

STELLA ROSEVELT

A novel

MRS. GEORGIE SHELDON

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BY

MRS. GEORGIE SHELDON





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CHAPTER I. ON THE ATLANTIC.

“A star
Which moves not ’mid the moving heavens alone,
A smile among dark frowns—a gentle tone
Among rude voices, a beloved light,

A solitude, a refuge, a delight.”—SHELLEY.

A noble steamer was laboriously plowing the turbulent waters of the great Atlantic, heaving, and struggling, and creaking with every revolution of her gigantic screw, for the waves were rolling high—“mountain high”—in very truth. The huge dark masses of water would swell and rise up like a great black wall, reaching, it seemed, almost to the angry, leaden sky above, then sweeping down with mighty force, thunder upon the decks of that great vessel, making it shudder to its very center, sending it down, down into the yawning depths, as if eager, in venomous spite, to blot it out of existence.

There were very few first cabin passengers on board the — as she thus labored on her weary way between Liverpool and New York, for it was late in the year, and the rush of travel was over for that season.

Fifteen were all they numbered, while there were about twice as many in the steerage; and well it was that there were no more to share the horrors of that dreadful voyage.

It had been a very gloomy passage, a severe storm arising the second day out, which had increased in violence until now—the fifth day—it appeared as if all the elements had conspired to work destruction upon the stanch ship which was faithfully battling with the cruel waves and toiling to bear its precious freight of human souls safely into port.

It was a forlorn little company that sat shivering and trembling in the close saloon—only five, all out of the fifteen who had not succumbed to the seasickness—and these five had the appearance, with their pale, pinched faces, their heavy eyes and disordered attire, of feeling anything but comfortable or well.

An old man of perhaps sixty years, his hair and beard white as snow, his face sallow and wrinkled, his eyes anxious and sunken, sat upon the floor—indeed, it was impossible to sit anywhere else—braced against a stationary seat, and clinging to one of the iron posts which supported the roof of the saloon. He was wrapped in a heavy shawl and two elegant rugs; his soft hat was drawn down over his forehead, and he seemed entirely oblivious of everything about him.

Two spinsters, companions and sisters, lay upon cushions flat upon the floor, and, also wrapped in their rugs, looked not unlike two huge bags of wool rolling from side to side with every motion of the boat.

Another man had crept into a corner, where he tried to keep himself from pitching about by clinging to a rope which he had fastened to an immovable table.

The only other occupant of the place was a little fair-haired maiden of perhaps fifteen or sixteen years.

She was small and delicate, and was sitting, or trying to sit, upon the floor, not far from the old gentleman before mentioned.

She was wrapped in a thick woolen shawl, and her head was ¹¹covered with a crimson hood, so that not much could be seen of her, save the fair, pale face, with its sad, appealing blue eyes, which looked out from beneath masses of shining golden ringlets that had strayed from her hood and lay upon her white forehead. She had a sensitive mouth, a pretty, rounded chin, a small, straight nose, and altogether, had she possessed something of color and less of sadness in her face, would have been considered wondrously fair to look upon.

This little waif, with her child-like countenance, her pathetic eyes, and her patient, uncomplaining spirit, was traveling alone.

There was not a soul on board that vessel whom she had ever seen before the day of sailing.

An orphan—her father, and the only relative on whom she could depend, had died just three months previous—she was going to the United States, to some distant connections who had consented to take her until she was of age and teach her to earn her own living.

She had been put in the care of the captain by the people with whom she had been staying since her father's death, and he was to deliver her to the strangers to whom she was going.

Some strange magnetism had attracted her toward the old gentleman with the white hair and beard of whom we have spoken, and near to whom she was now sitting.

She had hovered about him ever since the first day of the voyage, not in an obtrusive way, but as if she liked to be near him—as if there were something trustworthy and protective about him.

Perhaps one reason for this was that her seat had been next his at table—while they had been able to sit at the table—and once or twice, when she could not attract the attention of the steward, he had handed her what she wanted, and helped her bountifully to fruit when otherwise she would have been neglected.

When the storm came on with such violence that those not ¹²confined to their berths were obliged to take to the floor of the

saloon for safety, she had crept as near to him as she dared, and though she had sat there all day long, he had never spoken to her once, or appeared to heed her presence, but remained, instead, wrapped in his own thoughts.

Suddenly the ship rose upon a mighty wave—up, up she went, until every trembling passenger held his breath with awe; then she plunged headlong down into the raging deep, with a sinking, sickening sensation that chilled the blood and made the flesh creep with fear.

The next moment another terrific wave struck her, with a noise like the roar of a hundred cannon, and with a force which made her quiver like a frightened creature from stem to stern; and in the dread pause which followed, and which was fraught with horrible suspense, the little maid clasped her small hands and cast an appealing glance at her gray-haired companion.

He, seeing it, smiled grimly as he asked, in rather a gruff tone: “Afraid, sis?”

Before she could answer him the vessel gave another tremendous lurch, and she was rudely precipitated almost into the arms of her questioner.

He caught her just in time to save her from being dashed against the iron post by which he was sitting, and when she had recovered her breath a little, he put her gently down beside him, keeping one strong arm around her to save her from a second fall.

“This is pretty rough weather. Are you afraid?” he asked again, and looking with something of pity down upon her white face.

“It startles me to have the vessel pitch and tremble so, and those dreadful waves seem as if they want to swallow us; but I know that nothing can harm us, unless—”

“Unless what?” the old man queried, as she hesitated and glanced shyly up at him, a tinge of color coming into her cheeks.

“Unless it is God’s will,” she answered, reverently.

A sneer curled her companion’s lip at this reply; but the sweet eyes looking up into his seemed to touch some tender memory, for it quickly died, and he repressed the skeptical words to which he was about to give utterance.

But she *felt* it, nevertheless, and, with a grave look and serious tone, she asked:

“Don’t you believe that God rules the storm, and that He will take care of us?”

“My experience all through life has been that I have had to take care of *myself*,” he returned, with some bitterness.

“And I have been taught to trust ‘our Heavenly Father.’ I think one would hardly have much faith in *one’s self* at such a time as this,” the little maiden said, with a look of awe and an involuntary shudder, as another wave broke over them.

The man by her side felt the gentle rebuke, but he evaded it by saying:

“I think no harm will come to us. I have crossed the Atlantic many times; I have sailed upon other oceans, and have been in storms equal to, if not worse, than this. I do not fear the elements much in one of these well-built boats. There is only one thing at sea that I *really* feel *afraid* of.”

“And what is that?”

“Fire.”

He felt the thrill of fear that went vibrating through her whole frame as he uttered the dread word, and appeared to regret having added to her apprehension, for he continued, reassuringly:

“But an accident of that kind rarely happens nowadays, and where everything is so carefully conducted as on these large steamers. There, sit close beside me,” he went on, as still another thundering mass of water swept over them; “lean against me—so. I will keep my arm about you, and you will be safer than sitting by yourself. But how does it happen that you are traveling alone?”

“My father and mother are dead,” she answered, with the same appealing look that had touched him before, while her lips quivered over the sad sentence. “I had no friends in England, and so I am going to live with a cousin of my mother’s in America.”

“What is your name, little girl?”

The “little girl” flushed rosily at this question—as what maiden of fifteen or sixteen would not at this slur upon her proudly attained “teens?”—while she thought he need not have asked if he had taken pains to look at the passenger list; but she replied:

“Star Rosevelt Gladstone.”

A startled, almost agonized gleam shot into the old man’s eyes, and his face seemed to shrivel, until he looked ninety instead of sixty, as the young girl, in her sweet, clear tone, uttered this name.

“Star Rosevelt!” he repeated, with pale lips, while his voice sounded weak and far away.

“Yes, sir,” she said, not noticing his emotion; “or rather my real name is Stella, but mamma called me Star always;” and her voice faltered as she spoke of her dead mother.

Her companion did not answer, and the roar of the elements increasing, further conversation was out of the question, even had they been so disposed, which they appeared not to be.

The old man's head dropped upon his broad chest, and he seemed suddenly to have forgotten his companion, the angry waters, the rolling vessel, and everything else in his own sad thoughts.

Darkness began to settle down upon them. The storm raged on; the spinsters moaned and rolled upon their comfortless couches; the man in the corner swore and raved as he was rudely jostled about, with no prospect of rest or sleep; while the gray-haired man and the fair-haired maid, encircled by his strong arm, sat side by side, silent, yet less forlorn than their comrades by reason of a feeling of companionship, until the young girl's blue eyes closed, her golden head sank unconsciously upon the broad shoulder, and she slept sweetly and tranquilly the whole night through, a smile on her red lips, a sense of comfort and protection in her young heart.

When morning broke and Star Gladstone awoke, she found herself lying upon a heap of rugs, a pillow underneath her head and a soft robe covering her.

The sun was shining brightly into the saloon, where, only a few hours before, all had been so dark and dismal; the sky was beautifully clear and blue, without a vestige of the angry clouds which had so threatened ship and life a little while ago, and the good vessel was riding the gradually subsiding waves with strong and steady pulsations, which seemed to have almost a sense of victory in their throbbings, while the terrors of the night seemed only a troubled dream of the past.

She arose from her soft couch with a murmured "How kind!" as she realized who had made her so comfortable, and went below to her state-room to make her toilet.

After a refreshing bath she brushed out her long, abundant hair until it shone like strands of finest gold; then gathering it in her two hands, she plaited it into one massive braid, leaving the ends loose like a great golden tassel, and tying them with a broad blue ribbon.

Then she substituted a charming little blue hood edged with white for the thick crimson one which she had worn all night, wrapped a soft gray shawl about her shoulders, and went up on deck looking as bright and sunny as the morn itself.

She was very lovely. Short fluffy locks of her hair fell like a shining mist over her white forehead; her great azure eyes gleamed like bluebells after a shower; her cheeks were tinged with a delicate color, and a smile of joy at the return of fair weather parted her red lips, showing two rows of small white teeth between.

As she stepped out upon the deck, she espied her companion of the night standing aft, looking out upon the silver-tipped, dancing waves.

She glided to his side and saluted him with a sweetly spoken “good-morning,” which fell like music on his ear.

He turned and looked at her, an involuntary smile parting his lips, which evidently were unaccustomed to such relaxation.

“You are rightly named—you look like a star,” he said, abruptly, while his keen eyes were fixed intently on her bright face.

She flushed, but answered archly:

“Stars belong to the night; they are of no account in this glorious sunshine;” and she lifted her face up to the sun, as if in gratitude that its friendly beams were shining on her once more.

“It is a glorious morning,” said the old man, taking a long breath of the pure, keen air.

“Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning,” Star murmured, in a low tone, but with a thrill in her voice which told how she felt the words.

Again a sneering smile distorted the lips of her companion.

She saw it, and flushed a vivid crimson, and the tears sprang quickly to her eyes.

“Mamma used to repeat those words so often when she lay sick and dying,” she said, sadly. “I know that *she* looked forward to the ‘morning’ when she should be released from her suffering; but they never sounded so pleasantly to me as they do now on this beautiful morning after our night of terror.”

“Anything which was a source of comfort to your mother ¹⁷you doubtless treasure very tenderly,” kindly replied the gentleman, who *was* a gentleman, and felt sorry that his unbelief or skepticism should have brought a shadow upon that fair young face.

“There is the breakfast-bell,” he added, in a light tone, as it rang out its keen notes. “Are you hungry?”

“Indeed I am, sir,” Star answered, eagerly, adding, with a clear, sweet laugh that fell like music on his ear: “Eating has been an impossibility during the last few days, and I have considerable lost time to make up. That bell has a welcome sound.”

“Then take my arm, little girl, and we will go down together; the boat is not quite steady even yet.”

“Little girl!”

She flushed again, and shrugged her graceful shoulders.

Then she glanced up at him with a serio-comic air, and said, with a pretty pout:

“I am sixteen years old, Mr.——”

She could not finish, because she did not know his name.

He laughed.

"And maidens of sixteen don't like to be called little girls, eh?" he said. "Well," he continued, "I feel as if I am privileged to call you that, since I am nearly sixty, and *my* name is Jacob Rosevelt."

Star stopped short and looked up at him in surprise.

"How strange!" she exclaimed.

"Rather," Mr. Rosevelt returned; then asked: "How did you come by your middle name?"

"My grandmother gave it to me."

"Was her name Rosevelt?"

"No; her maiden name was Stella Winthrop."

Mr. Rosevelt started, then turned suddenly to look out over the sea, and to hide the pallor of his face. He asked no more questions, and all through breakfast he appeared absent-minded and taciturn. He scarcely spoke to Star during the meal—indeed, hardly noticed her at all—and she wondered if she could have offended him in any way.

Before she was half through he left the table, and she saw no more of him until late in the afternoon.

About three o'clock she left the saloon, where she had been trying to while away the time by reading, and went on deck.

It was very cold, but the sky was cloudless, the sea calm and beautiful, and, save an occasional call and response from the sailors, the distant thud of the machinery, and the swash of the water as they plowed the sea, there was scarcely a sound on board the vessel.

Star found a sheltered spot, and wrapping her shawl close about her, sat down for a little while to watch the white-capped waves and the speeding ship.

She had scarcely settled herself, thinking with a feeling of gratitude how lovely it was after the dreadful storm, when there came the noise of a dreadful explosion from somewhere forward, followed by a fearful rocking of the vessel; then the most horrible shrieks and cries rent the air; a column of smoke, sparks, and cinders went pouring up from the region of the engine-room, and immediately passengers and sailors began running about in great confusion, and perfectly frantic from fright.

Star was unhurt, but she sprang to her feet and stood as if paralyzed with fear, a look of horror on her young face, a feeling like death at her heart.

"Something dreadful has happened," she murmured, with white lips. "Have we escaped the storm only to encounter a worse fate?"

Then, as she saw the sailors getting down the life-boats, a sudden thought seemed to inspire her. She darted from the deck down into her state-room, where, opening a tiny trunk, she seized a package of papers, which she pulled up from beneath her clothing, and thrust it into her

bosom. She then took from a pretty box several articles of jewelry, which evidently had belonged to her mother, and fastened them about her clothing, putting some of them into a pocket of a skirt and pinning it securely together. This done, she darted out and up to the deck again.

CHAPTER II.

SAVED.

Here she found the captain, sailors, and passengers—those of them who were unharmed—hovering around the life-boats, eager to spring into them the moment they were lowered, and gathered, from what she could hear in the confusion, that the boiler had burst, and the accident had caused such serious damage to the vessel that she was fast sinking.

As she went nearer the captain she saw Mr. Roosevelt. He looked gloomy and anxious, and very pale, while he was eagerly scanning the faces of the people about him, and holding a life-preserver in his hands. His face lighted as he turned and saw her, and he heaved a long breath of relief.

“I was looking for you,” he said, in a hoarse voice, while he immediately proceeded to fasten the preserver about her person.

He then drew her arm within his, led her to the side of the vessel, and stood quietly waiting until the boats were lowered and the captain should bid them enter.

“Have you anything valuable that you wish to save—if *we* ²⁰*are saved?*” he asked, seeming suddenly to remember that she might have something.

“Yes, I have a few important papers and my mother’s jewels. I went down to get them after the explosion. How did it happen?” she asked.

“No one knows. It was one of those accidents which cannot be accounted for. The whole fore part of the ship is nearly blown to pieces,” he returned, gloomily.

Star shuddered, and then turned to watch the men let down the boats.

There were only three of them, the others having been destroyed or blown overboard. These were quickly filled by the frantic passengers and emigrants, who scrambled into them in spite of the orders of the captain to await his commands.

They took everything into their own hands, and as soon as the seats were taken, began to push off, regardless of the appealing cries of those remaining on board, the anger of the captain, and the threats of the sailors.

Mr. Roosevelt and Star were among those left, and the old man pleaded for a place for the young girl, calling them inhuman brutes to seek their own safety and leave a delicate girl to perish.

"The boats will hold no more!" the frantic creatures cried. "Every one must look out for himself in such a time as this."

"Wretches! have you no feeling? Are there no fathers and mothers among you? Will you see this child go down before your very eyes? You *must* take her!" he cried, wildly, authoritatively.

A feeling of shame seemed to come over them; there followed a moment of consultation, a counting of those in the different boats, then a reluctant consent was gained to take her into one of them.

"Be quick!" they cried, as a rush of flame in the center of the steamer warned them that a new and terrible danger threatened; and Mr. Roosevelt led her toward the rope ladder swinging from the vessel's side.

Star was very pale, but her great blue eyes had a strange, determined gleam in them.

"Are you afraid to go down the ladder?" Mr. Roosevelt asked, as he paused before it.

"Not if *you* will go *first* and hold it for me," she answered.

"But I cannot; they will not take us both," he said.

She drew back from the edge of the vessel, and looking up into that aged face, said, tremulously:

"Sir, you have dear friends who are waiting for you, and who would mourn your death. I have no one who loves me; I was going among strangers, and I should not be missed. You go; I am not afraid to die."

He looked at her in mingled awe and admiration, while those brave words, "I am not afraid to die," smote him keenly.

"Child," he said, huskily, "it must not be. You are young and beautiful; there is a long life of happiness, I trust, before you. *My* days are nearly spent, and I could not accept such a sacrifice. Come, they are clamoring impatiently at the delay. Give me one kiss, such as you would give to your own father were he living, and then I will help you down; or, if you are afraid, the sailors shall tie a rope about you and let you down."

He bent his head, his face filled with a yearning tenderness, to hers.

"The captain and the sailors—must they remain and perish, too?" she asked, breathlessly, while she shuddered as a hot wave of smoke came pouring over them.

"Yes; there is room for no one but you. Come; they will not wait longer. One kiss, little Star, and—God bless you!"

She looked up at him in surprise; he was asking God to bless her, when only last night he had sneered at her trust in Him. But she kissed him, for his lips were almost touching hers as he spoke. Then she leaned over the vessel's side, and said, in loud, clear tones:

"I shall not go with you; there are enough in the boat already."

She turned her back resolutely upon what seemed her only hope of safety, and, clinging to Mr. Roosevelt, she said:

“I will not leave you, the only one who has spoken kindly to me during all the voyage. They did not want me, for my extra weight would lessen their chances, and I will *try* to be brave when—when the end comes.”

She was ghastly even to her lips, but there was a clear and steady light in her eye.

Mr. Roosevelt was horror-struck at what she had done.

“Heavens, child! you shall not do this rash thing! Hold, there!” he yelled to those in the boat; “she *will* go!” and he lifted her in his arms and bore her to the spot she had just left, while the captain roared to the men below to wait.

But even as they were speaking the vessel gave a tremendous lurch and settled far down into the water. Smoke and flame were vomited up from below, and, horror of horrors! the boat into which they had just been urging—almost forcing Star—was swamped in the commotion of waters caused by that lurch, and its luckless freight were at the mercy of the hungry waves.

It was a fearful moment.

Cries and shrieks for help came up from the cruel depths, and white, upturned faces looked piteously toward the sinking hulk, as if imploring even the brief respite from a horrible death which it could afford.

Boxes, spars, and anything that was at hand, were cast over to them, and several succeeded in reaching and clinging to them, while others went down to their watery grave before the eyes of that watching, agonized group on the burning vessel, who almost forgot their own impending fate in the sufferings of their comrades. Suddenly a shout rent the air.

The captain hastened forward to see what it meant, and saw one of the sailors in the water on the other side of the vessel struggling with a boat.

The noble man had espied it at some distance from the ship, and knew that it was one which had been blown overboard. It might be injured so that it would not be safe, but it appeared to ride the waters all right, and he resolved to swim to it and thus save if possible the captain and crew.

He had nearly reached the steamer’s side with his trophy, when the other sailors discovered him and sent that triumphant shout.

“Throw a rope!” shouted the captain, new hope springing in his heart.

It was thrown with a will; the man caught it, and suspending his own labors, he and the boat were drawn safely to the ship's side.

Nimbly then the faithful crew sprang to obey their commander's orders. A liberal supply of provision and water was put into the boat, with plenty of rugs and what clothing was at hand; the required number of oars were brought, and in a few minutes all that remained alive on that ill-fated ship were safely seated within it.

Then they set to work to save those who were still struggling in the water. Ten were all that they could rescue, the rest went down; and now began the battle for life.

They pulled rapidly away from the sinking steamer, lest they should share the fate of those who had just been swamped, and the wisdom of this was manifest in less than half an hour, for, with another mighty lurch and plunge, which sent forth volumes of smoke and flame, the noble craft went down and the dark waters swept over it, obliterating it forever from the view of man; while the captain, with a groan of pain, covered his eyes and wept.

It was as if he had looked his last upon the face of some dear friend.

The day waned quickly; night shut down upon them cold and cheerless, hiding from their sight the other boats, and bringing with it such a sense of loneliness and misery as not one in that frail craft ever experienced before.

Star, the only woman in that boat, clung to Mr. Roosevelt as if upon him depended all her hope, and all that long night through he held in his one small, fair hand, while he pillowed her bright head upon his knees, and kept her covered with blankets and rugs.

Twice or thrice she awoke and started up, saying:

"I weary you, sir; let me sit by myself."

But he only drew her more closely to him, as he said, tenderly:

"No, no, little one; it does me good to have you near me. Lie still and get all the sleep you can, for we do not know what the morrow may bring to us."

When the morrow did come it dawned grandly beautiful. The sun came up from the east like a chariot of fire, turning the sea into waves of gold, and bringing cheer and courage once more to the hearts of the lonely little band who were struggling for life on the mighty deep.

Nothing could be seen of the other boats, although they had been eagerly looking for them ever since the break of day; but they had no reason to think they were not as safe as themselves, and were therefore not unduly anxious.

Star awoke much refreshed by her long sleep, and, as her lovely eyes took in all the beauty of the morning, a feeling of thankfulness for it

and their safety thrilled her heart, and almost unconsciously she began chanting a hymn of praise.

As she sang the first line, which was exactly like the beginning of the Lord's Prayer—"Our Father who art in heaven"—every oar was suspended; the captain reverently removed his cap, an act which was imitated by the crew, and all listened with respectful mien as the sweet voice rose upon the still morning air, thanking God for His care through the dangers of the night, and invoking His protection during the day.

"Thank you, Miss Gladstone," the captain said, as her last tone died away; "it is well for us to begin the day thus. You have a fine voice," he added; "will you sing something else and then we'll pull westward with a will for awhile?"

Star thought for a moment; then, with a delicate flush rising in her cheek, an almost holy light glowing in her eyes, and a thrill in her tones which touched every heart, she sang:

"In the harbor safe at home
Zion's stately ship shall come,
And her crew shall proudly tell
Dangers she has braved so well;
Never more to tempt the wave,
Never more the storm to brave,
Safe from rock and breaker's crest,
Anchored in eternal rest.
"Courage, then, ye faithful few!
Weary, weather-beaten crew.
Let no hardship be compared
With th' exceeding great reward;
Soon life's tempest will be o'er—
Lo! we near the promised shore,
And o'er troubled waves afar
Gleameth Bethlehem's welcome star."

There were tears in the eyes of those rough, stern-visaged men when the song was ended, and more than one weather-bronzed hand was lifted to dash them aside. There was not a sailor there who would not have fought dearly for the life of this sweet-voiced girl, who had thus touched a chord in their hearts which had not vibrated before for many a year.

A little while after the boatswain called aloud:

"A sail! a sail!"

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction toward which he pointed, and low on the horizon, very far away, there gleamed a white sail.

The captain brought his glass to bear upon it, and reported a schooner.

A signal of distress was hoisted immediately, and changing their course, they pulled vigorously for the vessel.

But in less than half an hour it had disappeared entirely, and, with disappointed faces, they again turned their course westward.

The demands of nature now began to assert themselves, and the captain served out a generous breakfast, treating all alike.

Mr. Rosevelt regarded him anxiously as he did this.

"How long will your stores hold out?" he asked, as the men began to eat hungrily.

"Two or three days," he returned; "but we are so nearly in the line of the steamers that we shall surely fall in with one before our provisions are gone."

The old man sighed, and bent a wistful look upon the young girl sitting beside him.

Star had noted his anxious tone as he questioned the captain; she had also seen the look he cast upon her.

"He fears that we shall be tossed about on the ocean until we starve," she thought, a horrible chill creeping over her; and she quietly slipped all the bread that had been given her into her pocket, and only ate the more perishable food and delicacies which the captain had laid in her lap.

That afternoon Mr. Rosevelt had a violent attack of vertigo, lying insensible for several hours; and now it was Star's turn to pillow *his* head upon *her* lap and minister to his comfort.

She bathed his face and head almost constantly, and with her shawl shielded him from the sun, which during the day was very powerful, while from time to time she fed him with bits of biscuit moistened with port wine from a bottle which the captain had given her for him, striving in every way to keep up his strength.

He appeared to revive toward evening, and said he was better; but Star saw that he was very weak, and that it was only by great effort that he kept up at all.

Another night passed, another day came, and still there was no sail to gladden their strained and aching eyes.

The third day the captain said, with a stern brow and pale, compressed lips:

"Our provisions are nearly gone—they will last only one more day;" and he shortened every man's ration, giving Star alone a generous portion.

She cast a pitying glance at the brave men toiling so uncomplainingly at their oars, and her heart sank as she thought what might be their fate.

Patiently she munched a single biscuit, while she slipped all the rest out of sight, hoarding it to fight the grim, gaunt monster which she feared was fast overtaking them.

Mr. Roosevelt had not been so well the day before; he was even worse this morning, and she was very anxious about him, for he would eat nothing, waving all food away with an expression of disgust, and only sipping a little wine occasionally, while he had become so weak that he could not sit up at all.

“He won’t live two days longer,” she heard one sailor whisper to another, when, a little later, he had another attack which utterly prostrated him. “He is failing rapidly, and eats nothing to keep up his strength.”

“He *shall* live!” Star said to herself, with an impulse born of despair; for he seemed her chief dependence, and she had grown to regard him with very tender feelings.

All night she watched over him, every half hour moistening his lips with wine, and forcing bits of biscuit soaked in it between them.

Every time she heard him swallow, her heart leaped for joy, for it told her there was hope even yet.

She had several squares of sea-bread in her pocket, for she had saved something from every meal, and she was determined, as long as her own strength held out, that she would faithfully minister to him.

Sometimes she was very faint herself from want of food, but she would take a little water in her mouth and swallow it gradually, and thus find a relief for a time.

The fifth day there was no food to give out—and, oh, the hollow eyes, the blanched cheeks and despairing hearts of that ill-fated party!

Mr. Roosevelt was conscious, to Star’s great joy, but too weak to move hand or foot.

The sixth day the courage and strength of the crew began to fail visibly, and two of the passengers fainted from hunger and weakness.

Star felt wretchedly guilty, with food in her pocket and those hungry eyes looking so piteously into hers; but she knew there was not enough for a crumb apiece, while the life of her friend depended upon it.

Mr. Roosevelt relapsed into partial unconsciousness quite early in the morning, and she was as pale and wan as a spirit, but the look of determination never left her face. She worked over the sick man constantly, forcing food into his mouth as often as she dared, while all the day long not a morsel passed her own white lips.

Just at sunset a little white cloud was visible on the eastern horizon, then it became a line of smoke; a few minutes later sails were distinguishable, and soon the broadside of a steamer became distinct. A

shout went up from the throats of the faithful crew, and with renewed courage and strength they bent every nerve to their oars.

It soon became evident that their signal of distress had been seen, for the steamer changed her course and came proudly plowing the waters toward the suffering band, and an hour later those starving, almost helpless ones were tenderly taken from their peril and every want kindly ministered to.

“What is it—where am I?” Mr. Roosevelt asked, aroused by the sound of strange voices, a vigorous rubbing, and an extra quantity of wine.

“A steamer homeward bound, and *we are saved!*” Star whispered in his ear, then bowed her white face upon her hands and wept for joy.

She would not leave him until the ship’s surgeon told her that he would pull through all right with proper care, and commanded that she go below and receive the attention she herself needed.

She staggered to her feet, a great burden rolling from her heart; but her waning strength deserted her entirely, and she fell fainting into the arms of a young, manly looking fellow, who was standing with pitying face just beside her.

He carried her below and gave her into the care of a stewardess, and thought, as he did so, that he had never in his life looked upon a face so pure and delicately lovely.

The captain and crew of the ill-fated steamer, with the other passengers who had been saved, were shown every kindness and attention which their critical condition demanded, and so ended that season of horror, and they were borne swiftly and safely toward America’s hospitable shore.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG STRANGER.

Mr. Roosevelt began to mend at once under the skillful treatment of the ship's surgeon, and to regain his strength much more readily than the young girl who had been so faithful to him.

He had been in a very dangerous condition, the physician said, and doubtless would have died but for the unremitting attention which Star gave him, in keeping his head cool and wet, and in forcing food upon him to keep up his strength.

Mr. Roosevelt heard this with evident emotion, and during the remainder of the voyage evinced the greatest tenderness for her.

