not sent from the stars—though they have voted me Astræa—to convert heathens. Pray, let us have your article of faith."

"I believe implicitly in your religion," said I; "but believing so much, I am compelled to believe a little more. If beauty calls up this homage of the imagination, and inspires these pure and elevating aspirations, it must awaken the emotions of the heart. To feel and appreciate beauty truly, therefore, is, in other words, to love."

"That is an old fallacy. If love were indispensable to the appreciation of beauty, it would cruelly narrow the pleasures of the imagination."

"On the contrary," I replied, "I believe them to be inseparable."

"You are talking riddles," she replied, as if she were getting tired of the subject; "but, true or false, I have no reliance upon the word love, or the use that is made of it. It means any thing or nothing."

"Then you must allow me to explain myself," and so I set about my explanation without exactly knowing what it was I had to explain. "I spoke of love as an abstract emotion." She smiled very discouragingly at that phrase, and I was, therefore, bound to defend it. "Certainly there is such a thing—listen to me for a moment. I was not speaking of the love of this or that particular object—a love that may grow up and then die to the root; but the love which may be described as the poetical perception and permanent enjoyment of the ideal."

"We must not quarrel about the word," interrupted Astræa, as if she wished to bring the conversation to a close; "we agree, possibly, in the thing, although I should have expressed it differently."

"I grant," said I, trying to gather my own meaning more clearly, "love must have an object. Abstractions may occupy the reason, but do not touch the heart. When beauty appeals to the heart it must take a definite shape, and the love it inspires must be addressed to that object alone."

"We have changed our argument," observed Astræa, quickly, "and see, we must change our seats, too, for supper is announced."

I felt that I was rhapsodizing, and that, if I had gone on much further, I must have uttered a great deal that Astræa would have inevitably set down as rank nonsense. I was not sorry, therefore, that the conversation was broken off at that dubious point. We were both scared out of our subtleties by the flutter and laughter that rang through the room as every body rose to go to supper; and in a few moments I found myself seated at table with Astræa next to me, and my friend the dwarf seated exactly opposite.

III.

The chatter of the party was, as usual, noisy and sarcastic. They were in an extraordinary flow of spirits, and indulged their unsparring raillery to an extravagant excess. The dwarf had quite a roystering fit upon him, and tossed his great shapeless head about with such outrageous fun, that one might suppose he was laboring under a sudden access of delirium, or had,

at least, fallen in with a rare God-send to exercise his powers of frantic ridicule upon. These things, no doubt, presented themselves to me in an exaggerated light, for I was a little out of humor with myself; and could not help contrasting the reckless levity of the group with the stillness of Astræa, who must have secretly despised the companionship into which she was thrown.

Whenever any body uttered a joke (and dreary and miserable jokes they were), the dwarf, who acted a sort of chorus to their obstreperous humors, would jerk his head back with a theatrical "Ha!" and spread out his hands like so many coiling snakes, with an indescribable exaggeration of astonishment. Then a sneer and chirrup would run round the table, rising presently into a loud laugh, which the lady of the house would discreetly suppress by lifting her finger half way to her face—a signal that was understood to imply a cessation of hostilities when the ribaldry was supposed to be going too far.

I looked at Astræa involuntarily on one of these occasions, and found her eyes turned at the same instant to mine. The same thought was in both our minds. We both abhorred the coarseness of the scene, and felt the same desire to be alone. The position which thus extracted the feelings that we held in common was full of peril to us; but at such moments one never thinks of peril.

I asked her to take wine, pouring it into her glass at the same moment. This implied a familiarity between us which I certainly did not intend, and should not have been conscious of if I had not chanced to notice the face of the dwarf. He was looking straight at us, his mouth pursed out, and his head thrust forward as if to make way for a sudden writhing or elevation of his shoulders. It was the express image of a man who had discovered something very strange, or in whom a previous doubt had just been confirmed. I could not at all comprehend his meaning; but I knew he had a meaning, and that threw me back upon myself to find out the point of the caricature. I attributed it to the unceremonious freedom I had taken with Astræa, and regretted that I had given occasion to so pitiful a jest; but I was by no means satisfied that there was not an *arrière pensée* in the mind of the dwarf.