They had not made much progress in their frail life-boat, notwithstanding the unrelaxing energies of the sailors, and found that they were still five days from New York when they were picked up by the other steamer; and although somewhat weakened by hunger and suffering and the intense cold, yet none appeared to be seriously affected by their experience, and a day or two served to make a great change for the better in them all.

On the evening of the second day after their rescue, Star consented to be carried up on deck; the day was keen and cold, but the sun was bright and inviting.

She was very wan and pale, but possessed a delicate beauty that attracted every one.

They took her directly to Mr. Roosevelt, and she gave him her thin hand without a word. He, too, looked so thin and ³¹white that the tears sprang to her eyes, and she could not speak.

"Dear child," he said, tremulously, and taking it in both of his, "they tell me that but for your unwearied efforts I should have died. I have no words adequate to thank you for the gift of my life; but, little Star, I shall never forget it."

She could not talk much, she was still too weak, but she was glad to be near him, and gave him as bright a smile as she could summon to her lips; and then, chancing to glance another way, she found a pair of dark, handsome eyes fixed earnestly upon her face.

They belonged to the young man in whose arms she had fainted upon finding that they were all safe once more.

He lifted his hat respectfully as he caught her glance, and then advancing, said, courteously:

"I trust the young lady is much better this morning."

Star bowed a somewhat cold assent, for she had been very carefully reared by her refined mother, and taught to be rather shy of strangers.

Then, thinking that was but a poor return for his interest in her welfare, she said, with a rising flush, for there was no mistaking the look in those fine eyes:

“Thanks; I am very comfortable this morning.”

Mr. Roosevelt smiled. He had noticed Star’s reserve, and it pleased him.

“She is a little lady,” he thought; then he said aloud, with a look at the young man, though he spoke to her: “I am very fortunate in finding friends, for since you have been confined to your state-room, this young gentleman—though I have not yet learned his name—has ministered to me in a manner most kind.”

Star’s eyes glowed at this, and she vouchsafed the young stranger a smile that set his heart bounding.

“I am afraid, though, that you are feeling far from well even yet,” she said, with an anxious glance into Mr. Roosevelt’s face.

“Pretty well—pretty well, little one, for an old codger like myself, who has seen a good many rough times. I’m a trifle weak yet, but time will help that. We have had a narrow escape however, and you have proved yourself a heroine.”

Star colored slightly at this compliment, and shot a shy look at the young stranger of the dark eyes. Then she leaned wearily back in her chair, tired with the exertion she had made.

The young man turned abruptly and walked away, but he soon reappeared, bearing a beautiful reclining steamer-chair, cushioned with crimson velvet, a couple of elegant rugs, and a silken pillow.

“Your chair is hard and uncomfortable, Miss Gladstone; pray allow me to substitute this one and wrap you more warmly. The air is cold, even if the sun is bright and genial,” he said, in a way that could not offend the greatest stickler for propriety, without even taking into consideration the license allowed on shipboard.

Star could not refuse this act of courtesy, and the chair and soft, warm rugs, with the bright, silken pillow, did look inviting.

She let him assist her into it, arrange the rugs about her, and smiled her thanks for his kindness, while she looked bewitchingly lovely with her fair cheek resting on the crimson pillow.

“Your shawl is unfastened at the throat,” he said, seeing that it had fallen away, and fearing she would take cold.

She put up her hands to fasten it, and found that she had lost the pin.

Her young attendant noticed it, and drawing a scarf-pin from his neck-tie—a pin with a beautiful cameo head—he passed it to her.

“Can you make this do for the present?” he asked.

She took it, noticing the exquisitely carved stone as she did so, and pinned her shawl closely once more.

When he saw that she was as comfortable as he could make her, he stepped back a pace or two, and drawing a card from a pocket, wrote something upon it, and then passed it to Mr. Roosevelt, saying, with a frank smile:

“I presume you think it is high time that I introduced myself; pardon my neglect upon that point.”

The old gentleman took the card and read the name:

“Archibald Sherbrooke.”

He bent a searching look upon the young man’s face for a moment, but the frank, honest eyes met his with such a genial expression that he could not harbor a doubt of him, and he said, cordially:

“Thank you, Mr. Sherbrooke; I am glad to know your name. Mine is Roosevelt—Jacob Roosevelt—and this young lady allow me to introduce as Miss Star Gladstone,” he concluded, turning with a smile to Star.

Mr. Sherbrooke bowed to Miss Gladstone and raised his cap in the most gallant manner; while Star, thinking what a nice-sounding name Sherbrooke was, and what a nice-looking man its owner was, acknowledged his salutation with a charming smile and blush.

The trio soon fell into an easy chat, which lasted more than an hour, while the young girl grew more and more like herself. Several times she forgot that she was weak or had been ill, in listening to the gay things to which her new acquaintance gave utterance, and she indulged in a hearty, joyous laugh, her face dimpling and flashing, her eyes gleaming, her golden hair fluttering about her white forehead, until young Sherbrooke thought her the loveliest girl he had ever seen.

He lingered long by her side, looking into her face with earnest, honest, admiring eyes, listening to her clear, sweet tones, and exerting himself to make himself agreeable to her; while Mr. Roosevelt sat and watched them with a sense of pleasure in their enjoyment, and never dreaming of the mischief brewing under his very eyes.

Star told the young man all about the terrible explosion, their expectation of death when they found the vessel on fire, their subsequent sufferings and terror while drifting about in the life-boat; while her voice grew low and thrilling as she spoke of her feelings when she began to realize that their provisions were falling short, and she feared they would starve to death on the trackless ocean.

"If the captain had not been so generous to begin with," she said, "it would have been better for all of us. Mr. Roosevelt cautioned him, but he appeared to think that some vessel would surely overtake us in a day or two. But after that I saved my sea biscuit; I put away half of what was given me every time; and if I had not done so, he"—with a shy glance toward her friend, and dropping her voice—"would never have lived, for when the captain found he was too ill to eat he gave his share to the other men. He gave me a bottle of wine, though, for him, and I soaked the biscuit in it and crowded it into his mouth when he was too unconscious to feed himself."

"And did *you* go without necessary food to do this?" Archibald Sherbrooke asked, with pitying eyes, and a feeling almost of reverence for the beautiful, self-denying girl.

"I am young and strong; I knew it would not do me such serious harm to get weakened by hunger as it would him," Star said, evasively; "and, besides——"

"Besides what?"

Star's lips quivered, but she answered, in a hushed tone:

"I knew it was right to do *all* that I could to save his life, and it gave me something to think of besides myself; and I knew, too, if we all *must* die, the—suffering would be *shorter* if I did not eat."

"But you were dreadfully hungry, were you not?" persisted her questioner, feeling a sort of horrible fascination in the subject, yet shuddering over the dreadful story.

"You will not tell *him*?" Star said, with a little motion of her hand over her shoulder to indicate Mr. Roosevelt.

"No."

"Yes, I *was* fearfully hungry," she went on, with a shiver at the remembrance, and she grew very white. "Ever so many times, when I was soaking the biscuit for him, it smelled so good that I would raise it to my lips before I was aware of what I was doing; but the thought always came to me in time—'he will die if I eat it.' There was only a *very little* left that last day, and I knew if he died I should always feel as if my selfishness killed him if I deprived him of it, and I was saved."

"I think you are the noblest girl that I ever heard of, Miss Star," young Sherbrooke exclaimed, with reverent enthusiasm.

"Amen!" said Mr. Roosevelt's tremulous voice, close beside them.

"Oh!" cried Star, starting and flushing, while the tears sprang into her eyes. "I did not mean that you should ever know——"

"You didn't, eh?" the old man interrupted. "I thought so; and when I saw you two talking so earnestly together, I imagined that you were giving our young friend a few facts which I wished to know myself, so I

got up from my chair and came to listen. They told me,” he went on, with emotion, after a moment, “that you saved my life; but, oh! child, you should not have tried to do it by sacrificing your own; and you would have done it on the steamer also. I shall never forget it of you, little one, you may be sure.”

He laid his hand gently on her head a moment, then turned and left them, to hide the tears that were welling to his own eyes.

“He has friends who doubtless are waiting for him,” Star ³⁶said, jumping to conclusions, and as if to excuse herself for sacrificing so much, “while *I* have nobody since papa and mamma died.”

“But you are so young and”—so beautiful, he came near adding, but something in her earnest, uplifted eyes restrained him from speaking so familiarly, and he added, solemnly—“and it must be so hard to die with all the world before you.”

“Yes, if you have dear ones who love you,” Star returned, with a deep-drawn sigh.

A wistful look shot into the young man’s eyes at this.

“You have no parents, then?” he inquired, in tones of sympathy.

“No. Mamma died more than a year ago, and papa has been gone three months. I have no brothers or sisters, no home, only some distant relatives in America whom I have never seen. They promised papa to give me a home until my education is completed, when I intend to teach.”

“Was your home in England?”

“Yes, in Derbyshire. Papa was a clergyman in Chesterfield.”

“Was your home in Derbyshire?” Archibald Sherbrooke asked, with a slight start, while his face lighted.

“Yes; were you ever there?”

“Often.”

“Isn’t it a lovely country?” Star asked, eagerly, so glad to meet one who knew where her home had been. “Can you imagine anything more delightful than a drive or a canter across the Derbyshire moors?”

“No, indeed. I have often galloped over them,” he said, and then they fell to talking of other places that they knew; and when at last the dinner-bell rang, Star said, with sparkling eyes and cheeks in which the color was beginning to return:

“I am hungry—really, naturally hungry, and I feel ever so much better.”

³⁷Every day after that, during the remainder of the voyage, Archibald Sherbrooke sought the companionship of Mr. Rosevelt and his lovely young charge—for as such he regarded her.

They became the best of friends, and the brilliant young Englishman seemed to arouse all that was brightest and liveliest in Star’s

composition, so that as her sweet, clear laugh rang out, and she replied to his jests with merry wit and repartee equal to his own, many of the passengers paused in their conversation or lifted up their eyes from their books to smile at the cheerful sight and sound.

The last day of the voyage came, and during the afternoon the two young people were pacing the upper deck, arm in arm, when Archibald Sherbrooke suddenly stopped, and pointing toward a distant city of spires and domes, said:

“Ah! we are nearing New York. A few hours more and we shall be there. Do you know, Miss Star, I shall be sorry to bid you ‘good-by?’”

The young girl’s bright face clouded at these words. A hot flush mounted for an instant to her brow, and her white lids drooped over her beautiful eyes.

“You, of course, expect friends to meet you on your arrival,” her companion continued, after a moment of silence.

“I do not know,” she answered, with a troubled look. “I did expect that some one would meet me upon the arrival of the other vessel, but now that we have had such trouble, I am afraid there will no one come for me, and I shall be obliged to go to Brooklyn alone.”

“That will not be at all difficult, since Brooklyn is only just across the river from New York. If you know the street and number where your friends live, you can easily find them,” returned the young man, encouragingly.

Star started and looked blank at his words.

“The street and number were written in my diary. That ³⁸was lost on the vessel. I did not think, in my haste, to get it,” she said, in dismay.

“Whew! that makes matters rather complicated for you, then; but never mind, the captain will know what to do about it, and I feel sure that you will have no trouble. It is probable that the pilot-boat, when it returned, after leaving the pilot with us, took back the news that some of the passengers from the wrecked steamer were with us, and your friends may hope that you are among them, and come to ascertain.”

Star was greatly cheered by this view of the matter, and made up her mind to wait patiently for whatever was to come.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. RICHARDS.

It was very late when the stately ship rolled slowly up to her pier, too late for the customs officers to visit her that night, and the impatient passengers were forced to wait until morning to appear before them and undergo that much dreaded ordeal of taking oath upon their possessions, dutiable or otherwise.

But early the next morning the hurry and bustle began, and there was the usual rush to claim baggage and get away as soon as possible from the place where they had spent so many monotonous days.

Star had no baggage to claim, and, not knowing what else to do, she sat still in the saloon and waited, watching the departing people with mingled feelings of curiosity and sadness.

Mr. Roosevelt had told her not to be anxious about her own fate, for he should see that she was kindly cared for, and if her friends did not come for her, he would provide for her until they could advertise her arrival in the papers. It was unfortunate, he said, that she lost their address, since it would be liable to cause something of a delay in reaching her destination. So, while he went to arrange some little matter with the captain, she sat and watched the hurrying crowd.

Archibald Sherbrooke came to seek her there, and found her alone.

"I'm off!" he said, with animation. "I've got through with the customs, and have come to wish you good-by. Mr. Roosevelt says he is going to take care of you. I hope everything will come out right for you, Miss Star, and that you'll find a pleasant home with your friends. I'm very sorry that you've lost their address, for I'd call and see you before I go back to England if I knew where to find you. I trust, however, that we shall meet again, sometime; and—will you please always consider me your friend?"

He placed a card in her hand as he spoke, and she saw that his address was written upon it.

"Thank you," she said, with a rising flush. "I shall never forget you, for you have been very kind to me. But wait—I nearly forgot to give you your pin," she concluded, suddenly remembering that she still had it, and she took the beautiful cameo head from her shawl and held it out to him.

"Please keep it as a souvenir," he said, gently, adding: "And I wish you had something to give me in exchange."

"I've lost everything, you know. I could give you naught but a 'tress of my yellow hair," Star said, with a light laugh, and lifting the heavy braid which lay over her shoulder with a look of mock dismay.

"Oh, *would* you?" he asked, eagerly, and taking her literally at her word.

"It would be but a poor return for this lovely cameo," she answered, flushing beneath his eager glance.

⁴⁰"No, indeed, it would not," he returned, earnestly. "May I have just a lock of its shining gold, please, Miss Star?" and his fingers touched the massive braid almost tenderly.

"I have nothing with which to cut it off, and—I'm afraid it would be very foolish," she said, with drooping eyes, but a quickly beating heart.

For answer, he drew a tiny pair of scissors from one of the pockets of his vest, and held them out to her with a smile.

She took them hesitatingly, her delicate face crimsoning even to the light locks which lay upon her forehead; then, with a hand that was not quite steady, she clipped a silken tress from among the curling ends below the blue ribbon with which the braid was tied, and laid it, with the scissors, in his extended hand.

"Thank you; I shall always keep it," he said, with glowing eyes, as he put it carefully between the leaves of a small notebook which he took from another pocket.

Then he took her hand in a warm, strong clasp, and, with a reluctantly spoken farewell, a lingering, wistful look into her lovely blue eyes, he went away.

As he disappeared through one door-way of the saloon, the figure of a woman, clad in plain dark robes, entered by the other, and threw a quick, searching glance around the place.

"I'm in search of a girl named Stella Gladstone," she said, in sharp, incisive tones, as her eyes fell upon our lone Star.

The young girl took a step forward, her earnest glance fastened upon that plain yet not unkind face.

"I am Stella Gladstone," she said, simply.

The woman looked at her keenly for a moment, and her homely countenance softened into something like pity as she noticed her delicate beauty. Then she said, bluntly:

"Well, miss, if I was ever thankful to set eyes on anybody, I am on you, or I'm much mistaken. I've lain awake o' nights thinking of you, ever since we heard that the vessel in which you sailed was lost at sea. If I got asleep at all, I'd wake with a start from horrid dreams, where I seemed to see you drowning and heard your dreadful cries. Two days ago another vessel came in, bringing in some of those who had been wrecked. We got

the news in the paper the night before they landed, and madam—Mrs. Richards, my mistress—sent me down posthaste next morning to see if you was among them. Of course you wasn't, so I went home and dreamed all night again. Last night news came that more had been rescued, and would land at this pier this morning, so I was posted off again to find you if possible. Well," she continued, heaving a deep sigh of relief, "I've got you at last, and I hope I sha'n't dream about you to-night. Of course you ain't overstocked with baggage?" she concluded, with a grim smile.

"No, I have nothing; everything was lost," Star replied, while her large, earnest eyes studied her companion's face, and she wondered what relation she bore to her, and who "Mrs. Richards," "madam," and "my mistress" were.

"More's the pity for *you*, then, or I'm much mistaken," the woman said, with a peculiar compression of her thin lips.

Then she added, with more of animation than she had yet displayed:

"But, bless me! I suppose you'd like to know who I am, and won't be much surprised when I tell you my name is Blunt; my name is like my nature, and I'm madam's—Mrs. Richards' housekeeper. A pretty time of it I have, too, or I'm much mistaken; though one can put up with considerable where their bread and butter and 'fixin's' are concerned. But come, it's time we were off. Have you had your breakfast?" she concluded, seeing that Star had grown rather pale, and thinking she might be faint and hungry.

"Yes'm," she answered, while a wistful expression stole into her eyes, and she stepped back and looked over the railing into the dining-room below, hoping to see Mr. Rosevelt. She felt ⁴²as if she *could not* go away without saying farewell to her kind fellow-traveler.

But he was nowhere to be seen, and she saw that Mrs. Blunt was impatient.

"If you please," she said, timidly, "might I just wait a few minutes to say good-by to a gentleman who has been very kind to me?"

"Lor', child! it'll be no use; you'll never find him, and almost everybody has gone already. Probably he's in the hands of the customs, having his trunks overhauled, and won't want to be bothered," Mrs. Blunt returned, good-naturedly, but really very anxious to get back to her interrupted duties.

"But he has no trunks; he was on the wreck with me, and he told me to wait here for him," Star persisted, almost ready to weep at the thought of going without seeing him.

"I'm sorry, miss, but madam will be having one of her tantrums if I am not back shortly, as there's company to dinner to-day, and it's nearly ten o'clock now," Mrs. Blunt, returned, a trifle indifferently.

She turned as she spoke and led the way from the place, and Star was forced to follow her, striving hard to repress the sobs that were struggling in her bosom over her disappointment; and when, half an hour later, Mr. Rosevelt came to seek her, he was as much disturbed to find her gone as she had been to go.

He made inquiries regarding her, and was told that some one had come for her and taken her away, but no one knew whither she had gone.

This relieved his mind somewhat as to her safety, but did not lessen his disappointment at thus losing sight of her and not knowing where to seek for her; but he was forced to go his way and bear it as he could.

Mrs. Blunt and her sad-hearted charge walked quickly from the steamer, and having no baggage, she immediately called a ⁴³carriage, and hurrying Star into it, gave her order to be driven to a Brooklyn ferry.

Crossing the river, they took another carriage, and a half hour's drive brought them to a stately dwelling in a fashionable portion of the city.

"There, child!" Mrs. Blunt ejaculated, as the carriage stopped; "we're home, and I'm glad of it, for you've caused me a heap of anxiety first and last, or I'm much mistaken; but you're safe and sound, thank Heaven, though you're rather delicate-looking for what I imagine is before you;" this "much mistaken" individual prepared to alight, casting a look of honest pity into the face of the fair girl as she did so.

Star looked surprised at this somewhat ambiguous speech, and would have liked to ask what it meant, but the woman gave her no opportunity, paying for and dismissing the carriage in her quick, energetic way, and then led her around to a side door and entered the mansion.

Beckoning Star to follow her, she passed through a lofty hall and up a wide, thickly carpeted staircase, where on every hand there were evidences of wealth and luxury.

Rapping upon a door at the front end of the upper hall, a voice bade her enter, and the woman opened it and passed in, and Star following, saw a handsome woman of perhaps forty years, dressed with great elegance and taste, sitting in a low rocker by a window.

She turned an inquiring glance upon Mrs. Blunt as she advanced. She could not see Star, as she was directly behind her and hidden by her tall figure.

"Well, madam, I've found her at last, and here she is," she said, in a satisfied tone, and stepped one side to present the young girl.

Madam heaved a sigh—it might have been of relief, it might have been the reverse; no one could have told which from the ⁴⁴expression of her face—as she bent a critical glance upon the young stranger who had come to find a home in her house.

She arose, came forward, and studied the fair, downcast face; for Star, after the first glance, knew she would receive no tender welcome from that cold, proud woman, and her heart sank like a dead weight in her bosom.

Something like a frown gathered on the woman's brow as she marked her exceeding loveliness.

"Well, Stella, you have had a hard voyage," she began, in smooth, cool tones, which made Star shrink from her and shiver slightly, they were so distant and devoid of feeling. "I am glad, however," she went on, "that you are safe, and I hope, now that you are here and I am to give you a home, you will do your best to please me. You look very much like your mother as I remember her, although I trust your face will not prove as great a misfortune to you as hers did to her."

This last statement was made with some severity. Evidently Mrs. Richards was not pleased to find the new arrival so beautiful in face and figure.

"Mamma unfortunate! How?" Star asked, surprise loosening her tongue.

"Is it possible that you do not know how she disgraced herself and family?" madam demanded, sternly, as if in some way Star was to blame for said disgrace. "Have you never been told how a poor clergyman once preached in the church where your mother attended worship, fell in love with her pretty face, and finally persuaded her to marry him, to the utter disregard of her whole family, who were highly respectable people."

Star's cheeks glowed hotly beneath this tirade, and her blue eyes flamed at this slur upon her idolized parents.

"I do not consider mamma's marriage anything of a 'misfortune' or a 'disgrace,'" she answered, with something of hauteur, and speaking very distinctly. "She was very happy all her life, and papa was a splendid man—a superior man."

Mrs. Richards smiled in a lofty kind of way, as she returned: "It is very natural, I suppose, that you should be your father's champion; nevertheless he was not, socially, your mother's equal, and she degraded herself in the eyes of all her family by marrying a penniless preacher, and a dissenter, too."

Star's lips parted again, as if about to utter an indignant protest to this statement; but, with a wave of her white hand, Mrs. Richards coolly dismissed the subject and turned again to Mrs. Blunt.

"I suppose everything belonging to her was lost," she said.

"Yes, madam; the poor child has nothing in the world save what she has on," that woman answered, with a compassionate glance at Star.

"That is awkward; but you can take her to the sewing-room and tell Miss Baker to measure her for a couple of dresses; tell her to make them from that piece of print that I purchased yesterday. Can you sew, Stella?" she asked, turning again to the young girl, whom she had not even invited to be seated.

"Yes'm; mamma taught me to sew when I was quite young, and I have attended to my own wardrobe, with the aid of a seamstress, ever since she died."

"That is well. You can then assist Miss Baker about your dresses, and when they are completed I will arrange about your other duties. You can go now. Mrs. Blunt will show you the way to your room, where you can lay aside your shawl and hat and then go to the sewing-room."

Star gave the woman a stare of blank astonishment.

She had been most delicately and tenderly reared; her education had been carefully superintended by her father, and the constant companionship of her refined and intellectual mother had made her a little lady in every sense of the word. She had been taught to be kind and courteous to every one; to sympathize with people in trouble; to rejoice with them in prosperity; and now this woman—this cousin to her mother—this human being, whom she knew her mother once saved from a dreadful death—had received her, after her long and perilous voyage, her suffering and hardships, in this unfeeling, indifferent way.

She had not even taken her hand at greeting; she had looked her over and inspected her with a critical stare, as if she were some beast of burden that she was buying to toil for her. She had not offered her the commonest hospitalities of her house, or given her one kind word or look.

She had instead simply, and in the coolest manner possible, commented on her marvelous escape from death, and then *insulted* her by speaking disparagingly of her parents; and now she had dismissed her from her presence as if she had been a menial, ordered *two print dresses* made for her, without a thought apparently of other clothing so necessary to her after being so long without a change of any kind.

She took a step forward, her slight form drawn proudly erect, the hot, indignant blood surging over neck, face, and brow, and was about to demand the meaning of this strange treatment, when Mrs. Richards, seeing her intentions, said, haughtily, and in a tone not to be mistaken:

"I told you that you could go, Stella. Did you understand me?"

With a heaving bosom and flashing eyes, Star bowed with a sort of stately grace, turned and followed Mrs. Blunt from the room with the step

of a queen; but when the door was shut behind them, she stopped and confronted that good though eccentric woman with an aspect which, to say the least, astonished her.

CHAPTER V. BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.

“What does this mean?” she demanded, passionately. “Why am I received in this strange, this heartless manner, by my mother’s cousin? Why does she presume to cast aspersions upon my father and mother, and talk about print dresses, and assigning me duties as if I were a mere servant?”

Mrs. Blunt’s breath was fairly taken away by these swift, indignant sentences and questions, and she could only gaze at the young girl in speechless surprise for a few moments.

Star was wondrously beautiful then, in spite of her soiled and disordered attire, with her flashing eyes, her blazing cheeks, her delicate, dilating nostrils, her scornful, curling lips, and proudly poised head.

“What does it mean, I say?” repeated Star, impatient at the woman’s silence.

Mrs. Blunt found her tongue at last.

“Mercy on us, child!” she ejaculated, her astonishment extending to her tones. “You’ve a temper of your own, or I’m much mistaken; and you’ll need it, too, if you’re going to live in this house.”

Then she added, more thoughtfully:

“I’m afraid, miss, you’ve come over here with a wrong impression—I really *am*.”

“What do you mean?” Star asked. “How have I come with a wrong impression?”

“What did you expect when you started to come to America to live with Mrs. Richards?” the housekeeper asked, evading her questions by putting another.

“I expected that my mother’s cousin, who papa said, was very wealthy, and able to take care of me, and had promised him to do so, would give me a place in her home as a member of her family, and give me an opportunity to perfect my education, so that I might be able, by and by, to take care of myself. This was what my father understood her promise to me to mean—this was what I expected. But from the reception she has given me—cold and heartless—and as I would not have received the meanest beggar who came to my door—from disrespectful and insulting remarks about my parents, and what she said about my ‘duties’, I am afraid that my position here will not be a pleasant one.”

Mrs. Blunt’s homely face was full of pity as she listened to what Star said.

"Poor child," she began, "you have expected entirely too much, and perhaps it would be a mercy to tell you at once how mistaken you are if you think you are going to find a pleasant home and a chance to get much of an education *here*. When madam got your father's letter and knew that you were soon to be an orphan, she said at once that it was 'just the thing,' and you would do nicely to supply the place of Maggie Flynn, the chamber and errand girl, and who was not exactly trustworthy. She said the 'English peasants always made good servants,' and as you were young and would be wholly dependent on her, she could train you according to her own notions. And, to make a long story short, you are to make beds and do chamber-work generally, wait upon madam and run of errands."

And the housekeeper heaved a sigh of relief that the difficult explanation was over. And difficult it was, with those glittering sapphire eyes fixed so intently upon her, and that beautiful face gleaming with scorn and indignation.

"In other words, she intends to make a servant—a slave of me," she said, with quiet sarcasm, but uplifted head.

"Ye-es—if you must put it so, miss," Mrs. Blunt admitted, reluctantly.

"What wages am I to expect?" and the clear young voice rang with intense scorn.

"Wages?"

"Yes, *wages*. What did she pay Maggie Flynn?" Star demanded, with a bitter smile.

"Six dollars a month; but—but I don't think madam has thought about wages for *you*. She is to give you a home for what you can do; and besides what I have told you, you are to wait upon Miss Josephine, who is not sparing of her commands, either."

"Who is Miss Josephine, pray?"

"The young lady of the house—Mrs. Richards' daughter."

"How old is she?"

"Just turned eighteen."

"Two years my senior," murmured Star, reflectively. "Well, Mrs. Blunt," she added, after a moment or two, and looking up with a clearer face, "show me to my room, please, and let me have a good bath, for I need refreshing sadly. If only I might have some clean underclothing to put on," she added, wistfully.

"You shall," the woman quickly returned. "I suppose madam never thought of it, and it is a shame. There, wait here," she added, as she threw open the door of a small room on the front of the house in the third story, "and I will bring you a change of Miss Josephine's. They will be a trifle too large, but never mind so that you're comfortable."

She sped away, and as Star removed her hat and shawl she looked about her.

The room was very scantily furnished, but it was clean, and as there was only a single bed in it, she knew she was to have it to herself—a point which she congratulated herself upon, as it would have been very obnoxious to her to room with one of the servants.

Mrs. Blunt soon returned, bringing clean, fresh garments, and Star felt that she had never realized before how great a luxury cleanliness was.

“You can go to the bath-room at the end of the hall,” she said, laying them over Star’s arm. “I have fixed the tub for you, lining it with a clean sheet, so that you need not feel shy about using it. I know you’ll feel a great deal better after it; then I’ll come to you again in a half or three-quarters of an hour, and take you to Miss Baker; and—I forgot—here’s a comb I’ve never used.”

Star felt very grateful to the kind-hearted creature, and made the most of her opportunity.

She had a refreshing bath, then combed out her luxuriant hair, re-arranging it as nicely and carefully as she had been taught to do in her own home, and when all was done she looked as bright and felt as fresh as a new creature.

When Mrs. Blunt returned at the end of an hour, her plain face relaxed into a smile, though Star had thought that smiles were at a discount with her as a general thing.

“Well, you *do* look nice, or I’m much mistaken; and those hands!—they’re much too fine and nice, in my opinion, for drudgery;” and the woman glanced admiringly at those small members, of which, to be truthful, Star *was* a little proud.

“Well, I am ready to go to Miss Baker,” she said, with a little sigh. “It is evident that I shall not be in a condition to do any kind of work, or drudgery, as you call it, until I am properly clad.”

“She’s true blue, and it’s an abomination to make a servant of her,” muttered the housekeeper, as she led the way to the sewing-room.

Miss Baker was in the midst of fitting a party-dress for Miss ⁵¹Josephine—a rather fine-looking girl, with black eyes and hair, a brilliant color, and a full, graceful figure.

Mrs. Blunt introduced Star, and then gave Mrs. Richards’ orders about the “two print dresses.”

“Goodness gracious! are you Stella Gladstone?” ejaculated the pet and pride of the Richards mansion, with a stare of surprise.

Star bowed a cold assent to this rude salutation, and then walked quietly across the room and seated herself by a window.

Miss Baker, however, had nodded and smiled kindly at her, and she felt sure that she should like the weary-looking seamstress.

“Well, I guess mamma will be glad you have come,” Josephine pursued; “she has been nearly plagued to death with that Maggie Flynn—you’re to take her place, you know, as chambermaid and errand girl.”

Star did not reply, and Miss Baker shot an indignant glance at the rude girl.

The young stranger’s heart was swelling within her until it was nearly ready to burst with insulted pride and bitter disappointment. She had longed, when she had found herself alone in her room, to relieve herself with a burst of passionate weeping, but she dare not give way to it lest it should unfit her for everything during the day; but now it seemed as if she could not endure much more.

She had never dreamed that such a reception as this awaited her.

She had pictured to herself, many times, being drawn into the arms of a pleasant, gentle-voiced woman, who had loved her mother, and who would love her for that mother’s sake, if not for her own. She had thought to twine her arms about her neck, and, laying her head upon a sympathizing bosom, tell her of her dear parents, what their hopes and plans had been for her, and what her own desires for the future were, and expected to receive only kind and encouraging words in return.

How different it all was, and how cruel that all her hopes must be crushed in this unfeeling way!

She had been ambitious to become a cultivated woman and scholar, and to follow out her father’s plans for her education, and come up to his standard, which was a high one.

But instead she found she was to be degraded to the level of a common servant, all her prospects destroyed, all her hopes crushed, and she felt as if she could not bear it.

“*I will not submit to it. I will not give up my hopes. I will not be a servant,*” she kept saying over and over to herself, while she sat there and waited for Miss Baker to attend to her needs, and felt rather than saw Josephine’s impertinent inspection of her personal appearance.

“You’ve got a wonderful head of hair,” that young lady at length observed, as she approached her after being released from the seamstress’ hands. “I think I never saw such a heavy braid before; and I believe it will just match Nellie Colton’s; she is papa’s niece. I’ll tell mamma to have a barber come and cut it off. Of course you can’t afford the time now to take care of it, and it would make such a splendid band for Nell.”

Star regarded her in blank astonishment. The effrontery of this young lady was simply overpowering.

"Indeed!" she at last quietly replied. "If Miss Colton is in need of a band of hair, she will doubtless find it at almost any hair store in the city. I intend to keep mine."

Miss Richards colored angrily, for Star's great blue eyes met hers fearlessly, and her tone betrayed an independence which did not promise well for any tyranny which she might expect to exercise over her in the future.

"You will do exactly as mamma desires, miss," she cried and then turned and left the room.

⁵³Star's face was also very red, and she swallowed an angry sob as she turned to Miss Baker.

"I am ready to sew," was all that she could say.

She longed to get some work into her hands, hoping thus to distract her thoughts from self and her bitter disappointment.

The seamstress cut off the breadths of a skirt and gave them to her, pitying the pretty, yet despised, stranger from the bottom of her heart.

"May I use the machine?" the young girl asked, glancing at that labor-saving instrument.

"Do you know how?"

"Yes'm."

"Very well. This is a Florence, and I will show you how to thread it."

"I know how, thank you. Mamma had a Florence, and I have often used it."

She arose, and going to it Miss Baker saw at once that she was fully capable of using it.

All day long she stitched and sewed, working quietly, yet rapidly, and by night one dress was nearly completed.

"You sew very nicely," Miss Baker said, as she examined her work late in the afternoon, "and this print will make you a very neat dress. I wish Mrs. Richards would allow me to trim it, but she told me to make it plain. She is in a hurry about the other work."

Star said nothing to this, but after the seamstress had gone home, she cut and pieced together some dainty ruffles from some scraps that had been thrown aside; and all the long evening, while the family were down stairs entertaining visitors and making merry, she was sewing and finishing off the print dress, that she might have something fresh and clean for the morning.

But she was, oh! so sad and lonely, and she could not help thinking of the previous night, when she had sat in the gay saloon of the steamer and chatted so sociably with Archibald Sherbrooke, and felt a strange thrill of happiness in sitting beside him.

She had not been allowed to eat with the family during the day. She had not seen Mrs. Richards, and did not even know of how many members the household consisted. It was evident that she was to be ignored, except as her services were required, that she was to be made a drudge, and her proud young spirit resented it with all the strength of her nature.

“I will never live so; I am above it. I am capable of better things, and I *will not* consent to become a nonentity,” her heart kept saying, over and over again.

But she was wholly dependent upon these people; her father had consigned her to their care. She had no money, save a letter of credit for a hundred pounds, the sum total realized from the sale of all the dear objects which she had been accustomed to see in her home since her infancy, and this she had been advised, by the lawyer whom Mr. Gladstone had chosen to settle his affairs, to consign to the care of Mr. Richards. But she had concluded since morning to say nothing about it to any one.

She had no other friends; if she had possessed them she would have flown to them at once. She was a forlorn stranger among strangers, and she could see no way at present out of the difficulties surrounding her.

She had eaten with Mrs. Blunt, who was very kind to her, and tried to tempt her appetite with all the daintiest bits upon the table; but the poor child was so sick at heart that she could scarcely swallow a mouthful.

When Miss Baker came the next morning, she looked the surprise she felt, as she opened the sewing-room door and saw Star seated within, busily sewing upon the dress she had been making for Josephine the day before.

And truly the young girl was a goodly sight to behold.

Her beautiful hair had been brushed until it shone like satin, and then gathered into a simple knot at the back of her head—she did not intend to have it cut off, and she had dressed it in this way so as not to attract attention to it—while the clustering locks which fell over her forehead, almost touching her eyebrows, gave a piquant expression to her face. Her eyes were bright, in spite of her “night of tears” and longing for the dear old home and familiar faces over the sea; her cheeks delicately flushed, and the fresh print dress, which fitted her slight, graceful figure perfectly, and which she had so tastefully trimmed, could not have been more becoming if it had been made of the richest materials.

“Why, Miss Gladstone, however did you manage to finish your dress, and put so much extra work into it, after I left last night?” the dressmaker asked, with some misgivings about madam’s approval when she should see it.

"I managed it because I needed it," Star answered. "I did not like to put on the dress I wore on the steamer again, it was so soiled and disfigured; and I ruffled it because I like pretty things and have been accustomed to them."

"I am afraid Mrs. Richards will object to so much trimming, for she was particular to mention that it should be 'plain,'" said Miss Baker, glancing dubiously at the ruffles up and down the front, and at the neck and wrists.

Star made no reply to this, but her red lips settled themselves a trifle more firmly, and her small head was lifted with a quick, proud movement, which told that she intended to exercise her own taste as far as she was able in the matter of her own wardrobe.

The second morning after her advent at the Richards' mansion, as she was descending to her breakfast, she suddenly encountered a portly but good-natured looking gentleman on the stairs.

She glanced up at him, and was about to pass on with a slight though graceful salutation, when he stopped short and regarded her with surprise.

"Halloa! who are you?" he asked, brusquely, yet not unkindly.

Star colored a lovely pink, as she replied, modestly:

"I am Star—or, I should say, Stella Gladstone."

"Stella—*Star* Gladstone!" he exclaimed, in surprise. Then he added, with an appreciative glance at her golden head with its dainty forelocks, her great, star-like eyes, and red lips:

"That sounds well—very appropriate, too, I should say. When did you arrive? We have been very anxious on your account."

Star's scarlet lips curled slightly.

It appeared that he had not been notified of her arrival—Mrs. Richards had not considered it necessary to speak of the welfare of one whom she intended to make her servant.

They had been anxious on her account!

He might have experienced some uneasiness concerning her; his kind eyes and pleasant face seemed to indicate a good heart; but the other members of his family, she judged, would not have grieved so very much if she had really gone to the bottom of the ocean, as they feared she had.

"I arrived the day before yesterday—Tuesday," she said, somewhat coldly, in reply to his question.

"Ah! I was in Chicago that day—reached home last night. You've had a pretty hard time, little girl, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir," Star returned, wondering if he had any idea *how* hard, while the tears rushed unbidden to her eyes at his kind tone. "I never expected to see land again," she added, trying hard to suppress a sob, as

she thought she would almost rather have died than come among such cold-hearted people as her mother's cousin's family appeared to be.

"Well, well, you are safe now, thank Heaven, and you must ⁵⁷try to be as happy as possible with us," Mr. Richards said, still more kindly as he remarked her agitation.

Star lifted her great eyes to his with a look of surprise. Could it be possible that he did not know the position she was destined to occupy in his household?

It certainly appeared so, for he was looking down upon her with admiration and even something of affection.

"Thank you, sir; you are very kind," she said, with a sigh, as she turned sadly away and left him.

CHAPTER VI.

STELLA'S APPEAL.

Star went down to the housekeeper's room after her encounter with Mr. Richards, and ate her breakfast in a very thoughtful mood.

Mrs. Blunt watched her curiously, and with a troubled expression on her honest face.

"Child, if you don't eat more you'll die, or I'm much mistaken," and she deftly slipped a dainty slice of buttered toast on her plate as she spoke.

"Thank you, Mrs. Blunt, but I believe I am not very hungry this morning," she returned, with a smile.

"I should think not, indeed, nor at any other time. You haven't eaten a 'square meal' since you came into this house," the good woman said, with an injured air.

Star was too deeply occupied to heed it, and finishing her coffee in silence, arose and proceeded slowly up stairs to the sewing-room, intending to finish her other dress that morning.

There was a look of resolution on her young face; her eyes gleamed with a new purpose.

"I will do it," she murmured, as she stood thoughtfully outside the door a moment, one small hand resting upon the knob. "I may as well make a bold stroke for myself at once, or I shall sink into nothingness. I *must* have an education; I cannot—I *will* not grow up ignorant, and have poor papa's kind care in the past all go for nothing."

She turned the handle of the door and passed into the room.

She found Mrs. Richards standing in the middle of the floor, holding up the unfinished dress in both hands, and inspecting it with no pleasant expression of countenance.

She glanced at the young girl as she entered, and as her keen eyes ran over her dainty figure in its new and tasteful garment, her face grew dark.

Star bade her a courteous "good-morning," but she did not even deign to notice the salutation.

"Who trimmed these dresses?" she demanded, sharply.

"I did," Star answered.

"Who told you to do it?"

"No one, marm; but I like things made pretty, and as there were plenty of pieces which could not be used in any other way, I made them up into ruffles."

Star spoke very quietly, but a bright red spot burned on either cheek.

“You like ‘things pretty,’ do you? And that is the way you calculate to spend your time in this house, I suppose?” Mrs. Richards retorted, sarcastically.

She received no reply, and continued:

“The pieces you have cut up into senseless ruffles I intended you should make into patch-work for the servants’ beds during your odd minutes.”

Star glanced at the numerous “senseless ruffles” which encircled the indignant matron’s ample figure, and thought there might be such a thing as a distinction without a difference.

“I’ve half a mind to make you sit right down and rip off every one,” Mrs. Richards proceeded, still chafing over the matter, and flushing as she noticed Star’s glance and half read her thought. “The idea of a chambermaid with ruffles and furbelows! And I do believe that seamstress has made your dress so tight that you cannot breathe,” she concluded, pouncing upon the poor girl to make an examination of the offensive robe, for the slight, graceful figure before her was not at all pleasing to her.

“No, marm, my dress is not tight; it only fits me nicely;” and Star’s slender fingers laid over quite a plait, thus showing that there was plenty of room for inflating her lungs to their utmost capacity.

“Then you are laced,” persisted madam.

“Laced?” repeated Star, who did not quite understand the obnoxious term.

“Yes; your corsets are too tight.”

“Oh! I never wear corsets; mamma did not approve of them.”

Mrs. Richards bit her lips and colored with vexation. She was not showing to advantage in this controversy. It was clear that Star’s perfect form was the work of nature’s own hand, and she would be obliged to put up with it, unless she tied her up in a sack to hide its comely outlines.

“Well,” she said, throwing aside the dress she had been examining, “I want you to come with me now; I am going to assign you your regular work. For one thing, you are to make all the beds in the house, except those in the servants’ rooms; then you are to keep Josephine’s and mine in order, wait upon us generally, and sew when there is nothing else to be done.”

Star stood looking down at the carpet in a thoughtful way while her would-be task mistress reeled off these instructions; then she raised her eyes, which looked almost black instead of their usual beautiful blue, and fixed them full upon the woman’s face.

“Did you understand,” she began, “when papa wrote to you, asking you to assume the guardianship of his only child and superintend her future education, that he had any idea that I should come into your family as a servant? I am sixteen years old, and although I have been taught to do many things in my home, and to do them well, I have never done any *hard* work. I have spent most of my time in study, and papa left written instructions with me regarding my future course in that direction. I am very fond of music; I can paint and draw quite well, I am told, for one of my age, and papa wished me to keep on with these accomplishments, so far as I was able to and attend faithfully to the other branches of my education. I tell you this that you may understand something of the disappointment I have experienced, since my arrival in this country, to find that I was expected to fill the place of a common servant. Do you think my father intended you to make me such?”

Mrs. Richards regarded the girl in astonishment, while her face grew crimson with shame and anger. She knew very well that Albert Gladstone had never dreamed that she would degrade his child in any such way. But Albert Gladstone was dead, and could not interpose to prevent it. She was obliged to curtail just now in some way, and when she found she must have this girl in her family, she had decided to dispense with the expense of one servant and impose the duties on Star.

But she had not once imagined that she would dare question her right to do with her whatever she saw fit, and she was amazed as well as angry at the quiet dignity and independence with which she made these statements, and called her to an account of her duty to her.

“I don’t know *what* your father *intended*, or what *you expect*,” she returned, in cold, precise tones. “I know that he wrote me you would soon be an orphan; that you had hardly a friend in the world, and he would leave you almost a pauper. He asked me to superintend your education, so that you would be able to earn your own living by and by. I intend to do so; and as you have nothing save your own hands to depend upon in the future, I am going to begin by making you useful at once. Did you suppose you were going to drop into the lap of luxury, and be reared in idleness?” she concluded, with biting sarcasm.

“No, marm,” Star returned, respectfully, yet not one whit abashed by the way Mrs. Richards had perverted the letter which her father had written. “I am willing to be useful—I *wish* to be useful—I should be unhappy to be idle; but I am *very unwilling* to be made a common drudge, with no time nor opportunity to pursue my education. You say I have nothing save my hands with which to earn my living. You are mistaken; I have *brains*, and I intend they shall serve that purpose.”

"It seems to me that you are making a saucy tongue serve its purpose pretty early in the day," retorted Mrs. Richards, an angry red leaping into her face.

"I do not mean the least disrespect in what I have said, Mrs. Richards; but I cannot give up all the hopes and aspirations which my father has fostered all my life without making an effort to accomplish them. I am frank to confess," Star continued, coloring, while her lips quivered slightly, "that from your reply to my father's letter, I inferred that I should be received into your family as an equal, and that you would give me a mother's care and counsel during the next three or four years of my life. Papa, I know, also understood it so, and died content, feeling that I should be well and kindly provided for."

Mrs. Richards felt very uncomfortable, for she knew that every word Star uttered was truth. She knew, too, that she was doing a mean and cowardly thing in making the bright and talented girl a servant; but she *must* have a house-maid. If she must curtail, she must do it in this way rather than in her own or Josephine's wardrobe.

"You are very impertinent, miss, and have been reared with altogether too high notions for one in your position," she said, angrily. "You ought to be thankful for a roof to cover your head, and anything to cover your nakedness, coming here, as you did, destitute of everything. An equal in my family, indeed! Music, painting, and drawing! What will Josephine say to that, I wonder? And who did you suppose was going to foot the bills? It won't do you any harm to have some of this independence taken out of you, and I'll have you understand, once for all, that you will fill Maggie Flynn's position in this house, or none."

Star bowed her proud head coldly. She saw that she was helpless for the present, and must yield to the inevitable.

"Very well," she said, calmly. "I understand from Mrs. Blunt that Maggie Flynn was about my age; that she had six dollars a month besides her board, and two evenings out a week. I will consent to fill her place, *for the present*, upon the same conditions."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mrs. Richards, in a towering passion at this unexpected proposition. "I never heard anything like it in my life! You forget that you are indebted to me for the very clothes you have on at this moment."

Star could hardly repress a smile at this calculating outbreak.

"You have given me the print for two dresses," she answered, with ready tact, "the cost of which, with us in England, would be four pence a yard. I have nearly made them myself, but you can deduct whatever you see fit, and I will attend to my own wardrobe in the future. If I do Maggie

Flynn's work, I must have Maggie Flynn's pay and privileges," she concluded, decidedly.

"You will have nothing of the kind"—Mrs. Richards was fairly hoarse with anger. "You forget that your father has consigned you to my guardianship for the next few years, and you will do exactly as I direct you. But we have wasted time enough in this kind of talk. You are to come with me now; I will set you to work, and see if we cannot take down some of this English impudence."

Star followed the woman as she was bidden, without a word, thinking it best to discuss the question no further just then; but there was, nevertheless, a determined gleam in her glorious eyes; her form was as erect and proud, her step as firm as if she felt herself in every respect the equal of the woman who appeared bound to oppress her.

All day long she was kept steadily at work; not a moment was she allowed to rest, except while she was eating. She made beds, swept and dusted rooms, and ran upon errands, until every bone in her slight body ached with weariness and her small feet were nearly blistered.

Her delicate hands had never performed such menial duties before, nor had her gentle heart ever throbbed with such revengeful, rebellious feelings.

It was eight o'clock before her hard mistress released her from her labors, and told her to go directly to bed, so as to be up early in the morning and sweep off the front steps before people should begin to pass.

She went to her room as directed, but instead of retiring, she took from a drawer of her bureau one of the packages of papers which she had rescued from her state-room on that burning vessel, and, weary as she was, she again descended two flights of stairs, and approaching the library door, tapped gently upon it.

A deep, manly voice bade her come in, and she entered with a firm and decided tread.

Mr. Richards was sitting at his desk, engaged in answering some business letters.

Star had timed her visit to him, for she had watched and seen him go into the library after tea was over.

He looked up as she closed the door behind her, and his face relaxed into a kind smile as he saw who it was.

The girl had interested him in the morning by her beauty, grace, and intelligence, but he had been so busy during the day that he had scarcely thought of her since.

He did inquire for her at dinner, but there was company present, and his wife made some evasive reply. If the truth could have been

known, she was rather reluctant to inform him what her intentions were regarding the young stranger.

“Do I interrupt you, sir?” Star asked, modestly, but without advancing beyond the threshold.

“Not at all, Miss Star. Come here and sit down; I am just through,” he answered, heartily.

She went and stood before him. She did not wish to sit down; she could say what she intended to tell him better standing, she thought.

“You spoke so kindly to me this morning,” she began, “that I have ventured to come to you for a little advice this evening.”

“Spoke kindly to you! Why on earth shouldn’t I speak kindly to you?” he asked, in surprise.

Then noticing her pale, weary face, he continued:

“What under the sun have you been doing to-day? You look tired to death.”

Star tried to smile, but she felt more like dropping her face upon her hands and sobbing aloud.

She controlled herself with an effort, however, and putting some of her papers upon the table beside him, said:

“I have brought you some papers which papa gave me just before—just before he died”—a sob would come in spite of her then. “One is a copy of a letter which he wrote to Mrs. Richards,” she went on, “and there is also her reply. Will you kindly read them, and tell me just what you understand by them?”

“Certainly, if you wish,” he replied, looking a trifle surprised at her request.

He motioned her again to a seat, then opened the letters and read them both through.

“I understand,” he said, when he had finished them, “from your father’s letter that, believing he was soon to die, he wished to provide a home for you. He states that he has no friends or relatives in England with whom he would be willing to trust you; that he has next to nothing to leave you, and begs my wife, as the nearest of kin, to assume the care of you and your education until you are able to do something for yourself, trusting to Providence to reward her for her kindness to the orphan. He mentions that he feels assured she will do this, since she once entertained such tender feelings for his wife for the signal service which she once rendered her.”

“Do you know what that service was?” Star asked, in a low tone.

“No; I asked Ellen when I read the letter which she received, but she seemed to have forgotten to what he referred. Perhaps *you* know, though?” Mr. Richards concluded, inquiringly.

Star colored vividly.

“Yes, sir,” she returned, with compressed lips.

“Well, what was it? I should like to know.”

“My mother was a Miss Chudleigh before her marriage, as you doubtless know, and she lived near Halowell Park, in Devonshire, where Mrs. Richards was once visiting, and it was during that visit that she saved her from drowning.”

“Whew! Your mother saved my wife from drowning, eh?” cried Mr. Richards, in astonishment, and coloring as he remembered his wife’s indifference upon the topic when he had questioned her about it.

“Yes, sir. Now will you please read Mrs. Richards’ reply to my father’s letter, and tell me how you interpret it?”

Star did not care to dwell upon the subject of her obligation, since Mrs. Richards had seen fit to pass it by so lightly.

“I interpret it just as it reads,” he said, after glancing over it; “that she would be very happy to grant your father’s request, do her utmost to make a good and useful woman of you, and follow out his wishes regarding your future education as nearly as she could.”

“Yes, sir, that is the way papa understood it; that is the way I understand it,” Star said, rising and standing erect before him with a gravity that made him wonder what was coming next.

“My father,” she continued, “as you know, was a clergyman with a very limited income, and he conducted my education himself until he became too weak to do so, therefore I am pretty well advanced for one of my years. I have read seven books in Virgil, have read two years in French, and am nearly through trigonometry, and have read a good deal in history. I was studying harmony in music when papa died, besides doing a little in painting and drawing. I do not tell you this,” Star interposed, with a sad smile, “to boast of what I have done, but that you may understand what my feelings are when I tell you why I came here to-night. Papa wished me to keep on with my Latin, reading Horace and Tacitus, with French, music, and history—in fact, he left a written programme for me to follow out as nearly as I was able. I am ambitious myself—I am *hungry* for knowledge. I want a *thorough education*, and as I must in the future earn my own living, I know of no way so congenial to my feelings as through literary pursuits. Perhaps ⁶⁷I made a mistake in appealing to you just now, but I could think of no other way out of my difficulties, for of course I am wholly ignorant of the manners and customs of this country. I mentioned these things to Mrs. Richards this morning——”

And now Star's voice trembled, and the beating of her heart nearly choked her, for she did not know how this man would receive her appeal to him against his own wife.

"Well, and what did she say?" he asked, feeling somewhat perplexed over the matter.

"She told me that I could not go on with my education as papa wished; that—I was to take the place of a girl named Maggie Flynn in your family."

"What!" exclaimed the gentleman, in tones of the most emphatic astonishment.

"Maggie Flynn, I understand," Star went on, gathering courage as she noted his surprise, "was a sort of chamber and waiting-maid, and Mrs. Richards says that I am henceforth to perform her duties. I cannot tell you," she continued, earnestly, "how repulsive such a life would be to me—to give up all my hopes, to forget, in the ceaseless routine of such an existence, all that I have already acquired; and I have come to appeal to you—to ask you if you will not try and persuade your wife to allow me to continue my studies? I am willing to work, and work hard, but I *must* have some time to improve and develop my mind. There are plenty of girls who can be employed in my place"—Star did not know of the curtailment business—"and who do not care for an education. Papa authorized a friend of his to dispose of his library and our household goods, and give the proceeds to me, after paying all bills. I have a letter of credit to the amount of a hundred pounds. I do not know the expense of schooling in this country, but could I not be sent to some institution for a year or two, and take this money to pay for it? I should be fitted by the end of that time, I think, to teach, and could relieve Mrs. Richards of all responsibility regarding my support."

Mr. Richards' face was very stern when the young girl concluded, and Star, looking into it, felt almost frightened at what she had done.

But she reasoned that her situation could not be much worse than it already was, and it demanded desperate measures.

CHAPTER VII.

A CONSULTATION.

"What have you been doing to-day?" Mr. Richards asked, in cold, stern tones, after what seemed an interminable pause.

Stella began to feel almost faint. That hard face, in which displeasure was the chief expression, did not look very promising for her cause; but she replied:

"I have done all the chamber-work, swept and dusted five rooms, and waited upon Mrs. Richards."

"You are not accustomed to such work," he said, glancing at her delicate hands.

"Not to any such extent, sir. Mamma used to require me to take care of the music-room, besides my own, at home, for we could keep only one servant, and I *know how* to sweep, and dust, and make beds," Star concluded, with a slight smile.

"I should say that you know a good many things for so young a lady," Mr. Richards said, kindly, for he saw that she was nervous over what she had been telling him. Then he added, more gravely: "I will consult with Mrs. Richards, and I think that we can arrange for you to pursue your education as you desire."

Star flushed.

She knew well enough that a mere consultation with Mrs. Richards would not secure much for her, and that she would be very angry with her for having appealed to her husband, and she made up her mind on the spot to make a bold stroke for her freedom.

So meeting his eyes in a frank, fearless way, yet speaking with the utmost respect, she said:

"I feel confident from the conversation which I had with Mrs. Richards this morning, that she will be very unwilling to make any change in her arrangements, so I will be perfectly frank and say to you, that much as I should dislike to take any radical steps in opposition to her, or my father's desire that I should remain with her, yet I *cannot* consent to remain here as a common servant, with no privileges or time to myself. I presume Mrs. Richards will say that, as she has been appointed my guardian, I shall have to do just as she desires. But I have read somewhere that when an orphan in this country reaches a certain age, he has the privilege of choosing a guardian for himself. Rather than be subjected to the fate of becoming a second Maggie Flynn," Star continued, her voice

gathering firmness, "I shall exercise that privilege. Thank you for listening so kindly to my troubles, and I trust I have not wearied you. Good-night."

Without waiting for him to reply, she inclined her head in a graceful bow, and quietly glided from the room.

"By George!" exploded Mr. Richards, staring blankly after her retreating form, "that is what I call spirit. Make a common servant of such a girl as that, indeed! My lady and I will talk this matter over, and see—*what* we shall see."

Half an hour later he sought an interview with his wife, and there followed "a consultation" in earnest.

Mrs. Richards was dumfounded upon being informed of the decided stand which her spirited little ward had taken, and her indignation in consequence knew no bounds.

"The impudent little beggar!" she ejaculated, crimson with rage. "Does she expect to rule me, or balk me like this? She will find herself greatly mistaken. I will give her a dose in the morning—'*such* a dose,' as Mr. Flintwinch was wont to remark to his beloved Affery."

"Ellen, you will do no such thing," her husband returned, firmly. "Have you forgotten Mr. Gladstone's letter to you and your reply to him? When you wrote accepting the guardianship of his daughter, you did so in a way to lead him to believe that you would do your best for her."

"And so I am doing my best for her," interrupted his wife. "You have talked of nothing but retrenchment for the last six months, and I have *tried* to retrench. I knew the coming of this girl would make an extra mouth to feed, so I made up my mind to make her useful, and save something if I could."

"Well, the child says she is willing to be useful, but you are not fulfilling your agreement by making a drudge of her. Mr. Gladstone understood that you would give careful attention to her education, which he evidently has conducted upon the most thorough principles, and he expected that you would fill as far as possible his place toward her."

"How do you know what I wrote to him? You did not see my letter," demanded Mrs. Richards, angrily.

"I have seen it to-night. The girl has it, and showed it to me; and now I want you to live up to your promises," replied her husband, gravely.

"She ought to be thankful that she has a roof to shelter her. Do you suppose I am going to allow her to interfere with Josephine's rights?"

"Certainly not; but this girl is exceedingly bright and pretty; let them become mates and share alike, and I'll wager that Star will never abuse your indulgence," Mr. Richards said, generously.

"And who may 'Star' be?" demanded his wife, scornfully.

“Why, Stella, of course—Star was the name, I suppose, by which she was known at home. Now, I insist,” he continued, with decision, “that this child be given a fair chance.”

“How about retrenchment if you have *two* fine young ladies to support instead of one?” sneered Mrs. Richards.

“Oh, bother! we’ll make it up in some other way. I’ll sell one of my horses; you can give up a new gown once in awhile.”

“Not if I know myself, Mr. Richards. I do not intend that this girl shall interfere with my comfort in the least degree,” interrupted the lady, with a frown.