The spiteful mirth went on in a rapid succession of vulgar innuendoes, puns, and jokes. The peculiarities of one intimate friend after another were anatomized with surprising skill; nobody was spared; and the finger of the hostess was in constant requisition to check the riot, and direct the scandal-hunters after fresh quarry. As none of the people who were thus made the subjects of unmerciful ridicule were known to me or Astræa, we took no part in their dissection, and imperceptibly dropped into a conversation between ourselves.

We resumed our old subject, and talked in low and earnest tones. I supposed that they were all too much engaged in the personal topics

that afforded them so much amusement to think about us, and had no suspicion that they were observing us closely all the time. I was apprised of the fact by the astounding expression I detected on the face of my indefatigable Mephistophiles: I shall never forget it. It was a face of saturnine ecstasy, with a secret smile of pleasure in it, evidently intended for me alone, as if he rejoiced, and wondered, and congratulated me, and was in high raptures at my happiness. I was astonished and confounded, and felt myself singularly agitated; yet, I knew not why—I was not angry with him: for although his manner was inexplicable, and ought to have been taken as an offense from its grossness, still, for some unaccountable reason, it was pleasant rather than disagreeable to me.

I forgot the little demon, however, in the delight of looking at Astræa, and listening to her. There was such a charm in her eyes, and in the sound of her voice, that I was soon drawn again within its powerful influence. As to the subject of our conversation, it was of secondary interest to the pleasure of hearing her speak. Whatever I said was but to induce her to say more. To struggle in an argument was out of the question—all I yearned for was the music of her tones. Not that I quite lost the thread of our discussion, but that I was more engaged in following the new graces and embellishments it derived from her mode of treating it, than in pursuing the main topic. Again I turned to the dwarf, and there he was again glaring upon us with a look of transport. But his fiery eyes no longer leaped out upon me alone; they were moved quickly from Astræa to me alternately, and were lighted up with a wild satisfaction that appeared to indicate the consummation of some delirious passion. I never saw so much mad glee in a human face; all the more mad to me, since I was entirely ignorant of the source from whence it sprang. Once I thought Astræa observed him, but she turned aside her head, and hastily changed the conversation, apparently to defeat his curiosity.

Many times before I took leave that night the mime repeated his antics; and, as if to make me feel assured that I was really the object of his pantomimic raptures, he squeezed my hand significantly at parting, and with more cordiality than he had ever shown me before.

As I bade Astræa "good-night," she gave me her hand—in the presence of the whole family; there was nothing to conceal in her thoughts. I took it gently in mine, and, gazing for a moment intently into her face, in which I thought I perceived a slight trace of confusion, I bowed and withdrew.

That was a night of strange speculation. For some time past, I had thought little of Gertrude—had almost forgotten her. That night she returned, but unlike what she had ever been before. The smile, like sunlight let in upon the recesses of a young bud, no longer cleft her lips; and her eyes were cold and glassy. I felt, too, that I had recalled her by an effort of the

will, and that she did not come involuntarily, as of old.

There was a sense of guiltiness in this. Was Gertrude fading from my memory?—and was Astræa concerned in the change? No, Astræa was nothing to me—she was out of my way—the height on which she stood was frozen. What was it, then, that troubled and excited me, and blotted out the past?

I was more unhappy than ever; yet it was an unhappiness that carried me onward, as if there was an escape for it, or a remedy. I was perplexed and disturbed. I was like a bird suddenly awakened in its cage amidst the glare of torches. I tried to think of Gertrude, but it was in vain. The thought no longer appeased me. The dwarf-mime was before me with all his devilish tricks and gestures. I could not rid myself of his hideous features. They danced and gibbered in the air, and were always fastened upon me. He was like a human nightmare; and even the gray dawn, as it came through the curtains, only showed that misshapen head more clearly. What was this dwarf to me that he should haunt me thus, and become an agony to my soul. Was he my fate? or was he sent to torture me to some deed of self-abandonment? I should have gone mad with this waking dream, but as the morning advanced, and the light spread, my aching eyes closed in an uneasy sleep.