“Well, we will manage in some way; but,” he added, beginning to get out of patience with her selfishness and heartlessness, “I swear, if you won’t promise to treat her considerately, and she repudiates you as her guardian, I will get her to choose me in your place, and I’ll treat her like a young princess—send her to Vassar, or any other first-class school she may choose, regardless of the cost.”

“George Richards,” cried his wife, with flashing eyes, “if you take up weapons against me in this way, I never will forgive you.”

“Can’t help it,” he retorted, coolly. “I’ll not have that girl made a common drudge of in this house while I am master here. How you could meditate such a thing for a moment is more than I can understand. Where is the gratitude for the life which her mother saved for you so many years ago?”

Mrs. Richards started slightly. She had not intended that her husband should ever know of the debt which she owed Star’s mother.

“I suppose she had to twit you of that in order to gain her point and make you her champion,” she said, sarcastically.

“No, indeed. I asked her what her father meant by his allusion to the service rendered you, and to which he referred in his letter, and she told me of course, though in a very modest way, that her mother once saved you from drowning. Now, I want you to change your tactics. I want you to allow her to be one of the family.”

“I *never* will do that, Mr. Richards, and it is useless for you to suggest it,” Mrs. Richards interrupted, hotly. “I could never endure the sight of the girl at my table after this, and Josephine, I know, would not consent to it. Any one can see by the course she has pursued to-night with you that she is full of art and intrigue, and would not hesitate to interfere with Josie’s plans and prospects.”

“Oh, ho! you’re afraid she will outshine Jo, are you?” laughed her husband, good-naturedly. “I should think one would set the other off, Star being so light and Jo so dark, and I should really enjoy seeing two pretty girls flitting about the house.”

"I will never put Stella Gladstone on an equal footing with my daughter, so you can cease arguing upon that point," reiterated Mrs. Richards, with a positiveness that was not to be mistaken.

"If you insist," she continued, after a minute's thought, "upon her being allowed to pursue her education, since she makes such a parade of being a bookworm, let her; I will not interfere. But *I* insist, on the other hand, that she make herself useful. She must work about the house before and after school, and do something in return for her support—more than this I will not concede;" and Mr. Richards, having gained this point, considered that he had won quite a victory for his wife's pretty ward.

"Very well," he said; "I presume she will be satisfied with this arrangement. She said she was willing to work if she might only be allowed to study."

"Satisfied or not, it is all the concession that I shall make; and mark my words, George, I shall not *love* her any better for this interference on your part," his wife said, hotly.

"Fie, Ellen! I thought you had a warmer heart; and it would not sound well outside if it should become known that you were making a servant of a relative. It would make quite a stir, let me tell you, if she should appeal to the courts to have a new guardian appointed," Mr. Richards returned, in a conciliatory tone.

Thus the matter was settled, to Star's great joy. Mr. Richards made arrangements at once for her to enter a select school for young ladies, which was located quite near their residence, and she began her attendance there the following Monday, having passed a most "creditable examination," the principal informed her.

When she was advised of this pleasant change in her life, she thanked Mrs. Richards in a few well-chosen words for consenting to it; but the irate woman shut her up instantly by saying:

"You owe me nothing, and I wish the subject never mentioned again in my presence. You will assist about the chamber-work in the morning before it is time for you to go to school, and help Mrs. Blunt with the mending on your return in the afternoon. Miss Baker will attend to the provision of suitable clothing for you, and you will work with her Saturdays. Now we will consider this matter disposed of until such time as you may deem your education finished;" and with this heartless speech, Star was summarily dismissed from the august matron's presence.

She was greatly rejoiced with even this ungracious permission to pursue her studies, and the hours spent in the school-room were a source of great delight to her; but her position at home was anything but agreeable.

Mr. Richards treated her kindly whenever he chanced to ⁷⁴meet her, but his wife and daughter ignored her presence when they could do so; when they could not, they took pains to make her feel her obligations and dependence in the most uncomfortable manner.

With Mrs. Blunt she was comparatively happy, for the woman, though brusque and peculiar, was very kind-hearted, seeming to have conceived a great liking for the lonely orphan; and often she would sit up late at night to get the piles of mending out of the way, in order that Star—who was studying very hard to make up for having entered school in the middle of a term—might have more time to herself.

Miss Baker, the seamstress, too, was very kind to her, and her Saturdays were often passed very pleasantly in sewing and chatting in the cozy sewing-room.

She left home at a quarter to nine in the morning, and did not return until half-past four in the afternoon, taking a luncheon and spending the nooning in the school-room.

This was not done on account of the distance, but because the dinner hour at the Richards' mansion conflicted with the school hours.

By staying at noon thus Star gained an hour's practice on one of the pianos, with no one to interrupt her, and this was a season of unalloyed delight to her. Nothing had been said to her about continuing her music—Mrs. Richards had vetoed all accomplishments on account of the extra expense—but she could not give it up, so pursued a course of faithful practice by herself.

Not a moment was wasted. She arose with the dawn, and every morning for an hour she might have been seen bending over her small table, busily engaged in writing or study.

All her duties were faithfully performed; beds had never been so well made before, rooms were never so carefully swept and dusted, or so tastefully arranged; and yet one would scarcely have mistrusted her presence in the house, everything was done so quietly and unobtrusively.

This general exercise, together with her brisk walk before and after her school, was very beneficial to her health. She grew tall, and round, and rosy, and in beauty every day.

Saturdays Miss Baker's weary face would brighten as Star sat and chatted in a merry, entertaining way, whiling away the long hours, her busy fingers often lightening her labors when there was no sewing to be done for herself, until she began to love the sweet young girl with a deep, warm affection, and to look forward to those weekly diversions almost as if they had been angels' visits.

Star was very tasteful also, and often suggested changes in trimming and the arrangement of drapery, thus making great

improvements in her work, while, in spite of Mrs. Richards' commands that "everything for Miss Gladstone be as plain as respectability would allow," she took pains to fit the young girl's figure with great nicety, and added many graceful touches to her otherwise simple dresses.

All winter long Star pursued this busy life, improving every moment to the best advantage, making every hour count; and one morning, getting through her work earlier than usual, she might have been seen stealing forth from that elegant mansion a half hour before the regular time, her cheeks flushed with some inward excitement, her eyes gleaming, yet somewhat anxious, and carrying in her hands a goodly sized package neatly wrapped in brown paper.

She took an opposite direction from the usual route to school, and walked hurriedly toward the business portion of the city.

At the end of twenty minutes she stopped before the door of a large and handsome store, where for a moment she seemed to hesitate as if uncertain what to do next.

At last, with fluctuating color and trembling hand, she turned the handle and entered.

A little while passed, and then she came forth again, while now she appeared pale and agitated.

As the door closed after her, she stood still for a moment upon the sidewalk, seeming lost in troubled thought; then a tremulous sigh, which was almost a sob, broke from her lips, and she turned and walked toward her school.

CHAPTER VIII. RETRENCHMENT.

Winter passed, spring came and went, and the commencement exercises of the seminary where Star was attending drew nigh.

The faculty, as was their custom, sent forth cards of invitation to its patrons, requesting them to be present and see for themselves what their children had accomplished during the year.

It chanced this time to fall upon Star's birthday, although no one was aware of that fact save herself; but to her it was destined to prove an eventful occasion, and one long to be remembered.

Mr. Richards received and opened his invitation with his other letters on that very morning, and after glancing over it, passed it to his wife.

She merely looked at it, yawned, and then laid it indifferently one side.

Mr. Richards compressed his lips at this. It did not please him that all the young girl's interests should be thus slightly ignored; but he said nothing, although his thoughts were busy during the remainder of the meal, and as soon as it was completed he repaired to his library and rang his bell.

"Send Miss Gladstone to me," he said to the servant who answered his summons.

Star received the command, wondering what it meant, and went down, with some trepidation, to obey it.

She was almost like an alien in that house, living so apart from the family, and so rarely encountering any of them; but she possessed a sunny, even disposition, and although she often grieved over the neglect she experienced, and yearned for love and sympathy, yet she would not allow herself to brood over it; thus she was always sweet and genial in her temperament.

As she entered the library this morning, Mr. Richards looked up and smiled with pleasure.

She was so fresh, and bright, and lovely that it was a delight to look upon her.

"I have received a card for the closing exercises of your school to-day," he said, pleasantly. "I think I should like to attend, if I can make it convenient. How have you been progressing?"

"Professor Roberts has been kind enough to say that I have done very well. You know I did not enter until nearly the middle of the second

term," Star modestly replied, while her cheeks glowed and her eyes shone with pleasure that he should manifest this interest in her welfare.

"Do you have any particular part in the exercises to-day?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir. I have a programme here in my pocket; perhaps you would like to see it?" and she drew it forth, laying it upon the table before him.

He glanced over it, and, third upon the list, he saw:

"Music, instrumental, by Miss Stella Gladstone."

Further down he read:

"Essay, by Miss Stella Gladstone. Subject: 'Walls Must Get the Weather-stain Before They Grow the Ivy.'"

He looked up at her with some surprise.

"Did you choose the subject of your essay?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you take such a topic?"

"I do not know, sir," Star answered, thoughtfully. "I read the line somewhere one day; it haunted me continually, until I wrote out some thoughts upon it, as I often do upon different subjects. Professor Roberts found them between the leaves of my Horace one day, and liked them so well that he asked me to elaborate and extend them, and read it as an essay to-day. He always has two or three essays from members of the junior class read upon commencement day."

Mr. Richards had been looking her over critically while she was speaking.

She was clad in a gown of some light gray material, made very plainly, but fitting her graceful figure to perfection. Simple bands of linen were just visible at her throat and wrists, while a knot of pale blue ribbon fastened her collar.

She looked lovely. She would have been so in anything; but he saw that her toilet was hardly befitting the ward of his wife.

"Girls for commencement always have a new dress, don't they?" he asked. "Have you made any arrangements of the kind?"

"No, sir; I shall go just as I am. This is the best that I have," she returned, glancing down at her dress and flushing slightly.

"How much time have you before the exercises begin?" he inquired.

"An hour or more," she said, looking up at the clock on the mantel. "I am ready very early," she added, smiling, "for I wished to look over my essay before reading it."

Mr. Richards looked grave. He remembered how Josephine had been all "fuss and feathers" at every commencement, and here this lovely

girl was going to appear before a crowded hall in a dress which his daughter would not have worn in her own private room.

“If you will step around to Hunt & Co.’s with me, you shall have one of those pretty summer silks that they are advertising so extensively. I should be gratified to have you as well dressed as your classmates, and I fear that your needs have been neglected in this respect,” he remarked, with a slight frown.

Star flushed scarlet now.

She had wished—oh, so earnestly!—that morning that she could have something dainty to wear, and she had sighed regretfully as she thought of all her pretty clothes lying at the bottom of the ocean, for they had been prettily made, although they were of inexpensive material; and she had heard the girls talking of the new dresses which were being made for them. But when her toilet was completed and she looked in the glass, she felt that, notwithstanding the disadvantage of her apparel, there was at least a distinguished air about her which bespoke the true lady, and she was comforted.

“Thank you,” she answered, quietly, while the color slowly receded from her brow and cheeks; “you are very kind to suggest it, but, if you please, I prefer to go as I am. I shall be gratified,” she added, dropping the proud ring out of her voice, “if you feel sufficiently interested to attend the exercises to-day, and I will endeavor to show you that I have tried to improve the advantages that you have given me.”

“I should be willing to take your word for it,” Mr. Richards said, heartily, “but I will come and see for myself.”

Star looked pleased at this assurance, and then, giving him a friendly little bow and smile, went away with a light heart.

“By George! she’ll make a woman to be proud of, or—or ‘I’m much mistaken,’ as Mrs. Blunt would remark. She has spirit, too, and is bound to stand on her own merits. There are not many girls who would have refused the offer of a pretty new dress for such an occasion. I’ll go over to the seminary and see what she has been doing.”

When Mr. Richards entered the hall of the seminary, he found it crowded to overflowing with spectators, anxious friends, and fond parents.

He gradually worked his way forward toward the platform, for he was determined to hear Star’s essay, if possible, and finally took his stand beside a piece of statuary and near an open window, where he could have air and yet command a good view of all the exercises.

Almost at the same moment a slight, willowy figure, clad in light gray, with a fair, delicate face, deep blue eyes, scarlet lips, and a wealth of golden hair, glided noiselessly to the piano on the platform, sat down, and

after running her fingers nimbly over the keys for a moment or two, dashed off into a brilliant and difficult sonata.

It was executed apparently without a mistake from beginning to end, and without notes, and when it was finished the fair performer retired from the instrument amid enthusiastic applause.

Mr. Richards was astounded.

He had expected some simple melody, passably performed. She had told him, in her modest way, that she had given some attention to music, but he had not imagined that she was as proficient as this, and he could not understand how she had kept up her practice, with no instruction, and no permission to use the piano at home.

He did not know of that hour at noon, nor the odd minutes, when other girls were chattering away at recess time, that Star had diligently given to this science which she so dearly loved.

He was no less astounded during the reading of her essay.

When it was announced, she came quietly forward with graceful self-possession, and unfolding the roll of manuscript which she carried in her hand, read in sweet, yet clear tones, a production which held her listeners spell-bound from beginning to end.

She must have woven something of her own heart history into it, he thought, for two or three times the tears welled unbidden to his eyes at the pathos which those smoothly rounded sentences contained.

It seemed as if Star's efforts were more highly appreciated than any other portion of the exercises. Even the valedictory, from a member of the senior class, although well written and to the point, was not listened to with such breathless attention.

At the conclusion of the programme, the diplomas were awarded to the graduating class, and then the professor said he would read the names of those who had passed their examination and were to be promoted from the other classes. There were two young ladies, he said, who were entitled to a double promotion, having accomplished the work of a year in about six months, which was, to say the least, a very unusual and laudable circumstance.

The names of those entitled to this were Miss Stella Gladstone and Miss Grace Turnbull, and they would, upon the beginning of the fall term, take their places in the senior class.

As the people flocked by him out of the hall, Mr. Richards heard Star's praises on every side, and inwardly vowed that the girl should have every chance in the future.

He made his way toward the platform, intending to speak with and congratulate her upon her success; but just before he reached her another gentleman approached her, and after shaking hands in the most cordial

manner with her, gave her a small package, and bending down, whispered a few words in her ear.

He could not understand the expression of mingled surprise and joy which for a moment absolutely glorified her fair face as she received the package; then the tears sprang to her eyes, as, with tremulous lips, she appeared to be thanking the giver.

The gentleman chatted a few moments longer with her, then put out his hand for the roll of manuscript which she still held, while he smilingly asked her for it.

Star hesitated about giving it to him, while a lovely color suffused her face; then, with a shy movement, she laid it in his palm.

He received it with a brilliant smile, bowed gracefully to her, and then left her.

Mr. Richards now approached her, and taking her hand, said, almost affectionately:

“Star, you have shone effulgently to-day, and I am proud of you.”

It would not have been in human nature to have prevented the little gleam of triumph which flashed from her eyes at this tribute to her talents, but she said, gratefully:

“Thank you, sir; but I owe my success all to you.”

“Not a bit of it,” he returned, with some emotion; “you owe it to yourself alone; but I will take care that you do not thank me for nothing at the close of another year.”

Star wondered what he meant, but she did not question him, and her heart was lighter than it had been before, since she crossed the ocean, as he led her from the building and walked home with her.

But he noticed all the way that there was a nervous tremor about her, while she was unusually absent-minded and silent.

“Who was that gentleman who came and spoke to you at the close of the exercises?” he asked, just before they reached home.

Star glanced up with a start.

“His name is Appleton,” she answered, and pretended not to notice that his eyes were resting curiously upon the package which he had given her.

When they entered the house, Star ascended to her own room, while Mr. Richards sought his wife.

He found her and Josephine together in the drawing-room, and, for a wonder, no callers with them.

He informed them where he had been, and also of the brilliant appearance which Star had made before the public.

Both mother and daughter sneered audibly at his account, and this aroused his indignation.

His eyes began to blaze, and his wife sobered instantly; she always recognized and dreaded this dangerous symptom.

"You are a couple of selfish, heartless women," he began; "and now, let me tell you, you have got to turn over a new leaf, or there will be trouble in the camp. That girl, whom you have so despised and tried to degrade ever since she came into the house, has wonderful talent—talent of which any one might be proud. She is rightly named, for she certainly shone like a star of the first magnitude to-day. Her essay was superior to anything produced there, and her performance upon the piano something wonderful for one so young and possessing so few advantages."

"Oh, papa, you don't mean to say that she can play the piano! I'm sure she has never touched this one since she came here, and no one can play well without constant practice," asserted Miss Josephine, with a toss of her dark head, for she was accounted a good musician.

"You don't believe what I tell you, then," her father said, frowning.

"Well, I think you must have overestimated her talent in that direction," the girl answered.

Mr. Richards did not reply, but walked to the bell-rope and gave it a pull.

"Go and say to Miss Gladstone that I would like to see her in the drawing-room," he said to the servant who opened the door.

"Really, Mr. Richards," interrupted his wife, with severe dignity; but he stopped her short with a motion of his hand.

"Go!" he repeated to the servant, who had hesitated as she spoke, and then he turned again to her.

"I want you to understand," he said, "something of the wrong which you have been doing this child, and now I am going to ask her to play to you. I desire that you treat her civilly, too, when she comes down. She should have been received here as one of us—I regret that I did not insist upon it in the beginning—she should have been on an equal footing with Josie, enjoying the same advantages, and receiving sympathy and encouragement instead of—well, it's no use fretting over it now; but, by Jove! I'll make it up to her in the future. Hark! she is coming, and now I'll have no sneers or sour looks," he concluded, as the door handle turned.

Star entered at this moment, and seeing the whole family assembled, looked somewhat surprised; but Mr. Richards approached her, saying, quietly:

"I have sent for you to ask if you will play again for us what you played at the hall to-day?"

Star glanced at the two ladies, but their attitude was not encouraging.

Mrs. Richards was the personification of dignified indifference, while Miss Josephine sat looking out of a window, and partially concealed by its drapery.

She saw that she was wholly indebted to Mr. Richards for this opportunity of displaying her talent, and that they were evidently somewhat doubtful as to her ability to do what he claimed for her; therefore her fingers began to tingle to do their very best.

“Certainly; I shall be pleased to play for you if you desire it,” she said, as she walked quietly and unassumingly to the piano and sat down.

She had not struck a dozen notes before she had the undivided attention of every listener; and when she had concluded, two of the little company were quivering with jealous anger.

Josephine had the name of being a good musician, but both she and her mother could plainly perceive that she had not a tithe of the talent that the fair, despised girl, of whom they had tried to make a common servant, possessed.

“Play something else, please,” Mr. Richards said, when she had finished the sonata which she had played at school; and, without a word, her slender fingers went sweeping through one of Mendelssohn’s “*Romances sans Paroles*” in the most intoxicating manner imaginable, and her new admirer, with a look of pardonable triumph, thanked her most warmly when she concluded.

She quietly left the room, although she felt assured that a storm was ready to burst as soon as she should be beyond hearing; the very atmosphere was heavy with it.

She was right in her conjecture, for no sooner was the door closed behind her than Mrs. Richards’ tongue was loosed, and she broke forth in a torrent of wrath.

“Well, George Richards, I suppose you imagine that you have done something wonderful in bringing that girl here and showing her off to us; but you will find that you have made a mistake. It is very praiseworthy, indeed, to seek to humiliate one’s own daughter, and I should suppose you would feel very proud of such an achievement. Where is your self-respect, that you bring a beggar in here and set her up as a reproach to your wife? I will not stand it, sir—I tell you I will not stand it! Things are come to a pretty pass, I should say, if our domestic peace is to be destroyed by that insignificant chit, and I was a fool ever to consent to her coming here.”

This and much more of the same kind the angry woman poured forth in a perfect volley.

Mr. Richards listened with quiet gravity to the tirade, and when she had concluded, he quietly remarked:

“Well, Ellen, now that you are through, we’ll say that it’s my turn. You might just as well make up your mind to be reasonable first as last, for mine is settled upon one thing—*Star Gladstone has done the last day’s work in this house that she ever will do!* She is to have her time entirely to herself until she graduates, a year hence. I shall offer to allow her to pursue music, and painting if she desires, during the long vacation just at hand, giving her the best of masters which New York affords, and spare no reasonable expense to make her the accomplished woman that I think she is capable of becoming. *You promised* all this to her father; he sent her to you with the belief that she would enjoy these advantages until she was fitted to become a teacher, *and she shall have them.* Now, one thing more—and you know that when I get aroused to this pitch I mean what I say—if I find that you or Jo are making her unhappy at any time, I’ll put her into the most genteel boarding-house in the city, out of your reach. As for ‘domestic peace,’ about which you twit me, I believe I love my family better than the average of men, and am not in the habit of stirring up strife; so it will rest with *you* to keep the peace.”

Mr. Richards did not wait for any rejoinder to this plain speaking, but left the room, and finding Star out upon the balcony leading from the dining-room, he told her that he had decided to let her take up music and painting during the vacation if she wished.

He felt amply repaid for his efforts on her behalf on seeing the look of joy which flashed over her face, while her voice thrilled with earnestness as she replied:

“Oh, sir, I ought to be the happiest girl in Brooklyn to have so much of good come to me on this, my seventeenth birthday!”

“Is this your birthday?” he asked, with a feeling of selfreproach that it should have come and nearly gone with no token of remembrance, while he glanced over her meager attire and marked the absence of all jewelry or trinkets such as young girls love, for she wore nothing of the kind save a dainty cameo head fastened to the knot of ribbon at her throat.

“Yes, sir; and it is one which I shall always remember with great pleasure,” she said, with a tremulous smile that he did not then understand. “I thank you,” she added, “for allowing me to go on with my music, and I will be very faithful in improving my opportunity; but—I think, if you please, I will not mind about the painting at present. I am very fond of it, but—I—”

“Very well; do as you choose,” he said, as he saw she was somewhat embarrassed. “You are to have all the advantages you desire during the next year, and you are to do no more work of any kind in this house—”

“Oh, but I like to work about the house,” she began, eagerly; but he stopped her authoritatively.

“No; I will not have it. You need all the time you can get for study and practice. Maggie Flynn, or some other Maggie, shall come back as chamber and waiting-maid, and you are to remember it is my command that you do nothing of the kind. If you have any spare time, use it in making the pretty things which young ladies of your age like so much. Here is something to begin upon, and I will allow you the same amount every month,” and he tucked a bill of no mean denomination into her hand as he concluded.

He did not wait to hear her thanks, but turned abruptly away, feeling very tenderly toward this sweet young maiden, who had lived such an isolated, neglected life in the midst of that household of luxury.

Star looked after him with a glorified face.

“Oh, what a birthday!” she said, as she went up stairs and shut herself into her room.

She folded that precious bill—more money than she had ever possessed before at one time—for “pretty things,” and laid it safely away in a drawer; then she took up a handsomely bound book that lay on her table.

“A red letter day!” she murmured. “My success—my promotion—his kindness, and, above all, this beautiful book—it all seems to be too lovely to be real.”

She raised the volume and softly touched her lips to it; then bowing her golden head, her heart overcharged with its unaccustomed weight of happiness, found relief in a shower of tears.

“The book” was the package, devoid of its wrapper, which the strange gentleman had given her in the presence of Mr. Richards.

The next morning’s papers contained an interesting account of the commencement exercises of — Seminary, together with a copy in full of Miss Stella Gladstone’s essay, and speaking in very flattering terms of its excellence as a literary production.

Another important event occurred that morning.

One of Mr. Richards’ driving horses was sold, and his wife, upon learning of the circumstance, lifted up her hands and scornfully exclaimed:

“Retrenchment!”

CHAPTER IX.

CHANGE OF FORTUNE.

A few mornings after Star's emancipation from her duties as a servant, she encountered, as she was coming down stairs to her breakfast, Josephine, who was also on her way to the dining-room.

"Well, I suppose you feel mighty set up over the fine show you made of yourself the other day," that young lady remarked, sneeringly.

"I had no desire to make a 'show,' as you express it," Star answered, courteously, and ignoring her companion's rudeness. "But it is always pleasant to receive thanks when one has tried to do one's best."

"Thanks!" was the scornful rejoinder. "You have been very sly about it all; and I should think you'd feel mean enough about wheedling papa into giving you music and painting lessons."

"I have never asked Mr. Richards for either, and—I am not going to take painting lessons at all," Star said, with scarlet cheeks.

"You needn't try to make me think papa would ever have made such a row if you hadn't been at him and pretended to be so abused and ill-treated. But—where did you get that lovely cameo that you wore in that knot at your throat?" Josephine asked, her eyes having been sharp enough to detect the pretty trinket.

"It was given to me by a friend," the young girl answered, with trembling lips, for she was cut to the heart by the unjust accusations heaped upon her.

"Some one must have liked to fool away money pretty well, to give you an elegant trifle like that," the rude girl said, for she had known that it was valuable at a glance. "It doesn't correspond with the rest of your wardrobe," she continued, jeeringly; "you'd better give it to me."

Star looked up into the bold, handsome face beside her with astonishment.

"I cannot give it to you," she said, with compressed lips.

"Well, *lend* it to me, then."

She was loaded with jewelry, early as it was in the day. She wore a heavy gold chain, from which was suspended a blue enameled locket set with pearls and diamonds; heavy jewels hung in her ears, broad bands of gold clasped her wrists, while her fingers gleamed with numerous costly gems; and here she was coveting the single ornament which she had seen Star wear.

"I do not like to appear disobliging," she returned, "but there are reasons why I do not even like to lend it."

"What reasons, pray, can you have for refusing so simple a request?" Josephine persisted.

"I have told you—it is the gift of a friend. I do not like to part with it."

"I will give you this handsome emerald for it," said the spoilt beauty, turning a valuable ring upon her finger.

"Thank you. No; I could not make the exchange."

"Nonsense! You're stuffy enough, I hope," the refined young lady retorted; and, with lowering brow, she turned impatiently away, and went into the dining-room.

An hour later, while Star was busily practicing, she stole slyly into her room and pounced greedily upon the coveted little treasure, which was stuck into a dainty pincushion made of bits of silk and covered with an embroidered lace tidy, all the work of the little maiden's skillful fingers.

"I was *bound* to have it," the unprincipled girl said, triumphantly, as she examined it closely.

"It is lovely; the most delicately carved cameo that I ever saw, and, for a little thing, must have cost no mean sum. Ah! it is marked on the back of the setting," she continued, turning it over. "A. S. and two tiny strawberry leaves underneath. I wonder who 'A. S.' is, or—was? What a lovely ring it would make."

She lifted the skirt to her basque and deliberately pinned it upon the lining, an evil look in her brilliant eyes.

"I'll capture it for awhile, just to torment her for her presumption in trying to outshine me before papa the other day. The little minx! she is altogether too high-headed and airy to suit me."

This important matter disposed of, she began to look about Star's room with some curiosity.

To begin with, it was exquisitely neat and clean, and the utmost had been made of the small and meagerly furnished apartment. A sheet had been ripped in halves, gathered across the one window, and then looped on either side with broad bands and bows of light blue cambric. A corner bracket, brought to light from among some rubbish in the store-room, had been covered with blue cambric, and over this hung a daintily ruffled curtain of dotted muslin, while upon the shelf were arranged Star's few books and a small vase filled with flowers. This last-mentioned object had been a gift from Mrs. Blunt at Christmas—her only remembrance on that day.

The small table was covered with a spotless towel having a blue border—more of Mrs. Blunt's thoughtfulness—and there was a bright strip of carpeting before the bed, which was covered with a cheap but

immaculate spread. Upon the bureau another towel was laid, and on this Star's few toilet articles were arranged with the utmost care.

Josephine opened and curiously peeped into the drawers.

In one there was a very limited supply of clean, neatly folded clothing; in another two or three handkerchiefs, as many collars, a ribbon or two, a small wooden box which was locked, and a worn portfolio—another trophy from the store-room—which was also locked and no key visible.

"I wonder what is in this?" Josephine said, taking up the box and shaking it, to ascertain, if possible, its contents.

They appeared to be somewhat heavy, and to be wrapped about with cotton or a napkin, and she was forced to put it down, her curiosity ungratified. It was the same with the portfolio, and, with a frown of disappointment, she returned this also to its place.

There was very little to attract any one in the little maiden's bower, and yet it had a cozy, home-like air about it; but her scant wardrobe, as Josephine opened the closet door to look within, appeared very mean in the petted and indulged beauty's eyes; and, indeed, it compared very unfavorably with the pretty outfit which had gone down on the ill-fated vessel on which Star had sailed.

"It is a mystery to me how she manages always to look so nice with these few traps," Miss Richards muttered, as she shut the door with a sign of disgust and turned to leave the room.

"Ha! what have we here?" she cried, as she caught sight of a new, prettily bound book lying on the small table. "Oh, this is that new novel that I heard Charlie Carpenter raving about the other evening. I wonder where *she* got it. I think I'll appropriate it myself; it looks inviting," she added, slipping the leaves through her fingers.