I was dissatisfied with myself, without exactly knowing why. I hated the dwarf, yet was fascinated by the very importunity that made me hate him. Why should he meddle with me? Why should he exult in any diversion of my fortunes? What was he to me, or Astræa to either of us? I was an unchartered ship, in which no living person had an interest, drifting on the wide waste of waters. Why should his eyes traverse the great expanse to keep watch on me? Could he not let me founder on the breakers, without making mocking signals to me from the shore, where he and his stood in heartless security? My sleep was full of dreams of that malignant demon, and I awoke in a state of actual terror from their violent action on my nerves.

IV.

The next morning I went out, determined to dissipate these harassing reflections, and, above all things, resolved not to see Astræa. I wandered about half the day, perfectly sincere in my intention of avoiding the quarter of the town in which she lived. My mind was so much absorbed, that I was quite unconscious of the route I had taken, until, raising my eyes, I saw the dwarf standing before me on the steps of his own door. I had dropped into the old track by the sheer force of habit, and have no doubt that my tormentor put the worst construction on the flush that shot into my face at seeing him. The same riotous glee was in his eyes that I had noticed, for the first time, on the evening before; but it now took something of a look of triumph that perplexed me more than ever.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, with a chuckle that

literally palpitated through his whole body—"you are come at last. I have been looking out for you the whole morning."

"Indeed!"

"How did you sleep last night?" he continued; "what sort of dreams had you? I'll answer for it that no dancing dervish ever went through such contortions!"

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Why, there!" he replied, "you turn red and white by turns. Are you hit?—are you hit? Confess yourself, and I will comfort you."

"Come, come," said I, anxious not to provoke the explanation I panted for, yet dreaded, "this *badinage* is sorry work for the day-light. You should keep it till the lamps are lighted!"

"Have at you, then," he returned, his features undergoing a comical transition into affected gravity; "I will talk proverbs with you, and look as gloomy as a mute at a funeral:" giving, at the same time, an irresistible imitation of one of those ghastly, wire-drawn, drunken faces. "Mercy upon us! what ominous tokens are in that doleful countenance of yours! The candle gives out its warning-sheet for the bespoken of the grave; the sea has its sights and sounds for the doomed man who is to sup with the fishes; the cricket challenges death in the hearth; the devil gives three knocks at the door when some miserable wretch is passing through the mortal agony; and there are signs in your face of a living torture, which any man galloping by may see. What does it mean? Is the leaf only turned over by the wind, and will the next blast whisk it back again? or are its fibres riven past recovery?"

I could not bear this tantalizing mockery; and if I had not been afraid of exciting the malice of that fiendish nature, there must have been an explosion at this moment. I managed, however, to control myself, and spoke to him calmly, but with a resolution in my voice which admitted of no mis-construction. "Now, listen to me, my friend," I said, "and understand distinctly what I am going to say. You have extraordinary talents for sarcasm, but I must ask you not to practice them upon me. I don't like to be questioned and criticised in this way. I dare say you don't intend any thing beyond an idle joke; but I don't like being made the subject of jokes. I covet no favor from you but to be spared your gibes—and that is not much for you to grant."

"The hardest thing in the world to grant!" he answered. "To be spared my gibes! What is to become of us, if I'm not to have my gibes? You might as well ask me to look you straight in the face and not to see you. Nonsense! you mustn't impose such a penance upon me."

"But why do you jest with me in this way? Do you think I am a fit object for burlesque and buffoonery?"

"Burlesque and buffoonery?" he returned, twitching his mouth as if he were stung to the quick; "I do not burlesque you, and I am not a buffoon."

"Then drop this strange humor of yours, and try to be serious with me."

"Do you desire me to be serious with you?"

"Most assuredly I do. I don't understand any thing else."

"Then it is a bond between us henceforth," he cried, in a tone of deep earnestness. "From this hour I jest with you no more."

As he spoke he glanced at me darkly under his eyebrows, and turned into the house. I was rather taken by surprise at this new manifestation of his versatile genius, and followed him mechanically, utterly forgetful of the wise resolution with which I had set out.

We went into the drawing-room. Astræa was surrounded by a group of girls, some kneeling, others dispersed about her, while she was directing their employment on a piece of tapestry on a large frame. The *tableau* was striking, and I thought Astræa never looked so well. Her fine figure was thrown into a graceful attitude, the head slightly averted, and one hand pointing to the tracery, while the other was raised in the air, suspending some threads of the embroidery. The faces that formed a circle round her were looking up, beaming with pleasure, and presented an animated picture. Here was Astræa in a new aspect. I felt the injustice her flippant critics had committed in unsexing her, and depriving her of her domestic attributes.