"Chatsworth's Pride," she continued, turning to the title page. "I should like to know who wrote it; but the author's name is not given. However, I'll read it, and see if it is as wonderful as Charlie said."

It was not a large book, and dropping it into her pocket, this "Paul Pry" in petticoats stole from Star's little bower and glided unobserved to her own room, having accomplished her object in securing the coveted cameo, and vented her spite upon the offending girl for having dared to outshine her in the presence of her father.

Later, when Star went up to her little sanctum and found both pin and book gone, she surmised at once who had been there.

The loss of the book she did not mind so much, although she was reading it and had been obliged to lay it aside in the midst of a most interesting chapter; while she knew that when Josephine had read it she would doubtless throw it one side, and she could easily get it again. But to

lose the cameo—that precious gift of kind, handsome Archibald Sherbrooke—was more than she could bear with either patience or fortitude, and a passion of tears testified to her grief for her loss.

She knew that it would be useless to appeal to Josephine for it; she could not *prove* that she had taken it, and she would doubtless feign astonishment and innocence if questioned regarding it, and unless she could regain possession of it by strategy, it was, she feared, lost to her forever.

A week subsequently the family repaired to their country residence at Yonkers, where they usually spent the hot months, excepting a few weeks' sojourn at some fashionable watering-place or mountain resort.

Here Star, who had been told that she was to have the use of the music-room whenever she wished, began her work in earnest, and gave six hours a day to hard, faithful practice.

Wednesdays and Saturdays, however, she went into New York to take her lesson, Mr. Richards having arranged with one of the first teachers for her instruction. In spite of Mr. Richards' commands to the contrary, she persisted in doing many little things to assist Mrs. Blunt, although she was relieved from all regular duty. The housekeeper often demurred when Star offered her services.

"You shall not spoil your hands, child," she would say, with a fond glance at those delicate members; "I can get along as well alone now as I used to, or I'm much mistaken."

"Never mind my hands, Mrs. Blunt; I can't practice all the time, and I must have some exercise. It is a pleasant change for me to help you once in awhile, and have a little cozy chat," Star answered, heartily; and the woman, who, to say the least, did not have either an easy or pleasant time herself, was often beguiled into allowing her to have her own way, and was cheered in no small degree by her sunny face and gay chatter.

"That girl'll make her mark in the world, bless her heart! She'll make a better and smarter woman than Miss Josephine, or I'm much mistaken," she was wont to remark forty times a month to the cook, and she grew to love our gentle Star with an almost motherly affection.

When not attending to her music, Star spent most of the time in her own room, and no one questioned as to how she occupied it; and although she continued to be ignored by the family when it was possible to do so, and snubbed and sneered at when it was not, she was comparatively happy, knowing that every day well spent was helping her on toward emancipation and independence.

One day Mr. Richards came home with a very grave face and sought an audience with his wife.

"I have a letter from your Uncle Jacob here," he said, drawing one from his pocket as he spoke.

Mrs. Richards' face lighted instantly.

"From Uncle Jacob? That is good news. Has he returned?"

"Yes."

"How is the dear old man, and when is he coming to make us a visit?" she asked, with animation.

"He is not at all well—has been having serious trouble with his head and eyes. He returned last fall, and since then has been visiting your brother in the West. Listen, and I will read you what he says:

"MY DEAR GEORGE:—You see by the heading of this that the wanderer has returned—yes, and returned to wander no more. I cannot write much, for I am not able to do so. I returned from abroad last fall, since when I have been with Henry, and now propose to go East and visit or make my future home with you, as you have so often pressed me to do. I know you will heartily sympathize with me when I tell you that the steamer on which I sailed was wrecked, and all I had was lost. I regret to come to you, as I shall, almost penniless, and in this broken state; but you have so often told me that there would always be "a warm corner in your home" for me, that I am going to take you at your word. I shall not wait for a reply to this, but follow almost immediately, for I know I shall meet with a hearty welcome."

Then followed a few affectionate sentences for each member of the family, but Mrs. Richards scarce heeded them.

"It can't be possible that Uncle Jacob has lost all his property!" she cried, aghast. "Why, the last we heard he was worth a million!"

"I know; but in these days it does not take long to lose a million," her husband replied, gravely, adding: "It is a misfortune, indeed, for the old man; but we will do the best we can for him, allowing him to feel it as little as possible. He *will* feel it, however, for he was, as I remember him, a very high-spirited, independent man."

Mrs. Richards' face was crimson from mingled emotions.

"It is a shame!" she cried, angrily. "Uncle Jacob always gave Henry and me to understand that we should be his heirs; and now we have to lose half a million apiece. How under the sun do you suppose he lost it?"

"I have no idea—some speculation, doubtless."

⁹⁶"It appears that he expects to be taken care of in his old age just the same as if he were the Croesus we have always supposed him to be," Mrs. Richards said, wrathfully.

"He has a right to expect it," her husband replied, with some sternness; "you have always professed the deepest affection for him, and urged him to make his home with you. Who *should* take care of him in his misfortune if not his only brother's children?"

"Henry is as well able to have him as I am, and I don't see why he could not have staid there."

"Perhaps he was no more welcome there than it appears he will be here," Mr. Richards remarked, sarcastically.

"Well, I'm not going to have him here, and there's an end of the matter. I shall post him right back to Henry. His wife does not have half the care that I do, socially. We might as well open a hospital for the lame, the blind, the halt, and beggars generally."

"I am astonished to hear you speak thus, Ellen, and of your own relatives, too, especially after all your flattering protestations. Of course we will receive your uncle kindly, and show him all proper attention."

"I will *not*," his wife retorted, angrily. "I may as well set my foot down first as last; he shall not come here to be a burden upon us. You have had your way about Stella; now I'll have mine in this matter. One beggar in the house is enough."

"Ellen, how you are changed! When I first knew you, you were sweet-tempered and kind. I believe your life of unlimited indulgence and luxury has soured and hardened you," Mr. Richards said, with a regretful sigh for the early days of his married life, when his wife was loving and lovable.

"Thank you; your *compliments* are not of a particularly 'sweet' nature," she answered, scornfully.

"Your uncle says he shall follow his letter immediately; he ⁹⁷may arrive at any hour. What shall we do with him?" asked Mr. Richards, taking no notice of her sarcasm.

"I don't know—I don't care. Tell him that the house is full of company—anything you please; only mind, *I* will not be burdened with a half blind, decrepit old man;" and the excited woman flounced angrily from the room, leaving her husband sitting alone in sad and troubled thought.

CHAPTER X.

THE UNWELCOME GUEST.

On the very evening of the day of that spirited discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Richards regarding the coming of the latter's uncle, a railway carriage stopped before the door of their mansion, and an old man alighted.

He was dusty and travel-stained; his hair and beard were white as snow; his clothing—a common business suit—considerably the worse for the wear; while he wore a dark-green visor or shade over his eyes, and appeared both weary and feeble.

He inquired of the servant who answered his ring for Mrs. Richards, and was told in an indifferent, almost impudent, manner that she was “engaged.”

“Humph!” ejaculated the visitor, lifting the green shade and giving the man a keen look; “where is your master?”

“In the library,” was the rather more respectful answer.

“Show me the way there,” commanded the stranger, authoritatively; and the servant turned with a subdued air to obey him, recognizing at once his superior in spite of the travel-stained, shabby clothing.

Mr. Richards received his wife's relative with every appearance of cordiality, although there was a restraint in his manner which could be felt rather than explained.

“Ah, Uncle Jacob!” he said, as he shook him by the hand and took his hat from him; “we hardly thought you could arrive quite so soon. I should have looked for you to-morrow, however. Sit down—sit down; and, John,” turning to the man who had shown him in, “tell Mrs. Blunt to fix up a nice little supper and send it in here on a tray.”

“Don't put yourself out, George; anything will do for to-night. I am more tired than hungry,” the old man said, sinking into a luxurious chair with a weary sigh, and removing the green shade entirely from his eyes.

Mr. Richards fidgeted and looked uneasy.

He knew that there was not a room in the house that his wife would give up; every one had been arranged for company who were expected or had already arrived, and he was at his wits' end to know what to do with him.

“Uncle Jacob” poor and ill was an entirely different character from “Uncle Jacob” rich and prosperous.

But he sat chatting socially with him until Mrs. Blunt appeared with a tray and served a tempting little meal, which the old gentleman ate with evident relish.

"I *was* more hungry than I thought," he said, when at length he had finished his second cup of tea, eaten the leg of a chicken and a couple of rolls. "Now, if you please, I should like to be shown to my room, for I have traveled a long distance to-day. But—where is Ellen? I should like to exchange greetings with her before I go."

"Ahem!" began Mr. Richards, feeling extremely uncomfortable. "Ellen has a house full of company to-night; if you could excuse her, and wait until to-morrow——"

"Certainly—certainly," the old man said, hastily, but in a disappointed tone; for his niece had always been the first to greet him and express her delight at his coming heretofore.

"And," continued his host, growing very red in the face, "I am very sorry, but—every room in the house is taken. Would you mind sleeping at the lodge until we can make a place for you?"

The old gentleman bent a keen glance upon the speaker at this.

He saw his embarrassment, marked his averted eye and shamefaced air, and mistrusted something of its cause.

"Sleep at the lodge?" he repeated, in a peculiar tone. "Oh, no; I've just come from Henry's, where I slept over the stable. *They* had a 'house full of company,' too. Is the lodge far from here? You know I've never been in this house before."

"About two minutes' walk; I will go with you and see that you are made comfortable. It is too bad that things should happen so," Mr. Richards said, with real regret as he saw how weary the traveler was, and he had half a mind to ring and command that he be shown into one of the guest chambers in spite of his wife's objections.

"Never mind, George; I shall sleep just as well there as here, no doubt," and he arose as if anxious to get away.

"Where is your baggage? I will attend to having what you need sent down," Mr. Richards remarked, as he took up his hat to accompany him.

"I have nothing but a small valise," was the reply. "You know I wrote you that I had been very unfortunate. I was on board the —— that was lost last fall, and everything I had on board went down."

"On board the —— were you?" cried Mr. Richards, in surprise, and glad of any change in the subject of conversation. "Why, then you must have known Star, as she was also on that steamer."

"Star—Star Gladstone, do you mean?" eagerly inquired Mr. Rosevelt, for it was he, as doubtless the reader has surmised before this.

“Yes, Star, or Stella Gladstone, is her name.”

Mr. Roosevelt sat down again, his face full of interest and animation now, and forgetting his weariness for the time in his desire to learn something of the beautiful girl to whom he was so deeply indebted.

“Where is she?” he asked. “What do you know—what can you tell me about her?”

“She is here in this house,” Mr. Richards answered. “She is the child of one of my wife’s relatives who resided in England, and Ellen, upon learning that she was an orphan and homeless, consented to have her come here,” he concluded, trying to make the best of a very poor story.

“I never expected to hear anything of her again, but I am very glad to know that she is here,” Mr. Roosevelt said, with evident emotion. “She saved my life during that awful time, almost at the sacrifice of her own. It would, perhaps, have been better had she not exerted herself in my behalf so much. It is not a pleasant feeling to know that one is regarded as an incumbrance and a burden,” he continued, with some bitterness; “but I shall never forget her heroism while I live. She nearly starved herself to death to keep life in me.”

“I am astonished at what you tell me,” returned Mr. Richards, feeling a deeper interest in Star than ever before.

“She disappeared very suddenly from the steamer which picked us up and brought us into port. I went down to my state-room for something, and then to the captain to thank him for his kindness and bid him farewell, and when I went to look for her she had gone; some one had come and taken her away.”

“Yes; we heard of the arrival of a steamer with some of the wrecked on board, and Ellen immediately sent Mrs. Blunt down to see if Star was among them,” explained Mr. Richards.

“She must be a pleasant addition to your family, George; she was a very attractive girl.”

“Ahem!” that gentleman replied, avoiding the keen eye fixed upon him. “Yes; she is a smart and talented girl; she will make a fine woman, without doubt. Would you like to see her to-night?”

“No; I believe I am too tired. I will go to the lodge now, if you please. I can see her to-morrow;” and the old man arose again.

Mr. Richards led the way from the room, getting his baggage from the hall, and then took him through the dining-room to lead him out by a side door.

As they passed through the hall, sounds of music and laughter came to them from the drawing-room; and had any one been watching Mr. Roosevelt closely, he might have seen his lips curl with something like scorn and his eyes gleam indignantly, in spite of his weariness.

As Mr. Richards opened the outside door leading out upon the veranda, a slight figure sprang up from the step, and Star, with a startled glance, turned and confronted them.

A look of surprise swept over her face as she saw Mr. Richards' companion; then, with a low cry of joy, she darted forward and seized Mr. Roosevelt by the hand.

"Oh, sir," she said, tremulously, "I was afraid I should never see you again! How glad I am to meet you once more!"

Mr. Roosevelt recognized her at once, and recognized, too, the heartiness and sincerity of her welcome. There was nothing forced or constrained about either her words or manner.

"Ah, Miss Star, I am as glad to see you as you can possibly be to see me," he said, shaking her hand warmly. "I little thought," he went on, "that when you and I were faring so poorly together that we were bound for the same place. I intended then to come here before this. Why did you not tell me that you were a relative of Mrs. Richards?"

"I did not think much about it, sir, or that my destination could interest you," she answered.

"Tut, tut, child!" he said, gently; "*anything* connected with you would have been of interest to me after your kindness to me. I was deeply disappointed to find you gone when I went to seek you; but they told me that some one had come and taken you away, so I was forced to go my way also. Well," he concluded, smiling, "I have found you now, and I shall not lose sight of you again."

"But are you going away now, sir?" Star asked, glancing at the bag Mr. Richards was carrying, and which had the initials "J. R." painted upon it.

"No; only to the lodge for sleeping accommodations, as there is no room in the house for me."

"No room in the house for you?" Star repeated, in astonishment; but something in Mr. Richards' face warned her that all was not as he would wish, and she added, flushing: "I wish you would take my room, then; for I can sleep very nicely on the lounge in the sewing-room."

Mr. Richards raved inwardly over his wife's obstinacy and heartlessness, which compared so unfavorably with this gentle girl's generosity and self-denial; but he could only hold his peace and let matters take their course, for if he interfered with his wife in her present state of bitterness and disappointment over the loss of her expected fortune, he knew that a domestic squall would be sure to follow, and one which it would be hard to settle.

"No, thank you, Miss Star," Mr. Roosevelt returned; "I will go to the lodge until there is room for me in the house. You are as kind and self-

sacrificing as ever, I perceive, but I will not deprive you of your room. Good-night, my child; I shall see you to-morrow."

He laid his hand in a tender, caressing way on her head; then went out with Mr. Richards, whom he enlightened still further regarding that eventful voyage which he and Star had made together.

She stood still in the door-way looking after them, a puzzled expression on her face, a gleam of indignation in her large blue eyes.

She had overheard Mrs. Richards telling Josephine something about "Uncle Jacob," that afternoon after leaving her husband.

The name had made her think of Mr. Rosevelt, and he had been in her thoughts most of the time since; but she had not imagined that they were referring to him, or that he was a relative of the family. Now she saw that he was the "Uncle Jacob" to whom she referred, but she could not understand his being sent out of the house to sleep.

"No room in the house! What can they mean?" she murmured, with tingling cheeks, for she knew of three unoccupied beds that he might have had as well as not.

To be sure they had been made up for company that was expected, but the visitors would not arrive for a day or two, and it seemed such an inhospitable thing to send that old man away down to the lodge, with its close, small rooms, to sleep.

"I hope I shall never be rich if it would make me hardhearted like that," she said, with indignation. "I would prefer to struggle all my life with poverty, and have a kind and generous heart—one that can feel for others in trouble and sorrow. How tired and ill he looked, too," she went on, recalling his pale face and drooping attitude, "and he is such a splendid man!"

"It makes me think of those other words," she said, the tears springing to her eyes: "'And there was no room in the inn,' and of One who, in consequence, had to lie in a manger. *That* could not be helped, for there *was* no room; but this is ¹⁰⁴shameful, for there is plenty and to spare here. How can any one treat one's father's brother so?"

CHAPTER XI. FILTHY LUCRE.

The next morning word was brought from the lodge that Mr. Roosevelt was quite ill, and not able to come up to the mansion for his breakfast.

"Breakfast, indeed!" muttered Mrs. Richards, with a toss of her proud head; "as if he supposed he was going to be invited to sit at the table with my fashionable guests in his shabby clothes."

She had received a full account of his arrival and appearance from her husband the night previous, after Mr. Roosevelt's departure for the lodge.

Mr. Richards went at once to see him, and to give orders to Mrs. Mellen, the wife of the gardener, to do everything for his comfort.

Later, his wife, with much inward fretting and fuming, followed his example, not because she had any desire to see him or felt in any way anxious about him, but to save unpleasant remarks and comments.

She met her uncle with anything but a cordial greeting, and which, even in the midst of his suffering, he could not fail to feel keenly.

"I am very sorry, Uncle Jacob, that you are ill, especially as I am full of company just now, and cannot personally give you the attention that you ought to receive," she said, trying to speak sympathetically, but failing utterly.

"Never mind me, Ellen. Mrs. Mellen seems very kindly disposed, and will, no doubt, do all that is necessary for me. I am sorry to be a burden to you in my misfortune, but you have always been so kind to me, urging me so cordially to come to you at any time, that I thought you would be glad to see your old uncle under any circumstances," the old man said, regarding her closely while he was speaking.

"I hope you will soon be better," Mrs. Richards returned, evasively.

She did not think it necessary to tell him that he was no burden, or to say anything to make him feel comfortable and at ease in his trying situation.

She was so deeply disappointed and chagrined on account of the loss of his fortune, and consequently of her share of his million, that it was impossible not to betray something of her feelings.

"Thank you," he returned, coldly. "Do not allow my condition to cause you any anxiety. I am very comfortable. It is very quiet here, and I shall doubtless do very well."

"Yes; you *will* be more quiet here than up at the house, where there are so many people and so much going on," she replied, eagerly seizing this pretext for keeping him where he was. "And," she added, "if you need anything, Mrs. Mellen can attend to all your wants."

After a few more commonplace remarks, she took her departure, feeling quite relieved to have him so easily disposed of. She had nothing to gain now by fawning and flattery, and since his gold was gone, he was no more to her than any other feeble old man, and it would not pay even to pretend what she did not feel.

As she went rustling out of the room and down stairs in her rich attire, her aged and dependent relative lay back in his chair, with a darkening brow and a pale, pained face.

"Money! money! money!" he muttered. "No one is of ¹⁰⁶much account in this world without plenty of the filthy lucre. If I had come here as I used to, with plethoric pockets instead of an empty purse and shabby attire, no one would have been sweeter or more delighted to see 'dear Uncle Jacob' than Ellen Richards. And it was just the same with Henry and his family. When I could make them costly presents and shower favors upon them—when I was 'Jacob Rosevelt, the millionaire'—no trouble was too great, nothing too good for me. It is a cold-hearted, selfish world; *no one* is to be trusted. But it is a little hard on an old man to find that he must go down to his grave and feel that he is regarded with affection by nobody. Talk of 'Divine dispensations,' of 'tempering the wind to the shorn lamb'—there is no divinity about it, for the adverse winds of the world never blew so coldly on me as at this moment," he concluded, bitterly; and bowing his head upon his hands, he seemed to lose himself in troubled thought.

"May I come in?" asked a gentle voice behind him, after a few minutes; and turning, he saw two blue eyes gleaming at him from beneath soft curls of sunny hair, a pair of red lips smiling upon him, while a slight, graceful figure, daintily clad in a pretty blue lawn gown, stood in the doorway, waiting for his permission to enter.

Jacob Rosevelt's sad face involuntarily brightened at the sight of this attractive picture, and he said, hastily:

"Well, well, child, I believe you are rightly named, for you come like a veritable star into the gloom of my life. Star Gladstone—it is but an index to your character, for you both brighten and cheer. Of course you may come in."

"Thank you," Star said, laughing, and advancing to his side. "I did not expect to be so highly complimented when I came out. I have brought you this lovely spray of oleanders which the gardener gave me from the conservatory," and she held up her little vase containing the bright,

fragrant blossoms. "And here," she continued, "is a dish of the most delicious raspberries you ever tasted, every one picked by my own fingers," and she held up her right hand, showing her slender fingers stained by the rosy fruit.

He watched her, his pale lips relaxing into a smile, which even extended to the eyes that had been so sad a little while before. She was irresistible in her bright beauty; she was as fresh and sweet as the morning itself, while with her heart filled with kindness and consideration for him, he began to think that all the world was not quite so bad as he had thought.

"Mrs. Mellen told me, as I came in, that you did not eat much breakfast," Star continued; "and as she is about to serve you a little lunch, I brought my berries right up to give them to you myself."

Mrs. Mellen entered at this moment, bearing a little tray with a tempting lunch spread upon it.

Star wheeled a small table to the invalid's side, spread a spotless towel which she found upon the rack upon it, and then deftly arranged the dishes in the most tempting way before him, putting the oleander blossoms in the center and the raspberries just under his nose, where he could not fail to get their delicious odor and long to eat them.

"How pretty and inviting you make everything look, little one," he said, affectionately, as he watched her graceful movements and their result.

"What would the world be but for the beauty there is in it? and what are pretty things given us for, but to enjoy?" Star returned, with a fond glance at the flowers, as she moved them a trifle nearer to his plate.

"There," she went on, smiling, and tossing her hat upon a chair, "I believe I am hungry myself, and if you will allow me to pour your tea, I think I could eat a slice of Mrs. Mellen's delicious bread and butter with you afterward. You don't often see such bread as that, I can assure you, and I frequently run down here and beg her to give me some."

¹⁰⁸The young girl shot a smiling glance at the woman as she spoke, and the woman's face beamed with pleasure at this tribute to her skill.

"Bless you, child!" Mr. Roosevelt said, as he unfolded his napkin and drew nearer the table; "the sight of your bright face and the smell of your berries have given me an appetite already. Sit down, sit down; my tea will taste ten per cent. better to be poured by your fair hands, and while we eat you shall tell me how it has fared with you during the past year. I see it has not changed *you* at heart; you are the same as when we parted, and you were as ready as ever last night to sacrifice your own comfort for a poor old man."

Star blushed. She felt almost as guilty, knowing that there had been room for him at the house, as if *she* had been the one to turn him away.

"I knew these rooms were low and close, while my room, although rather high up, was much more airy; besides, you looked too tired and ill to walk way down here," Star explained, with some embarrassment.

"Your own is rather high up, is it? How high?" he asked, giving her a keen glance.

"It is in the third story," she answered, flushing again.

"Ah! one *would* be apt to get good air in that latitude," said Mr. Rosevelt, dryly. "Now tell me," he added, "what you have been doing since I saw you."

Star gave him an account of her life at school, omitting for several reasons to speak of the fate which had been intended for her, and said just as little as she could in connection with Mrs. Richards and her haughty daughter, or their treatment of her. She told him of her music, of the books she had read, and what her plans for the future were when she should graduate at the end of another year.

She spent more than an hour with him, and when at length ¹⁰⁹she left him, he was apparently much cheered and a good deal better for her visit.

She went every morning afterward while her vacation lasted, always taking him something in the way of fruit or flowers, and cheering him with her lively chatting, until he began to look for her coming as the chief event of the day.

Sometimes they would wander together through the beautiful grounds of Mr. Richards' place, or, finding a cozy nook, Star would take some interesting book and read to him; and as the week went by, he appeared to improve in health and to grow more contented with his lot.

He continued to remain at the lodge, in spite of the fact that the company had all departed, and there was now plenty of room in the mansion.

Mr. Richards had gone West on a prolonged business trip, and, of course, could not use his influence as to any change; while Mrs. Richards appeared to ignore his presence entirely, unless she came upon him unexpectedly, when she would treat him with indifferent politeness.

Josephine's attitude toward him was one of proud disdain, although once she professed great friendship for him; but now he was nothing more than an aged, decrepit man—a sort of "cumberer of the ground," and simply tolerated because it would be considered inhuman to cast him out at that time of life.

In September Mrs. Richards and her daughter went to Long Branch for a change, leaving the household in charge of Mrs. Blunt.

Star began school again, going back and forth by rail, as the town house would not be opened again until October.

This made it hard for her, because she was obliged to go so early and return so late; but as her comfort was not a matter which usually demanded much consideration, and she made no complaint, the fact remained unnoticed.

¹¹⁰During the absence of the family, Mr. Roosevelt frequented the house, for it was much more comfortable through those hot September days than his contracted room at the lodge, and he was glad to avail himself of the privilege of the well-stocked library to while away the long hours of Star's absence.

In the evening she would entertain him with her music, while on Saturday they both felt like children out of school; and thus day by day they grew to feel a deep affection for each other.

"She at least does not love me for my money," the old man would often mutter to himself, with a grim smile, after receiving some thoughtful attention from the young girl; "her affection is sincere and disinterested, and I pray that her gentle heart may never become seared and hardened by the cold world."

He had long ago learned just how Star was regarded by the family, and how they had attempted to degrade her to the level of a common servant, and this did not tend to make him entertain any deeper respect for them.

His information on this point he had gathered chiefly from Mrs. Blunt. Star would not talk about it, always evading or changing the subject in a dextrous way that amused him in no small degree.

Meanwhile Josephine and her mother were flourishing among the fashionable at Long Branch.

The season proved to be a very gay one; every hotel was crowded, and many noted people from various countries were sojourning there.

Among others, the Richardses heard upon their arrival, there was a young English lord of great reputed wealth, having, it was said, the largest rent-roll in Derbyshire, England.

"They say he is the handsomest man in the place, as well as the richest," Josephine said to her mother, the night after their arrival at the gay watering-place, having heard this piece ¹¹¹of news, with much else, from an intimate friend. "All the girls are wild about him," she pursued. "Annie Falkner was introduced to him yesterday, and says he is as charming in conversation as he is in appearance."

"How old is he?" asked Mrs. Richards, pricking up her maternal ears at once over this wonderful information.

“About twenty-one or two, Annie thought he might be. He has been traveling in this country for a year, just to see a little of the world before settling upon his own estate. It is whispered,” the eager damsel went on, with flushing cheeks and sparkling eyes, “that he has heard of the beauty of American ladies, and is on the lookout for a handsome wife;” and Josephine tossed her head with a conscious smile, as her eyes wandered to the reflection of her own fine face and figure in an opposite mirror.

“That is somewhat doubtful, I think, since the English nobility are very jealous regarding marriages outside the pale of their own rank. However, such things are happening every year now, and this young lord may be captivated by some of our American beauties, after all;” and Mrs. Richards bestowed a glance of pride upon her handsome daughter, and thought how delightful it would be to figure as mother-in-law to an English lord, and to be able to say, “my daughter, Lady So-and-So.”

That evening Josephine Richards, the most brilliant girl in the ball-room of the Howard House—the hotel where they were stopping—was made supremely happy by receiving an introduction to Lord Carrol, of Carrolton, Derbyshire, England.

One look into the frank, handsome eyes of the manly stranger, one touch of his hand, one tone of his rich, musical voice as it vibrated in her ears, and she knew that she had met the man whom she should love with the one great passion of her life.

He was tall, with a well-developed form, straight, strong, and ¹¹²lithe; a splendidly shaped head, with masses of waving brown hair; clear, truthful, brown eyes, full of fire and intelligence; a full, rather low brow, a straight nose, and a smiling but decided mouth, with brilliant, even teeth.

It was not much wonder that the “girls were wild” over such a man as this, and he a lord, with a rent-roll of sixty thousand a year.

Josephine herself, at nineteen, was a magnificent-looking girl, at least when she was good-natured and animated.

She was a clear, brilliant brunette, with eyes as black as night, a wealth of midnight hair, a fine form, and clearly cut, rather delicate features; and all this, added to a faultless taste in matters of dress, went far toward making her the chief attraction wherever she went.

My Lord of Carrolton seemed no less pleased with her than she with him, and spent a goodly portion of the evening by her side after making her acquaintance, much to the chagrin and indignation of other anxious, blooming maidens and fond, managing mammas.

“Have you ever visited Europe?” the young peer asked his companion, as he led her to a seat at the conclusion of a quadrille.

"Never, my lord, but I think we shall persuade papa to take us upon a European trip by another year. Mamma has some distant relatives, I believe, somewhere in England," Josephine replied.

"I trust you will be as well pleased with my country and countrymen as I am with America and Americans," Lord Carrol remarked, gallantly, with an inclination of his grand head, and bestowing a look of admiration upon his companion.

Josephine flushed with pleasure. His glance, his gesture, his words, all plainly indicated that he did not consider her the least attraction in America or among Americans.

"Thank you, in the name of my native land," she said; ¹¹³ "but I think you must be an exception to the proverbial Englishman, for I have been told that, as a rule, they do not like us any too well. They cannot forgive us our independence."

"One may be forced to admire in one way that which it might not be pleasant to contemplate in another," his lordship returned. "But," he added, "I trust that as we, as nations, become better acquainted with each other by the frequent interchange of courtesies, we shall also become better friends."

"Have you been long in America?"

"Nearly a year. I have visited a large portion of the country, and I must confess that I am greatly pleased and interested in what I have seen, and particularly so with your free institutions and schools. Your people, too, are generous, free-hearted, and intelligent, while the beauty of American ladies, you know, is proverbial," he concluded, smiling.

Josephine's dark eyes drooped shyly beneath his glance, while the blood went rippling to her heart with a thrill such as she had never before experienced.

"I shall remain two or three months longer," he continued; "and I think when I do return, notwithstanding I love old England very dearly, I shall go with something of regret."

He would remain two or three months longer.

Josephine's heart leaped exultingly; she would meet him often, perhaps, this noble young peer; and what might not happen in two or three months?

"Do you remain long at Long Branch?" she asked.

"Three or four weeks, perhaps. I find it very pleasant here," he said; and again that thrill leaped through her veins. "I shall then go to New York," he added, "where I shall make my headquarters until I return to England."

"Perhaps we can help to make your stay in New York pleasant," Josephine said, with her most brilliant smile. "Mamma and I are to

remain here until the first of October, when we ¹¹⁴shall go home, and can, perhaps, help to show you more of our great city than you would otherwise see.”

“Thanks; I shall be very happy to avail myself of your kindness. But there is the signal for supper; may I take you in?”

It is needless to say that the fascinated girl accepted his invitation, and spent the hour feasting more upon the young lord’s handsome looks and charming conversation than upon the choice viands which he placed before her.

It was evident that he also experienced pleasure in her society, for, when he took her to Mrs. Richards—as she made a signal that she wished to retire from the company—and was introduced to her, and then accompanied them both to the foot of the staircase leading to their apartments, he asked and obtained permission to call upon them on the morrow.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAMEO RING.

A fortnight passed, and the Brooklyn beauty, as Miss Richards was designated, together with the attention she was receiving from the handsome English lord, formed the principal theme of conversation at the fashionable watering-place.

Mrs. Richards was in her element, and conducted herself remarkably well.

His lordship considered her a woman of very fine appearance and of wonderful tact; and it was noticeable that when he was in her presence he paid her full as much homage as he did her daughter; but people of course said this was all for a particular purpose.

"By the way," she said to him, one day, when they were comparing the merits of their respective countries, "I am more than half English myself. The late Lady Thornton, of Hallowell Park, Devonshire, was an aunt of mine—at least, my mother was her half-sister—and I have other distant relatives living in the same county."

"Indeed!" said Lord Carrol, his face lighting at this intelligence. "I had no idea that you had any English blood in your veins; I thought you were purely American. I have often heard my father speak of Sir William Thornton, of Devonshire, and his son, Sir Charles, was at Oxford with me. I was only slightly acquainted with him, however, as he took his degree a year before I took mine. I am very happy to learn of this fact," and, as if by some fascination, the young nobleman's glance sought Josephine as he spoke.

"I once visited at Hallowell Park when I was a young girl," Mrs. Richards continued, although a flush arose to her cheek as she remembered all that had transpired during that visit, for it was then that Star's mother had saved her from drowning. "It is a lovely place, and a very large estate, I believe."

"So I have been told. Sir William was quite an active statesman before his death, which occurred only a year after his wife's. They had only one child, Sir Charles, I believe."

"Has *he* a family?" Mrs. Richards asked, quickly.

"I think not—at least, I have never heard of his marriage. If he should die without issue, I suppose the estate would pass into other hands."

Mrs. Richards started, and gave the young man a quick glance at this.

“Whose, I wonder?” she said, reflectively, and suddenly seemed to lose all interest in the conversation, and the young lord turned his attention to the more appreciative Josephine.

¹¹⁶The month which the Richardses spent at Long Branch was an eventful one; it was the most brilliant season that Josephine had ever known.

She had several offers of marriage, but refused them all, for her heart was set on becoming Lady Carrol, and going to shine among the nobility of England.

When the time drew near for their departure, her heart beat high with hope; for Lord Carrol had lingered beyond the time he had intended to spend there, and she flattered herself that she was the cause of it.

He certainly had shown her considerable attention, and it was rumored that there would be an engagement.

He appeared to enjoy the society of both ladies, and although he had not committed himself in any way, he had accepted an invitation to visit them at their country-seat the second week in October, and both Josephine and her mother were hoping much from that event.

The last evening of their sojourn at Long Branch, Miss Richards descended to the veranda of the hotel, dressed with the utmost care and taste.

Her robe was of creamy white silk, with an overdress of filmy black lace, looped with crimson fuchsias. There were diamonds in her ears, her hair, and clasped about her neck and arms; but they were not brighter than her midnight eyes, which glowed with hope and love, while her smiling lips vied with the flowers which she wore.

She was brilliantly, dazzlingly beautiful.

The men watched her every movement with admiring glances; the women could but acknowledge her superior charms, yet with something of a feeling of envy on account of the prize they believed she was about to bear away with her.

Lord Carrol seemed drawn to her as the needle to the pole. He had been sitting at one end of the veranda when she came down, but he almost immediately arose and went to her side, while he would not have been human not to have betrayed his appreciation of the exquisite toilet, which seemed to enhance her beauty more than ever.

She was conscious of looking her best, and this made her appear to better advantage—for who does not feel more at ease and self-possessed when conscious of looking well?—while there was an unusual gentleness, almost sadness, in her manner, as if something foreshadowed that something was slipping out of her life to-night—something which would change and darken her whole future, unless the man whom she had

grown to worship should lay at her feet homage equal to that which she had given to him.

“What will the devotees at beauty’s shrine do to-morrow, Miss Richards?” the young lord asked, with a smile and a glance which told her what she knew already—that she was particularly attractive to-night.

“The Howland House possesses a galaxy of beauties, and I do not think there will be any occasion for the ‘devotees,’ as you call them, to neglect their duty to-morrow,” she answered, smiling too, but with heightened color.

“Ah! but it is plainly to be seen where they have bent the knee most devoutly,” he replied, with a gesture which called her attention to the many admiring eyes fixed upon her.

She shrugged her graceful shoulders with an air of impatience, as if annoyed to find herself so conspicuous, while her darkly fringed lids drooped over her glorious eyes, hiding the wistful look which had suddenly crept into them.

“The night is lovely, and the band is playing delightfully; let us go out and wander about the grounds for a little while,” Lord Carrol said, after a moment of silence, during which sweet, enticing strains came floating toward them on the evening air.

She took the arm he offered her, her heart throbbing so wildly that she feared he would detect it, and they passed down the steps and away from the crowd on the veranda, some of whom smiled to hide their envy, others indulgently, as if upon a pair of lovers.

“I suppose this will be our last night in this charming place,” the young man said, as they slowly wended their way along a sheltered avenue.

She looked up with a slight start at the word “our.” He noticed it, and smiled.

“I said ‘our,’ because I, too, shall leave on the afternoon express to-morrow. I have business in New York which will occupy me for a week or more.”

Josephine flushed with pleasure at this, for she felt sure that the “business” was only a pretext. Her vanity led her to believe that Long Branch would be nothing to him without her companionship, and that he would go to New York merely to pass the interval of time which would elapse before he would go to Yonkers to spend the promised week with them.

“Oh!” she thought, “if he would but speak a single word to commit himself that night, she could go away in the morning with a light and happy heart.”

But he had never hinted of love for her; he had accompanied her and her mother almost everywhere they had been, often showing Mrs. Richards more attention than herself. He had danced with her, rode with her, walked with her, and no word beyond the most commonplace expressions of friendship had ever fallen from his lips.

Sometimes she had thought that he was drawn to them more than to any one else simply because he had discovered them to be of English extraction, and felt more freedom and more in sympathy with them on that account.

But she knew, too, that he admired her for her beauty, and she certainly had exerted herself more than she had ever done in her life before to be not only entertaining, but gentle, and ¹¹⁹winning, and womanly, and she kept hoping that a crisis would come before they left for home.

They wandered on and on, the moonlight streaming upon them through the overarching branches of the trees, and making lace-like patterns upon the smoothly graveled walk at their feet, and he talked only of yesterday's boating, yesterday's racing—of anything save what her heart was craving to hear.

The band played its softest, sweetest strains; the leaves rustled whisperingly above their heads, suggestive of lovers' vows; they were almost alone in the beautiful, moonlighted avenue, and everything was conducive to love-making, if his lordship had only been so inclined.

Soon they came out by a fountain where the lights were shining brilliantly, and he led her to a rustic seat, placed her in it, and sat down beside her.

"I shall be very sorry to go," Josephine said, with a pensive sigh, as she looked around on the lovely scene; "it has been very pleasant here this summer."

"It has, indeed, and I shall carry the memory of it with me for a long while," her companion replied. "You have some very beautiful places of resort in your country, Miss Richards. You and your mother have made my sojourn at Long Branch more than pleasant. Since learning that you have English blood in your veins, I have grown to regard you almost as my own people; and sometimes," he added, smiling, "I have felt as if I might be intruding myself too much upon you; but I trust I shall be able to return some of your kindness when you come to England."

Josephine's heart sank like lead in her bosom.

These were surely very commonplace words to speak to her on the eve of her departure, if he entertained anything of affection for her.

"It would be a great delight to me to visit England," she returned; "and you have told me so much about your beautiful home—your mother and sister—that I have a great desire to see both it and them."

"You must come to Cheshire Park—my mother's and sister's home. Next year I shall hope to show it to you," he said, earnestly.

Did he mean that he hoped she would go there with him, or was it merely a wish that she would visit England, that he might be able to return some of the courtesies which she and her mother had shown him?

She could not tell, but hope seemed deserting her; her heart beat heavily, she grew pale and sad, and a slight shiver shook her.

He noticed it.

"You are taking cold, I fear; we ought not to sit here in this evening air."

"No, I am not taking cold; I will tie my handkerchief around my throat, however," she answered.

It was so pleasant sitting there beside him, so pleasant to listen to his rich, deep voice and look into his clear brown eyes, that she could not bear to think of going back to the hotel just yet.

She tied her handkerchief about her white throat, and as she did so, the light struck full upon a ring which he had not seen her wear before.

It was a lovely cameo, very delicately cut. It was Star's little treasure, the gift of Archibald Sherbrooke.

"Pardon me," Lord Carrol said, with a slight start as he observed it, "but you have a ring on your hand that I have never seen you wear before. It is very lovely. May I examine it more closely?"

Josephine unhesitatingly laid her hand on his palm, her whole body thrilling as his fingers closed over it, and he bent his proud head to examine the ring.

She had had poor Star's pin made into this ring, which she ¹²¹had worn a few times, and then tiring of it, had thrown it into her jewel-box, where it had lain unheeded until to-night, when a sudden whim had caused her to put it on.

"It is a very finely carved cameo," he said, after a few moments, during which he had regarded it intently. "I once saw one so nearly like it that I do not think I could distinguish it from this. It belonged to—to a friend of mine, although that was in the form of a pin."

"Was your friend a lady or gentleman?" Josephine asked, quickly, and not giving herself time to realize that she was betraying undue curiosity.

"A gentleman," he returned, briefly.

"It is a pretty trifle which was given to me by a relative," Josephine said, without even wincing at the *lie*, yet feeling guilty and uncomfortable to have the stone recognized.

"It is evidently quite a valuable cameo," Lord Carrol returned, thoughtfully, "and the person of whom I spoke prized the one he had very highly, for he is something of an artist, and had it carved in Italy after a design which he made himself."

"Indeed! Is your artist an Englishman?" Miss Richards asked, with downcast eyes, and more interested in this matter than she cared to appear.

"Yes; and his name is Sherbrooke—Archibald Sherbrooke," Lord Carrol replied, while he regarded her intently.

Josephine started, and the color flamed into her face.

Archibald Sherbrooke!

The name smote her unpleasantly, for she remembered those two initials, "A. S.," which were marked on the back of the setting of the cameo, and having two tiny strawberry leaves engraved underneath.

Could it be possible that Star—the despised girl at Yonkers—knew Archibald Sherbrooke, the *friend* of Lord Carrol, and that he had given this elegant cameo to her?

¹²²She remembered how, when she had asked her to give it to her, Star's lips had trembled as she said "it was the gift of a friend and she did not like to part with it;" but she never imagined that the associate of a peer would take interest enough in a girl occupying the position she occupied to give her so costly an ornament as this.

The thought was not a pleasant one, or it told her that if such was the case, and there could be no doubt of it, that Star was known and appreciated by one whom this English lord held in high esteem.

She would have liked to question him more about this "friend" of his, but did not wish to betray too much curiosity lest he should mistrust that she had the identical stone which he referred to, and should in turn ask unpleasant questions of her.

She therefore changed the subject as quickly as possible, hoping to win him to a mood more congenial with her own feelings and desires.

But her efforts proved unavailing, for his lordship had suddenly become thoughtful and taciturn; and Miss Richards at last, berating herself soundly for having worn that unlucky ring that evening, signified her desire to return to the hotel.

Mrs. Richards had watched them saunter from the veranda in a flutter of anticipation, hoping that the all-important moment had at last arrived.

But one glance at her daughter's face when they came back told her that the much wished for crisis had *not* arrived, and she felt deeply disappointed.

"Good-night and good-by!" Josephine said, holding out her white hand to her companion as they entered the hotel. She could not trust herself longer in his society, lest she should betray something of her disappointment and ill-nature. "I must say my farewell now, I suppose, since we are to leave by the early train to-morrow."

"It is always hard to say farewell to our friends," Lord Carrol answered, smiling as he took her extended hand. "However, I can say it with a better grace now than if it was to be a final one. But are you going to leave us so soon? There is a gay company in the dancing-hall, and I fear many will be disappointed if you flit so early."

"Yes, I am going up to my room," she answered, wearily; and he noticed that she had grown very pale and was shivering.

"I am really afraid you have taken cold; you look ill, and I fear I kept you out too long," he said, anxiously.

"No," she returned, brightening a trifle as she saw how troubled he was on her account. "I have not taken cold, but I do not feel like dancing to-night, so I will retire. Good-by for a week."

"Yes, for one week; then I shall see you in your own home at Yonkers," Lord Carrol said; and just then Mrs. Richards approached them.

"How is it that you two young people are not in the ball-room?" she said, brightly.

"I am taking leave of Miss Richards, who thinks of retiring, as she says you leave on the early train," explained his lordship.

"What is the trouble, Josie—are you not well?" the elder lady asked, with maternal solicitude.

"Yes; but I do not wish to dance to-night, so I am going up stairs."

"Then I'll go with you, for I have not quite finished packing. Well, my lord," she added, turning cheerily to him and giving him her hand, "I trust you will spend the coming week pleasantly, and then we shall expect to see you again."

"Thanks. Shall I have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Richards then? Will he have returned by that time?" the young man asked.

"Yes; he returns next week," Mrs. Richards answered, a new idea striking her.

Probably he wished to consult formally with her husband before proposing to Josephine; the English, she knew, were very punctilious regarding such matters.

Yes, she was confident, now she thought of it, that was why he had not come to the point to-night.

So, after a few more cordially spoken regrets, good wishes, and so forth, they left him and sought their rooms.

Lord Carrol turned and went out into the grounds again, his face grown very grave and thoughtful.

“I never would have believed it. I do not understand it at all,” he muttered to himself.

But what he did not understand or could not believe, the future must develop.

The next morning Mrs. Richards and her daughter left for Yonkers, and the same afternoon Lord Carrol was *en route* for New York city.

CHAPTER XIII. A GLAD MEETING.

Back and forth every day from Yonkers, patiently and uncomplainingly, went Star Gladstone to her school, glad to pursue her studies and music at any cost or sacrifice.

This occupied nine long hours of five days in the week, and, weary as she was upon her return, she always devoted what time she could to the white-haired old gentleman who watched her depart with a sigh, waited eagerly for her return, and who brightened so visibly when she appeared.

One day, after school, Star had an errand at a music store, ¹²⁵and was detained so long by the slow movement of the clerk who waited upon her, that she was obliged to hurry with all her strength to catch her train.

She entered the station breathless, just as the last bell rang and the cars began to move.

Hoping to overtake it even then, she ran for it, her small feet barely touching the ground as she sped over it. She reached the last car, put forth her hand to lay hold upon the railing and spring upon the steps, when a firm grasp upon her arms from behind rendered her efforts fruitless, and a deep, rich voice said:

“Young lady, pardon me the liberty I take, but that is a very dangerous experiment.”

The train was gone. Mr. Roosevelt would look for her in vain when it came in, but Star could not regret it, although she had exerted every nerve to catch it, for she would know *that voice* no matter where she heard it; and, with a vivid flush leaping to her cheeks, her pulses thrilling with excitement and delight, she turned quickly to find herself face to face with her whilom *compagnon de voyage*—Archibald Sherbrooke!

His face lighted brilliantly in an instant as he recognized her, for although she had changed somewhat during the past year, growing lovelier than ever, he had never forgotten those star-like eyes, those waves of soft, golden hair shading her forehead, nor that sweetly smiling, scarlet mouth.

“Miss Gladstone!” he cried, putting out his hand to her. “I had no idea whom I was saving from committing such an act of imprudence when I saw you about to leap upon that moving train; but I am doubly glad now that my presumption prevented you from doing anything so rash, and gave me this unexpected pleasure.”

"I am glad, too, for I am delighted to see you again, Mr. Sherbrooke," Star said, heartily and frankly, as she gave him her neatly gloved hand, and looking straight up into his handsome eyes in a way that testified to the sincerity of her words.

"I know it was imprudent to try to leap upon a moving train," she continued; "but there is some one at home who is always disappointed if I do not return at a certain hour, and so I was anxious to catch it. However, another leaves in a half hour; and, indeed, I am very glad to have met you."

How lady-like she was! With what perfect self-possession and grace she greeted him, notwithstanding her sparkling eyes and the flush which had leaped to her cheek told of inward excitement.

She was the same, and yet not the same; she had developed wonderfully since that morning when he had parted from her on the steamer.

Her hair was still of the same beautiful golden hue as the lock which she had severed for him, and which he still treasured; her eyes were the same heavenly blue, her smile as bright and sweet, but there was an added, indescribable charm about her that made her tenfold more lovely in his sight.

"Thank you," he said, in reply to her hearty greeting; "and now, if you have only half an hour before another train goes, let us make the most of it, and find a seat in the waiting-room where we can compare notes on the last ten months."

He led the way to the ladies' room, found a comfortable chair in a corner for her where they could talk undisturbed, and the half hour slipped by before they had any idea that it was time for Star to go.

"There is my train," she said, suddenly starting up as the first bell rang; "I must not miss this one, or Mr. Roosevelt will surely think something dreadful has happened to me."

"Mr. Roosevelt!" repeated young Sherbrooke, in surprise.

"Yes; is it not singular? We met as strangers on board the steamer, and, after all, we were coming to be inmates of the same house and did not know it."

"Yes, it is strange. He was a fine-appearing old gentleman. I trust that he has recovered from the effects of his exposure at sea."

"Not entirely, and I fear he never will," Star answered, with a sigh. "His health is not very good, and his eyes trouble him exceedingly at times. They were injured by the reflection of the glaring sun in the water while we were in that open boat. We are excellent friends, and he watches anxiously for my return every day."

"Do you come to New York every day?" her companion questioned.

"Yes; I am attending a seminary in Brooklyn, and for the present go back and forth every day. But see," she added, pointing to the clock; "there is only one minute more, and I must find a seat."

He assisted her to enter and conducted her to a seat; then, extending his hand, he said, smiling:

"If you come to the city every day, I shall hope to see you again."

The ever ready color leaped to her cheeks again, more at the look he gave her than at his words.

She was upon the point of giving him her address and asking him to come out to Yonkers to see her and Mr. Roosevelt, but the train started, and she was obliged to leave her invitation unspoken.

He had only time to lift his hat, dart away and leap upon the platform, before the train was under way.

Archibald Sherbrooke not only *hoped* to see her again, he *did* see her many times after that, for he contrived to be at the station on some pretext or other, or overtake her on the way thither, every day for nearly a week, and he was always greeted with a glad look and smile. Every day she grew more beautiful in his sight; every day his eyes told her so, and these chance (?) meetings grew very sweet to them both.

"You must come out to Yonkers, some day, and see Mr. Roosevelt," Star said, upon one of these occasions.

"There, I declare, we have found so much else to talk about, that I have not even told you where I live," she said, laughing.

"And I am invited out to see *Mr. Roosevelt*, am I?" he asked, with a twinkle of mischief in his fine eyes.

"Yes," Star returned, demurely. "I know he will be very much pleased to see you—indeed, he said so when I told him of our meeting. He remembers how good to him you were after his rescue."

"Thanks. Then I shall certainly avail myself of your invitation, and go out to see Mr. Roosevelt some day very soon," he said, with a grave bow; but his eyes told her that she would be the star to attract him thither.

"You say *he* remembers what transpired on the steamer. Do *you* remember, too, Miss Star, how you told me at parting that I should always be your friend—that you would never forget me?"

Star's glorious eyes drooped, and the quick color rushing upward, stained all her fair face to those soft yellow curls on her forehead.

"I have not forgotten," she murmured, softly.

"Neither have I, as perhaps this will prove to you," said the young man, lifting a tiny locket which hung from his watch-chain, and, touching a spring, held it up before her.

It contained nothing save a tress of shining hair, and Star knew in an instant to whom it had once belonged.

Like a flash she remembered the cameo that he had given her as a souvenir, and a choking sensation came into her throat.

She knew by the way he was looking at her—by the way he had asked her if she “remembered”—that he was wondering if she had kept his gift as he had treasured that lock of silken hair.

There was not a piece of jewelry about her person, and he had remarked that fact the first time he met her there at the station.

Every article of her toilet was as dainty as it was possible to make it with her limited resources, and she looked every inch a lady; but it was not usual in those days to see a young girl of her age without the glitter of gold or tinsel somewhere about her.

“You have kept it all this time,” she said, scarce knowing what to say from embarrassment, while she wondered what she ought to tell him about the cameo.

“Certainly I have kept it all this time. I urged you to give it to me, and you do not suppose I was going to cast it lightly aside, do you?”

“Perhaps not,” she answered, with downcast eyes; “but I hardly thought you would keep it in—in such a way; and—oh I Mr. Sherbrooke, I have lost that lovely little cameo that you gave to me.”

She looked up at him now, and he noted the troubled, even pained expression that was in her eyes.

“Lost it!” he repeated; and although he did not intend it, his face clouded, whether from disappointment or some other feeling she could not tell.

She could not bear that he should know *how* she had lost it, and she felt that she was guilty of no untruth when she explained its absence thus.

“Yes,” she returned. “Please do not think that I did not prize it, for I did more than I can tell you, and I hope even yet to be able to recover it.”

He did not reply, but his face had grown grave, almost severe, and she imagined there was something of constraint in his manner at parting with her.

She felt that he was hurt by her seeming carelessness or indifference for his costly little gift, and bitter tears kept welling to her eyes all the way home.

“I *will* have it again. I will go to Josephine and demand it. She has no right to it, for it is mine; and if she will not give it to me, I will appeal to Mr. Richards,” she said, indignantly, to herself.

“I could not bear to tell him how I lost it,” she thought, with rising color. “I do not wish him to know how I have been treated by my mother’s relatives, or how bitterly I have been disappointed in my hopes since coming to this country. But,” she added, with firmly compressed lips, “it

will not be so much longer. In a little while I shall be independent of them all.”

She little imagined how soon she would be independent of them, or how it would be achieved.

This was Thursday—she had first met young Sherbrooke the previous Friday, and there had not been the slightest cloud to mar their intercourse until now, though they had met almost every day—and Star went home feeling somewhat sad and depressed.

But the next morning her sadness disappeared when Mr. Roosevelt told her that he was feeling so strong and well that he would like a change, and he proposed to go to New York and call upon their young friend.

He had given Star his address, and when she left for school on Friday morning, it was arranged that Mr. Roosevelt should go to town that afternoon and she would meet him at Mr. Sherbrooke’s studio after school and they would return together.

It seemed, however, as if everything went wrong for our young friend that day. Her mind, usually so keen and active, refused to work with its accustomed vigor, and she was listless and almost inattentive, much to the surprise of Professor Roberts and her other teachers.

¹³¹Her thoughts were playing truant, and half the time were far away in that artist studio where Mr. Roosevelt was visiting.

When the hour came for her to join them, all her listlessness departed, and she was her own bright self once more; and when, in answer to her gentle knock upon his door, Archibald Sherbrooke opened it to admit her, he thought she had never seemed so lovely before.

He had begun to realize that the feelings with which he regarded her were something deeper and stronger than mere friendship called for—in fact, he knew that he loved her more dearly than any other object on earth, and that his heart had not really been his own, if the truth were known, since that day when they had parted on the steamer; and he had that morning come to the conclusion that the time should not be far distant when he should tell her in words of the emotions she had awakened in his heart.

“This is a pleasure that I had not anticipated until about an hour ago,” he said, with a brilliant smile, as he took her by the hand and led her into the room, where she found Mr. Roosevelt reclining comfortably in a luxurious chair.

“And this,” Star said, looking around her with a long-drawn breath of delight as she noted the many beautiful paintings hanging on the walls, “is a pleasure which I had not anticipated.”

“Ah! then it is my *work* which shall give you pleasure, rather than my *society*, as I had presumed to flatter myself,” the young man said,

ruefully, and making a comical grimace, although his eyes were looking down into hers with an expression which made her tremble.

She laughed, while a lovely color leaped to her face. But she tried to hide her embarrassment by retorting, archly:

"I suppose I must be polite, and affirm that I expect to enjoy both; but really, Mr. Sherbrooke, although I knew you were an artist, I had no idea that you painted such delightful things."

"You give me more credit than belongs to me," he answered, smiling; "but wait until you are rested, and then I have something in particular to show you."

"Oh, I am not weary. Let me look now, if you please; we have only an hour, you know;" and she began to move about the room, examining with no uncritical eye the works upon the walls.

The young artist kept by her side, telling her the subjects of the paintings, and relating many instances connected with them.

At length they came to a corner where there stood an easel, upon which there was a picture covered with a green cloth.

Mr. Sherbrooke removed the covering, simply saying:

"This is the picture that I particularly wished to show you."

It was quite a large painting, and represented a young man and maiden standing on board a steamer, while silver-tipped waves and a deep blue sky formed a charming background for their youthful figures.

The former stood in an eager attitude, with one hand extended, a smile on his handsome lips, a gleam of wistful admiration in his honest brown eyes, while his companion seemed to be clipping a tress from a massive braid of shining golden hair that hung over her shoulders.

The fair young girl was a faithful representation of Star as she had appeared on that day, which they both remembered so vividly, and in the act of severing that lock at his request. She stood with drooping eyes, a flush on her cheek, a half-smile on her beautiful scarlet lips, a shy and modest grace in her posture, while her slender fingers daintily held braid and scissors.

Archibald Sherbrooke watched her as she gazed upon his picture, his heart in his earnest glance; while Star, although ¹³³her eyes were riveted as if fascinated upon the familiar scene, could not say one word regarding it.

He had made her very, very lovely, with that sheen upon her hair, those soft, bright curls lying low upon her forehead, which gleamed beneath them like purest ivory; with those half-averted eyes, in which the iris was just discernible, so richly blue,

* * "As if the sky let fall

A flower from its cerulean wall;"

with her delicate hands in their pretty act showing to such advantage, and her slight, willowy figure so gracefully posed—so lovely that she could not help the conscious blush which mounted to her temples, nor the quick heart-throbs which stirred the lace upon her bosom; for something whispered to her that his hand had lingered fondly upon that picture, as if over a work that he had loved.

“What do you think of my work, Miss Gladstone?” he asked, gravely, and breaking the silence which was becoming oppressive to him.

“It—it is very—correct, I think,” she faltered, with averted eyes and deepening color.

An anxious gleam shot into his eyes at her reply.

“Have I displeased you by putting it on canvas?” he asked, earnestly.

“N-o,” she returned, somewhat hesitatingly.

“I fear I have,” he said, still more gravely than before. “Do not hesitate to tell me if you are offended, and I will obliterate it with one sweep of my brush.”

His eye was full of pain, a deep flush burned on his cheek, while there was a thrill in his low, earnest tone that set her pulses bounding afresh.

She glanced up at him, smiling slightly.

“No, I am not offended,” she said; “but I’m afraid I appeared very foolish that day to offer you a tress of my yellow hair.”

“Have I made the picture appear so?” he asked, quickly.

“No; you have made it altogether too beautiful,” she answered, earnestly, and then was covered with confusion at having admitted so much.

“Thank you,” he said, brightly, his face clearing. “I could not do that, if I had spent twice the time I did upon it, and”—bending nearer to her, and speaking in a tender tone—“it is a picture that I painted for myself alone; no one has ever seen it before, and I shall always keep it.”