Our entrance disturbed the group, and, springing up, they took to flight like a flock of birds.

"You see, Astræa," said the dwarf, in a sharp voice, meant to convey a sneer through a compliment, "you are not allowed to be useful in this world. You are invaded at all your weak points: the force of your attraction will not suffer you to enjoy even your needle in private."

"A truce, sir, to this folly!" exclaimed Astræa, turning from him and advancing to meet me.

The dwarf twirled painfully on his chair, as if the scorn had taken full effect upon him. We had both struck him in the same place. Had we premeditated a plan of operations for wounding his vanity we could not have acted more completely in concert.

"I hope," said I, desiring to change the subject, "you have recovered our merriment of last night?"

"Merriment?" interposed Mephistophiles; "Good! *Your* merriment! You and Astræa were like dull citizens yawning over a comedy, which we were fools enough to act for you. When next we play in that fashion may we have a livelier audience."

"The reproach, I am afraid, is just," I observed, looking at Astræa. But she was not disposed to give the vantage ground to Mephistophiles.

"I hope next time you may have an audience more to your liking," she observed; "tastes differ, you know, in these matters."

"Yes, that's quite true," returned the dwarf,

dryly; "but *your* tastes, it seems agree wonderfully."

Thus Astræa and I were coupled and cast together by the mime, who evidently took a vindictive delight in committing us to embarrassments of that kind. To have attempted to extricate ourselves would probably have only drawn fresh imputations upon us; so we let it pass.

Every body has observed what important events sometimes take their spring in trifles. The destiny of a life is not unfrequently determined by an accident. I felt that there was something due to Astræa for the freedom to which she was exposed on my account. Yet it was an exceedingly awkward subject to touch upon. The very consciousness of this awkwardness produced or suggested other feelings that involved me in fresh difficulties. I felt that I ought to apologize for having brought this sort of observation upon her; but I also felt that explanations on such subjects are dangerous, and that it is safer to leave them unnoticed. The impulse, however, to say something was irresistible; and what I did say was not well calculated to help me out of the dilemma.

"I feel," said I, quite aware at the moment I spoke that it would have been just as well to have left my feelings out of the question—"I feel that I ought to apologize to you for bringing discredit on your taste. The whole fault of the dullness lies with me."

"Not at all," she replied; "I am perfectly willing to take my share of it. Be assured that the highest compliment is often to be extracted from some people's sarcasms."

This was a "palpable hit," and I apprehended that it would rouse the dwarf to a fierce rejoinder. But he had left the room, and we were alone.

There was a pause; and Astræa, who had more courage under the embarrassment than I could command, was the first to speak.

"They mistake me," she said slowly; "it has been my misfortune all my life to be misunderstood. Perhaps the error is in myself. Possibly my own nature is at cross-purposes, marring and frustrating all that I really mean to do and say. I try to adapt myself to other people, but always fail. Even my motives are misinterpreted, and I can not make myself intelligible. It must be some original willfulness of my nature, that makes me seem too proud to the proud, and too condescending to the humble; but certain it is that both equally mistake me."

"I do not mistake you, Astræa," I cried, startled by the humility of her confession.

"I feel you do not," she answered.

"They say you are scornful and unapproachable—not so! You are as timid at heart as the fawn trembling in its retreat at the sound of the hunter's horn. But you hold them, with whom you can not mingle, by the bond of fear. You compel them to treat you with deference, from the apprehension that they might other-

wise become familiar. They translate your high intelligence into haughtiness; and because they can not reach to your height, they believe you to be proud and despotic."

"I know not how that may be," she returned; "but I will acknowledge that my feelings must be touched before the mere woman's nature is awakened. They who do not know me think—"

"That you are insensible to that touch," said I, supplying the unfinished sentence; "they libel you, Astræa! Achilles had only one vulnerable spot, but that was fatal. Protected in all else, you are defenseless on one point, and when that is struck your whole nature is subjugated. Do I describe you truly? When the woman is awakened, the insensibility and fortitude in which you are shut up will melt away—your power will be reduced to helplessness; absorbing devotion, unbounded tenderness, which are yearning for their release, will flow out; the conqueror will become the enslaved, living, not for victories which you despise, but for a servitude which will bring your repressed enthusiasm into action. For this you would sacrifice the world—pride, place, applause, disciples, flattery!"