He covered it carefully with the cloth again as he ceased speaking.

“These are not nearly all my work,” he said, as she turned to look at some others; “they are the united work of an old artist, ‘our master,’ we call him, and of three of my friends—companion artists. We have been traveling together during the last ten months, and these pictures are some of the results of our pilgrimage. We are to return now in a couple of months, having spent our year in America both pleasantly and profitably, I trust. We had to make our headquarters somewhere, so we took this room as a sort of studio, and thus putting our work all together, we manage to make quite a respectable display.”

“I am glad to have seen these pictures,” Star said, “and to know they are all the work of my countrymen. I wish, however, that *I* was going back to England in a month or two,” she concluded, with a sigh, and a tear springing to her eye.

“Do you?” her companion asked, eagerly. “Then you have not become weaned from your native land?”

“No, indeed,” she said, earnestly. “I love it as dearly as ever, and if I live I shall go back some day to my home.”

The young man bent toward her, an eager light in his eye; his lips parted as if he were about to speak, but Mr. Roosevelt, from the opposite side of the room, suddenly addressed some remark to him, and he was obliged to turn his attention to him.

CHAPTER XIV.

“LET ME DEPICT YOUR FUTURE.”

Before Mr. Rosevelt and Star left him, Mr. Sherbrooke arranged a little pleasure trip to Coney Island for the following day.

“I suppose, to-morrow being Saturday, you will have no school, Miss Gladstone,” he said, with an appealing look at her.

“No; but I have a music lesson at nine,” she answered, doubtfully.

“Could you not arrange to postpone it for once?”

“I think not; the hour is engaged for me, and if I am not there I lose it. I should hardly like to do that, for I must make the most of my time this year.”

Star said this last more to herself than in reply to him. She wanted to go—oh, so much!—and yet felt that she ought not to lose her lesson.

“Well, an hour will not make much difference; you will be through by ten. It will not be too late for our excursion then, and that will give us the best part of the day. The sail will be delightful, and we will come home by moonlight. I speak for to-morrow, as I am to leave New York next week for awhile. I think you will go, Miss Star?” Mr. Sherbrooke concluded, questioningly.

“I think I should enjoy the trip very much,” Mr. Rosevelt here interposed. “We’ll say ‘go,’ little girl, for we have had no holiday this summer. Yes, yes, Sherbrooke, thank you, we will accept your invitation, and Star will, I think, be willing to shorten her lesson a trifle, so that we shall be able to leave the city by half-past ten.”

Yes, Star said she would do that; and the matter once decided, her face brightened and her eyes glowed with anticipation.

She had not had a holiday that summer, as Mr. Rosevelt said; indeed, no one had planned a day’s pleasure for her before since she came to America, and the thought of this little excursion was very gratifying to her. A whole day spent in the company of Archibald Sherbrooke would be a “red letter day” to her; and so, with thrilling pulses and bounding heart, she took leave of him and went away with Mr. Rosevelt, to talk about it, to dream about it, and, girl-like, to plan how to make herself as charming as possible for the occasion.

As for Archibald Sherbrooke himself, he sat down after his guests had departed, and allowed his thoughts to have their own way.

“She is as lovely as a dream,” he murmured, watching her from the window as she tripped lightly along by Mr. Rosevelt’s side. “I did not think when I started for America that I was coming to meet my fate; but

so it proves. Unless I can win Star Gladstone's love, the remainder of my life will not contain much that will be worth living for. She is as pure as a lily, beautiful as a veritable star; and yet there is something that I cannot quite understand about her; there is a reserve, an occasional sadness, that seems strange in one so young, while once in awhile she lets fall a word which makes me fear her life is not as bright as it should be. There is something of a mystery, too, about Mr. Roosevelt. How sort of 'seedy' and neglected he looked to-day, and I judged, when I met him before, that he was a man of abundant means, and without a care, pecuniarily.

"How startled my fair one looked when I showed her my picture," he went on, with a luminous smile; "and I really believe that she realized something of the tenderness that I have put into it."

He arose and went over to the easel, and removing the cloth, stood looking at the lovely girl with a world of affection in his handsome eyes.

"My glory-crowned Star," he murmured, "I began to love you the moment that you fell exhausted into my arms when you were rescued from the hungry jaws of death, and I will spend my life in winning you if need be. I have seen no other woman your equal during all my sojourn in America—at least, no one who has so moved my heart—and I know of no one in all England whom I should care to win for my bride.

"Star Gladstone! It is a name symbolical of her nature," he said, unconsciously repeating what Mr. Roosevelt had once told her, "or I am no adept in reading character. She will crown my life with light, and bring gladness and beauty into my home, if I can win her; and I think I am not mistaken in believing that I read the sequel to my own love-story to-day in her blushing face and shy, drooping eyes."

Saturday came, and at an early hour Star awoke and arose to see what the morning promised, and to prepare for the anticipated pleasure of the day.

The sun rolled up from the east without a cloud, its light, a dusky red, tinging all the earth with a rosy hue—a sure harbinger of a hot, dry day, and just what Star of all things most desired.

"Why?" does curiosity question.

Because her one best dress for summer had been a simple white lawn, which her own fair hands had fashioned in the most dainty manner, and she had nothing else really pretty to wear.

"If I cannot have embroideries and laces, I can at least have ruffles and tucks, for they cost nothing but time and patience," she had said to Miss Baker, when the question "how it should be trimmed" came up for discussion; and ruffled and tucked it was in the most artistic manner.

¹³⁸She ran down stairs to practice for an hour, after which she went to her breakfast, and confided to Mrs. Blunt the fact that "she and Uncle

Jacob” were going to have a holiday—her throbbing pulses warned her not to mention the third member of the party, lest she should betray more than she cared to—and that good woman remarked, with characteristic emphasis, that “if she wasn’t glad of it, she was much mistaken, and hoped she’d have the best time in the world; she’d certainly had *precious few* good times since she came there.”

This duty over—for she did not feel right to be gone the whole day without telling some member of the family of her intention—she returned to her room to give her attention to that, for once with her, very important subject for consideration—her toilet.

She arranged her shining hair with great care. It was her glory, and Archibald Sherbrooke had made it appear such in that picture which he had shown her yesterday, and which she now remembered with crimson cheeks and glowing eyes, as she brushed those shining strands until they gleamed like burnished gold. She then wove it into one massive braid, as she had worn it that day which neither of them would ever forget, and tied it a little way from the end with a fresh, delicate blue ribbon.

This done, she donned the spotless white dress, with a broad belt of blue and its great bow on one side, and fastened a simple knot of the same at her throat, but heaving a regretful sigh as she thought of her precious cameo, and wished she could have had it to wear to-day. Then she tied a pretty chip hat, with its mull trimmings and bunch of forget-me-nots, over her golden head, and blushed rosy red at the vision of loveliness that looked out at her from her small mirror.

Taking her roll of music, and throwing a fleecy shawl over her arm, she ran down stairs with a light, springing step, intending to go to the lodge for a word with Mr. Roosevelt before she went to the station.

“Where are you going, miss, rigged out in that style?” was the rude query that saluted her ears as she came out upon the veranda and stopped a moment to fasten her gloves.

Looking up, she saw Josephine sitting at one end of the porch, and half hidden by the luxuriant growth of vines climbing the trellis.

Her radiant face clouded; it seemed almost like an omen of evil to have her anticipations of pleasure broken in upon thus.

“I am going to New York to take my music lesson,” she answered, touching the roll underneath her arm.

“Do you always dress yourself out like that to take your music lesson? Perhaps you are trying to strike up a flirtation with Professor What’s-his-name,” sneered the haughty beauty.

Poor Star glanced down at her offending dress, an indignant flush rising to her cheek.

The entire cost of it had been less than what Josephine was accustomed to pay for even a pair of shoes; and yet she knew, without being told, that the gay belle, with all her expensive trappings, had never looked half so fresh and lovely as she did at that moment.

Josephine realized it also, and her heart was filled with bitter envy and malice.

“Go back up stairs and change your gown,” she continued, angrily, without giving Star an opportunity to reply to her taunting remarks. “You have no business to go to the city, dressed as if you were going to a party.”

Star’s small head came up like a flash of light; her eyes darkened and glowed with a sense of wounded pride and injustice.

She stood still a moment, her scarlet lips compressed until only a narrow line of red was visible; then, in a calm, clear, but very decided tone, she said:

“You have no right to lay such commands upon me, Miss Richards, and I shall not obey you.”

“You insolent beggar! what do you mean by answering me in this way?” began the astonished girl; but Star had glided down the steps, and was walking with a proud, elastic step down the avenue; consequently her rage was expended upon the empty air.

But she was fairly startled by the exquisite loveliness of the young girl. She had never seen her dressed with so much care before, and had not dreamed of having such a rival in her own dwelling.

Mr. Roosevelt was standing on the porch of the lodge when Star came along, and he, too, marveled at her exceeding beauty, saying to himself that he had never seen her so brilliant and spirited before.

And, indeed, he had not, for she never had been so thoroughly aroused before during all her residence in Mrs. Richards’ family.

“Good-morning, Uncle Jacob,” she said, brightly, as she saw him standing there, and her indignation immediately began to subside.

What was Josephine Richards that she should allow her to mar all the pleasure of her own holiday?—that she should drive the happiness from her heart, the sunlight from her face, when she was going to spend long hours of delight in Archibald Sherbrooke’s presence?

Nothing, save a coarse, rude girl, devoid of feeling or refinement; and with a resolute effort she drove her from her thoughts, the smile returned to her red lips, the light to her eye, as she ran lightly up the steps and stood beside Mr. Roosevelt.

“How well you are looking,” she said, gayly. “I just ran down to see if you were all right, and to jog your memory about our little celebration to-day.”

"You did not need to do that, Starling. I am as eager as a schoolboy for my day of pleasure," he returned, with a fond smile, adding: "But how dainty you are this morning. I shouldn't wonder if our artist friend would be wanting to paint the picture of a 'star' one of these days, eh?"

Star blushed and laughed lightly.

She could have told him, had she chosen, that it was already painted.

But she only charged him playfully to make himself look as young and charming as possible if he intended to be her escort to Coney Island; then waving him a farewell, she tripped away with a smile on her lips, a song in her heart.

He stood and watched her out of sight, murmuring, with something like regretful fondness:

"My bright Star, somebody will want something more substantial than a painting if you are onehalf as attractive in his eyes as you are in mine."

The little German professor of whom Star took music lessons rubbed his small fat hands with delight, his face dimpling all over with smiles, when she came like a ray of light into his room.

"Ach! but der fraulein should have been called Miss Gladheart," he said, regarding her admiringly. "She is as bright as der day, as fair as der morn; she is like a flower dot is newly bloomed."

Star laughed merrily.

It seemed ludicrous enough to her to hear this fat little man, with his bald pate, his red face, dumpy legs, and his broken English—who scarce ever was known to express a thought that was not connected with music before—bubble over thus unexpectedly with sentiment.

"Oh, Professor Schwab, you overwhelm me!" she cried, gayly; "and I'm almost certain that your compliments will degenerate into a veritable scolding before I have been here fifteen minutes, for I fear I am not in very good order to-day, my head is full of pleasure."

"Pleasure is good now and then; it is made for youth," the professor remarked, with a sigh, and a glance at Star's bright face and dainty costume, as if he regretted that he was no longer young.

"I want you to let me go in just half an hour, for this is to be a holiday," Star said, as she removed her hat and gloves.

"Der fraulein shall do shust vat she pleases—I can refuse her nothing to-day; but," he added, assuming a business-like air, "let her mind dot she keep her fingers right and der time goot."

Star settled down at once to her work with such earnestness of purpose that she really outshone herself, executing her brilliant and

difficult exercises in a way that would have done credit to the composer himself.

“Verra goot—excellent goot! Der heart is glad, her hopes are bright, and der work is well done. Miss Gladstone, in six months I teach you notting more; you go to Germany—to Italy, to study,” he said, his face beaming with satisfaction at her proficiency.

Star thanked him with her brightest smile for his praise, and then left him with a light heart; and when she reached the place appointed as the rendezvous by Mr. Rosevelt and Mr. Sherbrooke, this latter gentleman also thought her the fairest object he had ever seen, and knew that, as he clasped her small hand, his eyes were betraying that old, old story of which his heart was so full.

The sail down the river was even more charming than they had anticipated. The day was perfect, the air being just cool enough to be exhilarating, while our trio of friends were in a mood to enjoy everything in the way of pleasure that might present itself.

They reached the island about noon, when Mr. Sherbrooke, ordering a carriage, they drove directly to Manhattan Beach Hotel, where they partook of a sumptuous dinner, and thus fortified, sallied forth to enjoy the beauties and attractions all about them.

A couple of hours were spent in visiting the different objects of interest, and then Mr. Rosevelt said that he should be obliged to give up and take a rest.

So Mr. Sherbrooke ordered a room for him at the hotel, and he went to “take a nap,” while the young man, with a feeling of exultation that now he should have Star all to himself, took a carriage for a long drive upon the beach.

For miles and miles they drove over the smooth, hard road, both in their happiest mood, and giving themselves up to the enjoyment of the hour.

Every moment spent in Star’s society only served to entangle our young English friend more securely in the meshes of love’s net; while she began to realize that the world would never be quite the same again to her when he should be gone and no prospect of their meeting again.

“He is going away next week,” she kept saying again and again to herself, while a chill pain gnawed at her heart. “How can I bear to have him go, and feel that I may never see him again? Oh, England, my home! my home! would that I also could go back to you!”

So intense was her longing for her home, so keenly did she regret this parting, which she felt was inevitable, that the tears sprang into her eyes, and a deep sigh came welling up from her burdened heart.

"Miss Star, why that doleful sigh?" exclaimed Archibald Sherbrooke, in surprise.

Star started, and looking up, found her companion's eyes fixed upon her with grave questioning.

She colored vividly, fearing he had read something of her thoughts.

"Did I sigh?" she asked, evasively.

"Yes; and I did not like the sound of it, either. Are you tired of driving? Shall we go back and try something else?" he asked, only anxious to give her pleasure.

"Oh, no; this is delightful," she answered, quietly. "I fear I have been guilty of rudeness if I have given you the impression that I am not enjoying every moment of this lovely day. Do you know, Mr. Sherbrooke," she asked, with a smile that had a tinge of sadness in it, "that I am indebted to you for the only real holiday that I have had since I came to America?"

He regarded her with surprise.

"Is it possible?" he asked. "I fear, then, that you have not had a very happy life during the last year, or else you are working too hard over your books."

She feared she had betrayed more than she ought. She did not want him to know how hard life had been made for her. She was too proud to complain of the ill-treatment, the coldness, and even dislike which had been her lot, where she had expected to find only kindness, love, and sympathy.

"*I have* been working pretty busily," she answered, as if that were all. "I am anxious to graduate this year, and I have to apply myself rather closely with my music and other duties."

"Why are you so anxious to graduate this year? Why not take more time, rather than run the risk of injuring your health?" he questioned, gravely.

"I am going back to England some time," she said, her eyes kindling, "and the sooner I can complete my education, the earlier I can go. I have my own future to carve out, Mr. Sherbrooke, and my aim is to prepare myself for a teacher."

"Your own future to carve out!" he cried, greatly surprised. "I thought you had friends here who were to care for you always."

She colored, but answered, gravely:

"I should not be content to pass my life here. I shall stay only long enough to complete my education; then I shall go back to my own country to teach."

He understood her; he saw, even though she would not confess it, that her life since coming to America had not been a happy one.

He saw now, as he looked down into her face, so fair and beautiful, what he had not noticed before, she had always been so bright and animated when with him.

There was a wistful look in her eyes, lines of sadness about her sensitive mouth, that told him of a heart yearning for love and finding only husks to feed upon.

She was going to be a teacher, she said; she was bending all her energies in that direction, and was working, he felt assured, far beyond her strength.

She did not look fit to fight the battle of life alone; she was slender and delicate, although he felt that, in spite of her fragile appearance, there was an element of strength in her character which would overcome every obstacle which it was possible for a human being in her position to overcome.

She had “her future to carve out,” she had told him. What did she intend that future to be?—what were her hopes, her aims, her plans? Surely not to teach *always*.

Ah, if she would but learn to love him—if he could win her, it would be very different from the wearying, dragging life of a teacher.

Before he was hardly aware of his intention, his heart had overleaped every barrier, he bent toward her and said, in a low, earnest tone:

“Star, I love you. Let *me* depict your future for you.”

CHAPTER XV.

A FATAL MISTAKE.

The beautiful maiden cast one startled glance up at her handsome lover, and then grew colorless as the dress she wore.

But when he softly laid his hand upon hers, saying, gently, "Darling, I have frightened you with my abruptness," her whole being thrilled beneath his touch, and the rich crimson swept swiftly up over neck, face, and brow, until it lost itself in the fluffy masses of sunny hair which lay upon her forehead.

"I could not help it," he went on, a glad light leaping to his eyes as he saw her blushes; "and I have known that I love you, my beautiful one, for a long time. Do you remember that it was I who received you into my arms when you were lifted to the deck of our steamer from that frail boat in which you so nearly perished? Do you know that your fair face lay upon my breast, and as I looked down upon you, *I* knew that no other had ever moved me so strangely and so deeply, despite its pallor and the tale of suffering that I read there? Its power grew upon me during the few days which followed and while we were so much together, and when at last we were obliged to part, and I begged a tress of this sunshine"—touching the massive braid which lay over her shoulder almost reverently—"the picture that you made, with your shy grace and modest beauty as you unhesitatingly clipped it for me, stamped itself indelibly upon my heart, where I have carried it ever since, growing to love it more and more, until I determined to make it always mine by putting it on canvas. I did not know as I should ever see you again, and yet I have been haunted by a feeling that some magnetic influence or strange power of attraction would eventually draw us together again; and so it has proved. Star, I know that I love you as deeply and truly as it is possible for one human being to love another. You say you love England; you wish to go back and make your home there. Tell me that, some day, *I* may take you there—that *my* home shall become your home, and you will be my cherished wife. My darling, you have made yourself very fair to-day—so like the picture I have painted, and which I showed you yesterday, that something has whispered to me that a thought of *me* prompted it; that there was something of tenderness in your heart which made you put those shining locks, which you have been wearing in another fashion of late, into this massive braid again, and tie it with this lovely blue, so like your eyes. Raise them, dear, and let me look into them, to see if I can read anything

of the story I wish to know. Tell me, Star, that when I come to America again, I may come to claim this hand and call its owner my wife."

His hand had rested lightly upon hers all the time he had been speaking. She had not attempted to withdraw it, and now his fingers closed over it in a firm, loving clasp.

It still lay trembling but unresistingly there; and when, as he bent to look into those drooping eyes, she lifted them to his with one shy glance of answering tenderness, he knew that he had not sued in vain.

"My own darling!" he whispered, passionately, his face flushing with happiness; "you *do* love me; I read it in your eyes, and the world was never so bright to me as at this moment; but tell me, shall I have what I want—will you give me your promise that, next year, when you have completed your education, instead of going back to England as a teacher, you will go with me as my wife?"

She grew suddenly grave, and lifting an earnest look to his face, said:

"I have told you that I am only a poor girl, with my own fortune to carve out. You have no idea *how* poor I am, how dependent, how friendless. You, perhaps, have proud relatives; you may occupy a place far above me socially, and your friends might object to your claiming one in my position as your wife."

"I care nothing for your poverty or dependence, dear," he returned, tenderly; "it cannot alter the fact that you are the only woman whom I shall ever love well enough to make my wife. But," he added, with a thoughtful look, "I forget that I am almost a stranger to you—that you know nothing of me, that I have told you nothing——"

"I have not given it a thought," Star interrupted, earnestly. "I can *trust* you; I *know* you are true."

His face grew radiant.

"You will never regret your trust, my darling," he said. "I—am an artist, Star, but I believe I can take care of you, and promise you that you shall never know the meaning of the words poor and dependent again. Of course I have friends, and—but I will tell you all about them some other time. I want my promise now—you will give yourself to me, dear?"

"Yes," she breathed, her scarlet lips parting slightly with a tremulous smile, "by and by, when I am better fitted to be your—wife."

He longed to take her in his arms and draw her to his heart, and kiss the lips that had promised him the greatest joy he had ever known; but there were other carriages near, and curious eyes all about them; so he could only clasp that small hand more fondly, and murmur low and tender words to tell of the deep, true love of which his heart was full.

"You shall indeed go back to England now, my darling," he said, "but never to *teach*. You shall remain here until you have completed your course of study if you wish; then I shall come, before this time next year, and take you to my—our home. I shall return with a happy heart now, for I shall have an object to work for and something to look forward to. Ah, my dear, my dear, do *you* realize what is in store for us?—a long life of joy and love together, with brightest hopes and congenial tastes. Star, my beloved—my *star*, indeed!"

Who can wonder that she gave herself up to the bliss of loving and being loved, when wooed in this tender manner?

Who could chide this heart-hungry maiden, who had been starving for affection and sympathy, for feeling that she had never known happiness before?

And she loved him with all her soul. He had won all the passion of her young heart, and she gave herself up to him wholly, unreservedly, trusting him without a suspicion or thought that he could be anything save truth and honor itself.

Twilight was beginning to gather when they returned to the hotel where they had left Mr. Roosevelt, but it was not yet so dark but that that gentleman remarked the glorified expression of the young man's face, and the brilliant light which gleamed in Star's radiant eyes.

"May I tell our dear old friend, Star?" Archibald Sherbrooke whispered, as he assisted her to alight from the carriage.

She started, and grew crimson.

"Oh, Mr. Sherbrooke, not to-night, please."

"To whom are you speaking, my Star?" he interrupted, with assumed sternness and reproach.

She glanced up questioningly, yet with burning cheeks, for she knew what he meant, but was not quite sure yet what he wished her to call him.

"My mother calls me Archie," he said, with a meaning smile.

"Must *I* call you that?" she asked, her heart thrilling at the name, yet instinctively shrinking from addressing him quite so familiarly just yet.

"There is no '*must*' about it, nor about anything else that ¹⁵⁰you do not like, my darling," he said, very gently, but looking a trifle grave, she thought.

"Then please let me go—Archie, for I know Uncle Jacob is wondering why it takes me so long to get out of the carriage, and—and ever so many people are looking at us," Star said, wishing she could hide her hot cheeks, and realizing, if he did not, that he was holding her hands a great deal longer than there was any need of doing.

A brilliant smile parted his lips as he released her, and she darted away just as a servant came forward to take the horse, he following more leisurely to give her time to recover herself a little.

"You have enjoyed your drive, little one?" Mr. Roosevelt asserted, questioningly, as she came and stood beside his chair, while he regarded her with a keen glance.

"Very much, Uncle Jacob; and you—are you rested?" Star asked, eager to turn his attention from herself.

"Entirely, and am as hungry as an old bear, too. These sea breezes have sharpened my appetite to a painful degree," he replied, as if his hunger was the only subject which occupied his thoughts, while all the time he was watching her closely, and telling himself that there must be some cause more potent than "sea breezes" for her brilliant color and that tender light in her eyes.

"I am delighted to hear it," young Sherbrooke said, now joining them, "for our tea is waiting for us, I am told, and we shall have just about time enough to dispatch it comfortably before the boat is due."

They went in to an inviting meal, spread in a private room for them. The young man had given an order to this effect before going to ride, as he had noticed that Star was annoyed at dinner by the attention which her lovely face had attracted.

But it was noticeable that Mr. Roosevelt did most of the eating, for our lovers were in altogether too exalted a state for such commonplace realities as bread and butter, or even for anything so tempting as peaches and cream.

When Mr. Roosevelt's hunger was appeased, he asked Star to play something before they left.

There was a piano in the room, and he was extremely fond of music.

"I want our friend here to know what a talented little musician we have," he said, with a fond glance at his favorite.

Star was only too willing to comply with his request, glad of anything to relieve the awkward consciousness which had pervaded her all through tea, and sitting down to the instrument, she played several pieces.

Archibald Sherbrooke was astonished at the proficiency which she displayed, and the appreciative silence which prevailed upon the veranda outside the open windows, told that her power had swayed a larger audience than she had thought of having.

"She is mine; I have won her, this talented, beautiful, pure-hearted girl," Archibald Sherbrooke said, exultantly, to himself, as he closed the piano for her, and pressed the hand that hung invitingly near him.

They repaired to the boat-landing soon after, for it was nearly time for their departure.

When the steamer arrived, Archibald found a sheltered seat for Mr. Rosevelt, and then drawing Star a little apart, wrapped her shawl carefully about her and sat down beside her, her hand clasped in his under cover of its soft folds.

“He will not mind, and I want you to myself,” he whispered. “I cannot see you to-morrow, love, for it will be Sunday, but Monday or Tuesday I shall come to you. I cannot wait longer.”

Star glanced at him somewhat anxiously.

She knew what that coming would entail upon her—sneers ¹⁵²and taunts, and perhaps more unkindness than she had ever yet received from Mrs. Richards or Josephine.

Mr. Richards, she felt assured, would be more considerate of her feelings; yet, under any circumstances, this visit of her lover would be a very trying one.

Ah! *how* trying, Heaven only knew.

She thought perhaps she ought to tell him something of her life during the last year, that he might not be wholly unprepared when he should present his suit for what she feared would be a very disagreeable interview.

But she was so supremely happy sitting there by his side in the glorious moonlight, and knowing that she was so tenderly beloved, that she could not bear to mar it by so much as a word or thought of what she had suffered in the past, or might have to endure in the future, until he should come for her to claim her as his wife. No, she would not tell him; she would wait until after he had been presented to her guardians. There would be time enough then, and it would be just as well.

But it was a fatal mistake.

Had she told him then, all the pain and anguish, all the misery and hopelessness which she afterward experienced would have been spared her; but how could she know?

So they sailed on up the river, side by side, hand clasped in hand, and thought only of the supreme happiness of the moment.

It was one of those beautiful fall evenings, calm and still, and bright with an almost intoxicating brilliancy; the heavens, the river, with its gliding banks on either side, all lighted with a radiance that was absolutely dazzling; and Star wondered if ever in all her life before she had seen the world so wondrously beautiful.

“Monday or Tuesday you are coming to Yonkers?” Star murmured, in reply to this remark of her lover’s. “I thought you were to be away from New York next week?”

"And so I am; I am coming to Yonkers to see you," he answered, smiling. "My darling, do you not know that all the world is changed for me now?"

It certainly was for her, she thought, with a tender little smile, and then she said:

"Have you a card and a pencil? I must tell you where to find me, you know."

"True. How stupid of me not to have thought of it," he returned, as he searched his pockets to find what she wanted.

"I thought it better to write it than to tell you," she said, archly, "fearing you might forget."

"I own that I am not in a condition to remember anything to-night, save that you love me and that I have won you," he whispered, putting pencil and card into her hand.

She wrote the street and number of the house where she lived, and gave it back to him, and he put it away without even looking at it.

And thus the moments sped swiftly on until they landed, and that delightful homeward sail was over and had become one of those events to be remembered and treasured when, in the dark future, they should look back upon it and wonder if as bright a gleam of happiness had ever really existed in their lives.

Mr. Sherbrooke accompanied Mr. Roosevelt and Star to the station where they had to take the train for Yonkers, and found comfortable seats for them.

"I shall see you again very soon," he said to the old gentleman, as he took his hand at parting.

"I trust so. We shall be glad to see you at any time; and many thanks for this day's pleasure," Mr. Roosevelt replied, heartily.

"The obligation is all on my side," Archie said, with a meaning glance at Star, which made the color come again and her heart to bound like a roe in her bosom.

The bell warned him that he must go, and with a lingering, loving pressure of her hand, he reluctantly bade them a final good-night and went away.

The young girl had no idea of the lapse of time after that, until she heard Mr. Roosevelt heave a long-drawn sigh.

She started, realizing then that they were almost home, and that she had not spoken one word since her lover left them.

"Uncle Jacob, are you very tired?" she asked, anxiously, and with a feeling of selfreproach.

"No, dear; only thinking how beautiful the world is under some conditions, how dreary under others," he returned, watching her intently.

The young girl's cheeks glowed hotly, but she had not a word to say in reply to those sentiments. But she knew that the events of that day had glorified the whole world for her, and all the way home she had been weaving golden plans for the future, when Archie—it came easier every time now—should take her to his simple home over the water—for of course it must be simple, since he was only an artist—and which she would make just as bright and beautiful as love and taste could make it.

CHAPTER XVI. A GREAT SHOCK.

The next morning, on descending to her breakfast, Star found the whole house in a state of great excitement.

On asking Mrs. Blunt the meaning of it, that good but evidently much disturbed woman informed her that a “real live English lord was expected to arrive the following day, and Mrs. Richards had given orders that everything be done up in the grandest style possible.”