"Not a very agreeable picture—but, I am afraid, a faithful one."

"Strong feelings and energy of character are not always best for our happiness," I went on; "you expected too much; you found the world cold and selfish, and your heart closed upon it. This was the action of a temperament eager and easily chilled; and it was natural enough that people who could not move your sympathies should think that your heart was dead or callous. Yet there it was, watching for the being who was one day to call up its idolatry—for it is not love that will constitute your happiness, Astræa—it must be idolatry. It is that for which you live—to relinquish yourself for another. All is darkness and probation with you till she who now inspires so much worship to which she is indifferent, shall herself become the worshiper. It is the instinct of your nature, the secret of the enigma, which makes you seem exactly the opposite of what you are."

I might have run on I know not to what excess, for I felt my eloquence kindling and rising to an extravagant height, when I perceived Astræa change color and avert her eyes.

"Have I offended you, Astræa?" I inquired.

"Offended me?" she answered; "no, you have done me a service. You have shown me the error of my life—the folly and delusion of hoping for a destiny different from that of the ordinary lot."

"Why do you call it a delusion? You will yet find that haven of rest toward which your heart looks so tremulously. The bird whose instinct carries it over the wild seas from continent to continent sometimes droops its jaded wings and sinks, but it makes land at last."

"No, no; it was a dream. There is no reality in such foolish notions."

"Come," said I, with increasing earnestness, "you must not speak against your convictions. You do not think it a dream—you rely confidently on the hope that the time will come—"

"The thought is madness," interrupted Astræa, quickly; "no—no—no—there is no such hope for me. Do not misconceive me. You have read my nature as clearly as if the volume of my whole life to its inmost thoughts were laid open before you. But the dream is over. It might have been the pride and glory of my soul to have waited upon some high Intelligence—to have followed its progress, cheered it patiently in secret to exertion, encouraged its ambition, and lain in the shadow of its triumphs. It is over. That may never be!"

Her voice shook, although she looked calmly at me as she spoke, trying to conceal her emotion. Her hand accidentally lay in mine. There was a danger in it which I would not see.

"And you have not found the Intelligence for which you sought?" I demanded, in a voice that conveyed more than it expressed in words.

"Yes," she replied slowly, "I have found Intelligence—original, hard, athletic; but wanting in the sympathy that alone wins the heart of woman."

"Astræa," I replied, "your imagination has pictured an ideal which I fear you will never find realized."

"I have found it!" she cried, betrayed into a transport of feeling; then, checking herself, she added, "and I have lost it. Would to God I had never found it!"

Her head drooped—it touched my shoulder; my arm pressed her waist—I was ignorant of it; a haze swam before my eyes. Tumultuous sensations beat audibly at my heart. Astræa, the haughty beauty—the intellectual, proud Astræa—where was her dominant power—her lofty self-possession now? Subdued, bowed down by emotion, the strength of her will seemed to pass from her to me, reversing our positions, and placing in my hands the ascendancy she had so lately wielded. The air seemed to palpitate with these new and agitating feelings. I made an effort to control myself and speak, but could only pronounce her name.

"Astræa!"

There were a hundred questions in the word; but she was silent, and in her silence a hundred answers.

"Not here, Astræa," I cried; "we shall be more free to speak elsewhere—away from those vacant eyes through which no hearts find utterance for us. One word, and I will be still—one word—"

She trembled violently, and pressed my hand convulsively, as if she desired that I should not ask that word. But it was no longer possible to restrain it.

That word was spoken.

A shudder passed over her, and as she bent her head I felt a gush of tears upon my hand. At that moment a muffled step was on the stairs, and I had scarcely time to disengage

myself when our imp half opened the door, and looked in with a leer of ribaldry and suspicion that chilled me to the core.

(To be continued.)

WILLIAM PENN'S CONVERSION TO QUAKERISM.*

PENN did not remain long in London. His father, anxious to keep him apart from his old Puritan friends—and to sustain the habit of devotion to his temporal interests into which he seemed gradually falling, sent him again into Ireland. He had no suspicion that the enemy of his peace lay in ambush at the very gates of his stronghold. But the youth had not resided more than a few months at Shangarry Castle before one of those incidents occurred which destroy in a day the most elaborate attempts to stifle the instincts of nature. When the admiral in England was pluming himself on the triumphs of his worldly prudence, his son, on occasion of one of his frequent visits to Cork, heard by accident that Thomas Loe, his old Oxford acquaintance, was in the city and intended to preach that night. He thought of his boyish enthusiasm at college, and wondered how the preacher's eloquence would stand the censures of his riper judgment. Curiosity prompted him to stay and listen. The fervid orator took for his text the passage—"There is a faith that overcomes the world, and there is a faith that is overcome by the world." The topic was peculiarly adapted to his own situation. Possessed by strong religious instincts, but at the same time docile and affectionate—he had hitherto oscillated between two duties—duty to God and duty to his father. The case was one in which the strongest minds might waver for a time. On the one side—his filial affection, the example of his brilliant friends, the worldly ambition never quite a stranger to the soul of man—all pleaded powerfully in favor of his father's views. On the other there was only the low whisperings of his own heart. But the still voice would not be silenced. Often as he had escaped from thought into business, gay society, or the smaller vanities of the parade and mess-room—the moment of repose again brought back the old emotions. The crisis had come at last. Under Thomas Loe's influence they were restored to a permanent sway. From that night he was a Quaker in his heart.

He now began to attend the meetings of this despised and persecuted sect, and soon learned to feel the bitter martyrdom to which he had given up all his future hopes. In no part of these islands were the Quakers of that time treated as men and as brethren—and least of any where in Ireland. Confounded by ignorant and zealous magistrates with those sterner Puritans who had lately ruled the land with a rod of iron, and had now fallen into the position of a vanquished and prostrate party—they were held up to ridicule in polite society, and pilloried

* From a new life of Penn, by Hepworth Dixon, in the press of Blanchard and Lea, Philadelphia.

by the vulgar in the market-place. On the 3d of September (1667), a meeting of these harmless people was being held in Cork when a company of soldiers broke in upon them, made the whole congregation prisoners and carried them before the mayor on a charge of riot and tumultuous assembling. Seeing William Penn, the lord of Shangarry Castle and an intimate friend of the viceroy, among the prisoners, the worthy magistrate wished to set him at liberty on simply giving his word to keep the peace, but not knowing that he had violated any law he refused to enter into terms, and was sent to jail with the rest. From the prison he wrote to his friend the Earl of Ossory—Lord President of Munster—giving an account of his arrest and detention. An order was of course sent to the mayor for his immediate discharge; but the incident had made known to all the gossips of Dublin the fact that the young courtier and soldier had turned Quaker.

His friends at the vice-regal court were greatly distressed at this untoward event. The earl wrote off to the admiral to inform him of his son's danger, stating the bare facts just as they had come to his knowledge. The family were thunderstruck. The father especially was seriously annoyed; he thought the boy's conduct not only mad but what was far worse in that libertine age—ridiculous. The world was beginning to laugh at him and his family:—he could bear it no longer. He wrote in peremptory terms, calling him to London. William obeyed without a word of expostulation. At the first interview between father and son nothing was said on the subject which both had so much at heart. The admiral scrutinized the youth with searching eyes—and as he observed no change in his costume, nor in his manner any of that formal stiffness which he thought the only distinction of the abhorred sect, he felt re-assured. His son was still dressed like a gentleman; he wore lace and ruffles, plume and rapier; the graceful curls of the cavalier still fell in natural clusters about his neck and shoulders: he began to hope that his noble correspondent had erred in his friendly haste. But a few days served to dissipate this illusion. He was first struck with the circumstance that his son omitted to uncover in the presence of his elders and superiors; and with somewhat of indignation and impatience in his tone demanded an interview and an explanation.

William frankly owned that he was now a Quaker. The admiral laughed at the idea, and treating it as a passing fancy, tried to reason him out of it. But he mistook his strength. The boy was the better theologian and the more thorough master of all the weapons of controversy. He then fell back on his own leading motives. A Quaker! Why, the Quakers abjured worldly titles: and he expected to be made a peer! Had the boy turned Independent, Anabaptist—any thing but Quaker, he might have reconciled it to his conscience. But he had made himself one of a sect remarkable only for