“A lord?” Star said, smiling—she had seen many a lord, and had not been very crushingly impressed with a sense of her own inferiority and insignificance in consequence—“a lord, Mrs. Blunt?” she repeated, laughing. “You will find him simply a man, very much like the rest of mankind. He will eat, and sleep, and talk, and walk exactly like anybody else. But what may his lordship’s name be, and what brings him here?” she concluded, with some curiosity.

“Lor’, Miss Star, you take it pretty coolly, or I’m much mistaken,” Mrs. Blunt remarked, with an admiring glance at the girl’s bright face; “but I suppose it’s because you’re accustomed to seeing ’em, being English yourself. But a lord is considered some pumpkins on this side of the water—at least, madam appears to think so, since he was courting Miss Josephine all the time down at Long Branch, and she hopes to have him for a son-in-law one of these fine days.”

Star looked surprised at this bit of information. Mrs. Richards and Josephine had been home a week, and she had heard nothing of this before, although the subject had been pretty thoroughly discussed among the servants of the household. But she had been so intent upon her studies and music, going from home so early and returning so late, and keeping her own room so much, that it was nothing strange.

“Is Miss Josephine engaged to him?” she asked.

“Couldn’t say positive, Miss Star, as to that; but if she ain’t, she’s expecting to be, and doing her prettiest to catch him, or I’m much mistaken. She’s talked of nothing else since she got home; and the beautiful dresses she’s bought, and the grand things she’s been planning to do when he comes, would fill a book if rightly writ up. It’s a mystery to me how ¹⁵⁶anybody so grand and mighty can walk on two legs like the rest of us common mortals,” she concluded, with grim humor.

Star laughed merrily.

Evidently Mrs. Blunt, as a loyal subject of a democratic country, did not look forward to the advent of this young sprig of nobility with very much relish.

"You have not told me his name yet," Star said.

"Carrol—my Lord Carrol, of Carrolton, Derbyshire, England, and goodness knows what else," Mrs. Blunt replied, spitefully, but with a toss of her head so exactly in imitation of Josephine when that young lady went soaring among the clouds, that Star was infinitely amused.

"Lord Carrol, of Carrolton," she repeated, reflectively. "I have never heard of any one by that name, and we lived in Derbyshire, too; but of course there are a great many people there of whom I know nothing."

"That's true, no doubt; but his being a lord don't make him any the better worth your knowing, according to my way of thinking. But, gracious me! I mustn't stand here talking, when there are such heaps of work to be done;" and the excited woman began to bustle about the room with decidedly more of energy than grace.

"Now, Mrs. Blunt," Star said, picking up an apron and tying it around her slim waist, "since you have such 'heaps' to do, let me do something to help you."

"Bless you, child! you sha'n't touch a thing. You ain't going to spoil those pretty fingers for the piano, lord or no lord. I was baking and preserving all day yesterday, and had no time to make the black cake that madam gave orders for, so I suppose I've got it to do to-day, if 'tis Sunday."

"And you've got all those raisins to seed, those currants to clean, and that citron to slice. It is too bad, Mrs. Blunt, and on this holy Sabbath, too," Star said, gravely, while she heaved ¹⁵⁷a regretful sigh as she glanced from the window and saw the bright sunshine tinting everything with a golden light.

"Can't help it; it's got to be done," the housekeeper responded, grimly. "I expect," she went on, her thin lips curling with a curious expression of scorn, "if madam don't work herself on Sunday she thinks she's keeping the Sabbath in a proper manner and according to law and gospel, no matter how much her servants may have to do. I've a notion that perhaps *her* Bible don't read like *mine*; that part where it says 'thou, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant,' must have been left out of those velvet covers of hers. But you go away, Miss Star. If I've got to break one of the 'thou shalt nots,' you ain't going to be a partner in my sin," she concluded, as the young girl sat down to the table and began to open a large package of raisins which lay there.

"No, indeed, Mrs. Blunt, I am not going away; I am going to help you; and if we work nimbly together, perhaps we can get through in

season to go over to the chapel for evening service;" and she pulled out a great bunch of the fruit and began to pick it from the stems.

"Miss Star, I couldn't consent to it no way; I couldn't have it on my conscience that you should do it," the woman returned, real distress pictured on her honest face.

"Now, be reasonable, Mrs. B., do," Star said, coaxingly. "If you had so much to do yesterday that you *couldn't* do this work, and it *must* be done to-day, I shall not feel that I am doing anything wrong to help you, and *I'm going to*."

"Well," the housekeeper said, with a sigh of resignation, "that cake has got to be baked to-day, and it would take me six mortal hours to clean that fruit alone, let alone the making and baking. I'm sure it's real good of you to offer to help me, but—there are your fingers, Miss Star——"

"I know it, and nimble ones you'll find them, too," interrupted the young girl, smiling. "Now, don't raise any more objections, there's a good soul, for I *may* have to do this kind of work for myself sometime," she went on, with a slight flush, and drooping her white lids to hide the happiness in her eyes, "and I should really like you to teach me how, although I must confess Sunday would not be the day that I should *choose* on which to learn to cook;" and, without more ado, she bent over her self-imposed task, while Mrs. Blunt turned aside to heave a sigh of relief and wipe a tear from her eyes; "for," as she told the housemaid afterward, "it was no fool of a job to get nine pounds of fruit ready for cake, and the day had looked longer than the first twelve chapters of Chronicles, with their sons and son's sons, which her father had made her learn when, as a child, she had played truant from her Sunday-school."

Hour after hour Star patiently worked with the tired woman, helping to stone the raisins, stem the currants, and slice the citron; and when at last the fragrant fruit was all mixed and floured ready for the cake that was to test the digestive organs of the notable lord, she beat the eggs, browned the flour, and waited upon the housekeeper until the savory mess was finished and put in the pans.

"Two mortal hours it will take me to bake it, and then it will be ready for the confectioner to ice," she said, as she slipped it into the oven and shut the door upon it with a sigh of relief.

"Blessings on you, child," she added, gratefully, "for your kind heart and willing fingers, and when you're married, if I'm living, I'll make your wedding-cake for you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Blunt; I shall not forget your promise, you may be sure," laughed the happy girl, as, flushed and tired, but with a light heart after the performance of a kind act, she sought her own room to rest and

think of the manly lover who was to come in a day or two, and to wonder if Mrs. Blunt would really make her wedding-cake.

She could not feel that she had been guilty of any wrong in lending her aid to the weary and overworked woman below, even though she had spent long hours of that Sabbath in labor; and when, as the evening bells called to prayer, and the glorious harvest moon came sailing up from the east, flooding all the earth with beauty, they wended their way together to the chapel of which Star had spoken in the morning, and where she loved to go because everything was so quiet and unostentatious, a peculiar peace seemed to pervade her heart, and a voice, as of some angel, to whisper the benison "well done."

Monday all day the greatest excitement prevailed, as on the preceding day, in the Richards' mansion, for its ambitious mistress had determined to make a favorable impression upon the young lord whom she was anxious to secure as a son-in-law, and accordingly spared neither pains nor expense to make her house and hospitality as imposing as possible.

Star was away, as usual, all day at school, and therefore was not mixed up in the confusion; but, upon her return, she could imagine something of what had been done, for the house was a perfect bower of beauty, and order, and cleanliness from top to bottom.

Flowers of the choicest description were everywhere; fresh draperies had been put up wherever they were needed, and most tastefully arranged; the servants were all arrayed in immaculate suits, and went tiptoeing around with that air of importance and expectancy which betrayed the interest they felt in the arrival of an English peer; while Mrs. Richards and Josephine were perfectly gorgeous in new dresses of latest fashion and most artistic design.

The coach, with its burnished trimmings and its span of spirited bays in their gold-mounted harness, was standing before the door, ready to go to the station to meet the expected guest; and with all these evidences of preparation around her, Star would have been less than human not to have experienced some curiosity regarding my "Lord Carrol, of Carrolton."

"Well, it may be one of the 'good times that I can't be in,' as poor Glory McGuirk would say; but then I had *my* good time yesterday, and I don't know as I care very much," she thought, with a smile half sad, half tender, as she watched the carriage containing Josephine and her father whirl away in grand style to the station.

However, thinking it might be expected of her to make a good appearance in case she should happen to meet the distinguished stranger, she changed her school dress for a fresh, blue lawn, trimmed with a

dainty white edging, spanned her small waist with a broad belt, and fastened a bunch of waxen snow-drops at her throat.

She had no jewels, no elaborate *lingerie* like Josephine with which to make herself attractive; but she had a way of giving herself such a touch of elegance with these little accessories, despite her simple attire, that no one could pass her by unnoticed; and now, with that new-born smile of happiness on her ripe lips, that light of love and hope in her eyes, and the coming and going color in her cheeks, she was fairest of the fair.

When her toilet was completed she sat down by her window—which, although in the third story, was upon the front of the house, where she could look directly down upon the porch, and also commanded a view of the winding avenue which led down to the road—to watch for the return of the coach and the coming of the illustrious guest.

Sitting there, she fell to musing—to thinking of the time when she should go back to dear old England, the land of her birth, the home of her love.

Only a few months more and her course of study would be finished; a little more of faithful application to her books, a little season of patience and forbearance, then a life of brightness and happiness.

Some one would come for her then, and she would go away forever from the slights, and sneers, and malice which had made her life so cheerless and forlorn, so hard to endure during the past year.

So absorbed did she become thinking of this, that she did not hear the carriage when it turned in at the gate and came smoothly rolling up over the hard, graveled drive-way, and it had almost reached the door before she was aware that at last the noted, titled stranger had arrived.

She leaned out to look as the spirited horses were reined in before the porch, and the sound of laughter and gay voices came floating up to her ears.

A tall, darkly clad figure sprang out and held forth a hand to assist Josephine to alight; but a massive post was in the way, and she could not see his face. Mr. Richards followed the young people, and they all passed up the steps together.

It was a pretty picture that she looked down upon, for now she could see all that transpired. Mrs. Richards, handsome as any queen in her elegant black silk dress and duchesse laces, her diamonds gleaming like drops of dew in a moonlit night; Josephine, bright and sparkling in an elaborate street dress, with her jaunty hat and bright plumes, standing proudly beside the finely formed young man as he exchanged greetings with her mother; and Mr. Richards, stout and comely, a perfect pattern of the hospitable host, with his good-natured face, which was expressive of a most cordial welcome.

But Star had grown suddenly pale as snow, and caught her breath convulsively, as a clear, manly laugh rang out on the air at some jest of Josephine's, and then the stranger turned, hat in hand, having made his bow to his hostess, to speak to Mr. Richards, and thus she could look directly into his face.

There was a look of horror in her eyes as they were fastened upon that handsome face, her lips were drawn and pinched, and the pain that was clutching at her heart betrayed itself in a low, sobbing moan.

There was no mistake—although she could scarcely credit her own senses—she knew that dark, chestnut-crowned head, that handsome, smiling face, that straight, stalwart form but too well, even though a cruel mist was creeping up before her eyes to hide him from her sight. She knew that clear, ringing voice, even though the roaring sound in her ears seemed striving to drown it. Josephine's guest—her accepted lover she had tried to make it appear—the titled stranger, Lord Carrol, of Carrolton, was no other than *her betrothed, Archibald Sherbrooke!*

CHAPTER XVII.

“WHY HAS HE DONE THIS THING?”

What could this strange thing mean? What was Archibald Sherbrooke—the man who, two days before, had told her that he loved her and no other—doing there in that character of Lord Carrol? Why was he there, laughing, chatting, and exchanging greetings in that familiar way with Mrs. Richards and her family?

Star’s heart nearly ceased its beating; she grew faint, giddy, and absolutely soul-sick. Her face paled until it was as white as those cold, waxen berries at her throat; her very life-blood seemed to be congealing.

What could it mean?

Looking down upon the little group, she saw that Josephine’s eyes were fastened upon him—*her* lover—with an expression that there was no mistaking. It was full of pride and wistful affection. Her voice was low and sweet when she spoke to him, her laugh silvery clear as it rang out upon the still evening air at some light jest of his; and Star knew that she loved him deeply, passionately; that she would stop at nothing to win him, if, indeed, he was not already won. Oh, what—what could it all mean?

It was cruel, cruel as death, to have her short, bright dream shattered thus; to have given all the wealth of her warm young heart to the handsome young stranger who had called himself Archibald Sherbrooke, and now to discover him to be a myth—that there was no such person, that she had been made the plaything of an idle hour. And yet it had all appeared so real; he had *seemed* so true and loyal, and to have loved her so fondly.

But stay—might she not be jumping to conclusions, after all?

A different solution to the mystery flashed into her mind. She started eagerly up, the color coming back to her face, a joyful light flashing into her eyes.

Archie had told her that he should “come to her Monday or Tuesday—that he could not wait longer;” but she had not thought he would come to-night. She *did* expect him to-morrow, and perhaps he had arrived.

On the other hand, Lord Carrol had, perchance, disappointed his friends. They had gone to meet him, and had not found him as they expected.

Archie, very likely, had taken the same train from New York that his lordship had intended to take, and on arriving had inquired of some one for the street and number that she had written on the card for him; the

individual whom he asked might have known it was Mr. Richards' residence—for he was well known there—directed him, and he, on learning the man's errand, had probably, with his usual good nature, invited him to take a seat in his carriage, and had driven him home.

Thus she reasoned with her aching, fear-burdened heart, clutching at this little ray of hope as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

But he did not appear like a stranger to any of them; neither did Josephine seem like the disappointed girl she probably would have been if her expected lover had not arrived. She was chatting and laughing with him in the most friendly way; her face was glowing with happiness; her tones and her laughter were musical from very joy.

With these doubts mingling with her sudden hope, Star leaned forward, eagerly listening for him to inquire for her; but the words which came floating up to her smote her heart with a deadly pain, drove the color back again from her face, and made the love-light in her eyes change to a look of mortal agony and despair.

"My lord," Mrs. Richards said, graciously, "we will not keep you standing here; the drawing-room, where we have other friends waiting to meet you, is more inviting, and our dinner will soon be served."

And my lord, with his most charming smile and bow, replied:

"Mrs. Richards, you have given me a most hospitable welcome to your delightful home, and I shall be happy to meet your friends;" and giving his arm to Josephine, he followed his hostess within, to be presented to the other guests who had been invited to meet him.

All hope was gone now—they had called him Lord Carrol and he had replied, and, stricken with despair, Star slipped from her chair like one from which all life had been suddenly smitten, and fell prone upon the floor, where she lay in a semiconscious state for more than an hour.

But when at length thought and feeling began to return to her, she wondered if she were herself or some one else who had lived through a century of misery—youth and happiness, joy and hope seemed to be attributes of an age so long gone by.

"Why has he done this thing?" she moaned, sitting up and clasping her icy hands across her burning brow. "Why has he deceived me thus, making a fool and a plaything of me merely to pass an idle hour? Why did he call himself Archibald Sherbrooke, when he is Lord Carrol, of Carrolton. Why could he not have left me alone when I was content with my music, my studies, and my simple life? Oh! why need my whole future be blighted thus? I could have gone on my way—I could have carried out my plans and gratified my ambition to become a teacher and be independent, and believed myself happy, if he had left me to myself. But now—if I could only die—if I could even go mad—*anything* to make me

forget how I have allowed myself to love him, and built all my future hopes on his love for me!"

The sound of gay voices and laughter came floating up to her from below as she sat there mourning her blighted life; it smote her like the stab of a knife, and she shivered from head to foot, every nerve cringing with keenest pain.

In imagination she could see how Josephine was assuming her most bewitching airs to win the treacherous man who had blotted out every hope of joy from her existence, and who, perhaps, was bending over her, speaking soft and tender words, even as he had done to her only two days ago.

Yesterday and the day before she had lived upon the mountaintops—"upon the heights"—where life had seemed opening out before her like a paradise; to-night, in a single moment, she had been hurled into the very depths of misery.

She got up from the floor, tottered to the window and shut it, to keep out those hateful sounds from below which nearly drove her into a frenzy; then, too weak to sit up, she crept into her bed, where she lay shaking as with an ague and moaning with pain all the long night through.

Morning found her burning with fever, with an aching head and a crushed and breaking heart.

She could not rise, and, although faint, the very thought of food filled her with loathing, and yet her throat and mouth were dry and hot with a terrible thirst.

Thus good Mrs. Blunt found her about ten o'clock. She had missed her from breakfast—something very unusual, for Star was as prompt as the day itself generally—but she had not had time to inquire into the cause of her absence until now, for there had been lively doings down in her department that morning.

"Merciful sakes alive! whatever in the world has happened to you, Miss Star?" she cried, when, on thrusting her heated face in at the door, she saw the young girl in her wretched condition lying on the bed.

"I believe I do not feel very well this morning," Star said, wearily.

"I should think not, indeed! You've got a high fever, and yet you're shaking with the cold. Goodness gracious, child! and you all dressed out like this, too! What has happened?" Mrs. Blunt cried, aghast, as she pulled back the coverlid and saw at a glance that she had been lying all night in her clothing.

Star was too miserable to explain, as the good woman saw, and she did not press her with questions; but with nimble yet tender hands she removed her clothing, replacing it with her *robe de nuit*, and then

wrapping her in a heavy blanket, she tucked her snugly into bed once more.

She then went down below, where she prepared a steaming drink of some kind, with which she hastened back to her patient, and insisted that she should drink it—"every drop."

The poor child obeyed, feeling too wretched to offer any objections; and then saturating a napkin with camphor and water, Mrs. Blunt bound it about her aching head, and darkening the room, bade her go to sleep again as quickly as possible, for of course school was not to be thought of that day; and indeed Star had forgotten the existence of such an institution.

The hot drink warmed and soothed her, while the kind attention of the woman comforted her; and exhausted nature asserting itself, she soon dropped into a profound slumber.

It was late in the afternoon when she awoke again, and realized that she was much refreshed physically, although her burden of misery was still crushing down upon her heart.

Mrs. Blunt found her as white and wan as she had been flushed and feverish, when she looked in upon her again just before dinner, and she could not understand the look of hopeless despair that lay in her usually bright and joyous eyes.

"Whatever in the world is the matter with you, Miss Star?" she asked, anxiously. "It'll be bad luck for me if you're going to be sick, for since you came into the house, with your bright face and cheery ways, the days and months have grown shorter by half. Come, come, chicken, don't look so downcast; it breaks my heart to see you so white and drooping."

"I shall be all right by to-morrow, Mrs. Blunt. I am better already, thanks to your kind care," Star returned, sitting up in bed and trying to bring her shattered nerves into better order. "If you will please hand me my school dress," she added, "I think I will get up and take a run down to the lodge. I have not seen Uncle Jacob since yesterday morning, and he will wonder what has become of me."

"Indeed, child, you mustn't go out to-night, and as for Mr. Rosevelt, he knows all about you already. I sent word to him before noon that you wasn't able to go to school, and he's been up to the house twice since to inquire for you. He sets a store by you, Miss Star, and I believe it would break his heart if anything was to happen to you."

A wan little smile flitted over Star's face.

It was about the only ray of light or comfort that she had in her great darkness—this knowledge that there was one who did really love her, and to whom she also was almost a necessity.

She could rely on “Uncle Jacob,” if upon no one else, and she longed to go to him and lean upon him now in her trouble. Of course she could not tell him how she had let handsome, fascinating Archibald Sherbrooke win her heart from her, and then found all too late how cruelly she had been deceived. She was so thankful now that she had not allowed him to tell Mr. Roosevelt as he had wished, though, perhaps, that had only been another ruse of his, and he had not intended to tell him, after all; but it would be a comfort to go down to the lodge and see him, and listen to the kindly tones of his voice.

Mrs. Blunt helped her to dress, for she saw that she was glad to sit down by the window—though she shuddered as she remembered that she had sat just there last night when her heart had been broken—and rest, while she began to fear that she should not be able to get down stairs, after all, that night to go to see Mr. Roosevelt.

Mrs. Blunt watched her closely with those small, keen eyes of hers, and saw that her trouble was more of the mind than of the body, though what could have caused it was a puzzle to her.

She did not trouble her with conversation, but after making her room tidy, she went quietly out and left her alone. She returned after a little while, however, bringing her a bowl of hot soup and a plate of nice little biscuits.

“You are very good to me, Mrs. Blunt,” Star said, gratefully; and she ate the soup with a relish, for she was very faint and hungry, while the housekeeper looked on with a satisfied air as she saw a tinge of color coming back to her pale face.

“Somebody else was good to a poor old woman yesterday, or I’m much mistaken, and I reckon it’ll take a good while for you and me to be quits on that day’s work,” the kind-hearted creature returned, a tear starting to her eyes as she remembered how bright and happy the fair girl had been during those long hours while she had worked so busily and patiently with her.

But she could not stay with her, much as she wished to do so, and try to bring back her truant smiles, for her many duties called her below, and she went away, cautioning Star to be very careful and not take more cold.

Left alone, the unhappy girl felt that she must get out and away from that close room where she had suffered so much; she must *do* something to make her forget, or her brain would be turned.

So, wrapping a shawl about her, she stole down a back way, out by a side door into the grounds, and taking a circuitous path, made her way as rapidly as her strength would permit toward the lodge.

She had accomplished about half the distance when her limbs began to fail her, and she became so weak and faint from the exertion she had made that she was obliged to stop and lean against the trunk of a large tree to rest awhile.

It was nearly dark, for the sun had gone down and the heavy foliage of the surrounding trees made deep shadows all about her; the air was chill with the breath of the frost spirit—so different from the mild loveliness which had prevailed only forty-eight hours before—and the rustling leaves above her seemed mourning over the fate awaiting them, when its cold hand should sway their frail stems and lay them low.

A feeling of unutterable woe overcame her—such a sense of loneliness and desolation that she could not bear it; and covering her face with her hands, she gave way to the flood of tears which would not be restrained.

She had no idea how long she wept—time, place, everything was lost in the utter abandonment of her grief—until she was aroused, and a thrill of terror went tingling through all her nerves, as a hand fell suddenly yet lightly upon her shoulder.

With a start, her hands dropped from her tear-stained face and she looked up, to find the grave, questioning eyes of her faithless lover looking down into her own.

A low cry of surprise and dismay escaped him as he recognized her.

“Star! My darling, what does this mean?” he asked, in astonishment. “How came you *here*, and why do I find you grieving thus? You look more like some stricken white dove than like my bright, beautiful star. I was coming to you to-morrow—I wanted to come to-day, but I could not. Tell me, dear, how is it I find you here in the grounds of Mr. Richards, where I am visiting?” and he would have gathered her into his arms, but by a quick movement she evaded him, and stepping back a few paces, she confronted him with a haughty uplifting of her small head, her face and eyes glowing with scorn and indignation.

“To-morrow you would have come to me,” she repeated, with curling lips. “Pray, where would you have sought me?”

“Here in Yonkers, at No. 56 — street. I think that was the address you wrote on the card,” he said, apparently bewildered by her strange conduct, and regarding her with a troubled look. “I wanted to go there to-day, but there has been no opportunity,” he said again. “And to-morrow I was intending to ask Mr. Richards to direct me to the address which you gave me.”

“Do you know the street and number of *this* residence?” Star asked, sternly.

"No. When it was arranged that I should come here to make a short visit, Mrs. Richards was so kind as to say that her carriage should meet me at the station, so that I do not even know the name of the street on which they live."

"Then to-morrow, when you should ask to be directed to the address which I gave you—if, indeed, you intended to ask for it—you would have been told that you would find me here in this place—this house. Mr. Richards' residence is No. 56 — street," Star said, proudly and coldly.

She had no faith in him; she believed he was acting a part.

"Impossible!" he cried. "I never dreamed of such a thing. Why, then, have I not seen you? Why were you not with the family when I arrived last night? Why have I not seen you to-day?" he asked, as if more and more astonished.

"Because," she answered, her voice rising, with a scornful, bitter ring, "I am a dependent upon the bounty of the rich; because I am a burden and expense in a house of luxury, and only tolerated on account of a promise made to my dying father and to cancel a debt due to my mother. You have not seen me, because I am not allowed to breathe the same air, eat and drink, and sit at the same table with those who think they are of finer mold than I. But it is just as well, my lord——"

"My lord!" he repeated, in a startled tone, interrupting her. "Star, that from *you*!"

She laughed bitterly, lifting her head with a haughty gesture, though her face gleamed like a piece of marble in the waning light.

"Yes, that from me!" she said. "Fortunately, I was at a window above the entrance when you arrived last evening, and witnessed the honors that were heaped upon my *Lord Carrol, of Carrolton*, and the revelation of your *true character*, although a sudden and bitter one to me, was, perhaps, after all, a providential one; for, if it showed me how I had been duped and betrayed, how I had been made the plaything of an idle hour, it also gave me time to collect my scattered senses a trifle before meeting you and telling you how I *scorn* you for——"

"Duped! betrayed! plaything! Star, listen to me," pleaded the young man, his breath almost taken away by these startling accusations and by her wild words, so full of derision and pain.

"I will *not* listen to you!" she cried, passionately; "I have listened to you too much already. Oh! why did you do this wicked thing? Why could you not have left me alone? Had you not enough already, with your riches, your title, and your life of pleasure, without coming in cruel sport to spoil a poor young girl's life? Was it not enough that you could woo and win the

heiress, the belle and beauty of Long Branch, without the amusement of trying to win and break my poor heart?"

"Star! Star!" he cried, drawing nearer the excited girl. "What wild, wild words! Every one is like a dagger plunged into *my* heart. You do not know what you are saying, dear. I try to win and break your heart! My poor darling, you have been misled by having learned of my title. I should have told you before, but——"

"Then you *are* Lord Carrol? You own it—you acknowledge it?" Star interrupted, with a ring of wild despair in her tones.

When she had looked up into his face, into his kind and loving eyes; when she had heard his voice, so low and eager, yet tender; when he had called her "his poor darling," and said her words were like a dagger plunged into his heart, her own had begun to thrill anew, and she almost hoped against hope that there was after all some mistake, in spite of what she had seen and heard.

But now he owned it. He was not Archibald Sherbrooke at all; he was the titled peer, and he had sought to win her love under false colors; and all the pain, and bitterness, and scorn returned, even while she waited breathlessly for his answer.

"Yes, I am Lord Carrol, of Carrolton; but, Star——"

"That is enough; I want to hear no more," she said, stopping him with an authoritative gesture of her white hand. "I will not listen to another word from your traitorous lips!"

She turned proudly from him and would have left him, but he sprang forward and seized her hands.

They were cold as ice and shaking as with palsy, and he was shocked by the hopelessness visible in her face as he looked down upon it.

"Star, my darling," he began, in a voice that was almost stern from emotion; "you *shall* listen to me. It is my right to be heard, and I can explain everything to you if you will but give me the opportunity."

But she would not. Pain, despair, outraged pride and affection made her unreasonable and almost insane.

She flashed a haughty glance up at him.

"Lord Carrol," she said, in her iciest tones, "release my hands, if you please."

He dropped them as if they had been coals of fire, and drew back a pace or two from her, deeply wounded, while his own face was nearly as white and pained as hers.

"Star, you are wronging me more than you dream. Surely you will listen to my defense," he said, and his voice trembled with suppressed feeling.

Oh, how she longed to yield and allow him to win her back; how she longed to let him take her into his strong arms, and hear him murmur again those tender words such as he had spoken to her so recently; but, remembering his attentions to Josephine last night, her looks of affection and pride, her bright face and happy laugh—remembering what she had heard regarding his devotion to her at Long Branch, and the reason that had been given for his coming there to her home, she could not.

He had played the role of rich lover to the proud heiress; he had acted that of a poor sweetheart with her; for had he not told her he was an artist, but *hoped* to be able to take care of her, so that she need never know the meaning of the words poor and dependent again; and now, with all this evidence before her, how could she help believing him false to the core—to have simply amused himself at her expense?

“You can have no defense to offer me, and I will hear nothing,” she returned, coldly. “You have deceived me most cruelly; you came to me as Archibald Sherbrooke; you used all your powers of fascination to make me love you as a poor artist, while you had already played the part of a rich lover in a different character at a fashionable watering-place. I congratulate you upon your marvelous success as an actor, my lord,” she concluded, with scathing sarcasm.

A deep sigh broke from him; her words hurt him keenly, for he was very proud.

But he saw how she was suffering, and he tried to be patient with her, feeling sure that if he could only make her listen to him all would be well.

“My dear,” he said, gently, “you do not understand. Pray, let me tell you all about it. I swear that I am both—”

“You need not swear; I know enough already. Go back to my more fortunate cousin, Miss Richards, whom the whole household expects you intend to make Lady Carrol. She, I own, is better fitted to be the bride of a peer of England than the poor alien who is a burden upon her bounty. She will grace your proud home and name with her beauty; she will add to your riches with her wealth. But let me tell you”—and Star had no idea how superbly beautiful she was as she stood so proudly before him and uttered this prophetic sentence—“that the girl whom she has despised and insulted, whom you have deceived, and whose life you have blighted by your treachery, will yet rise to a position that shall shame and humiliate you both. Go back to her, I say, and—ask her for the cameo which you gave me. I told you that I had lost it. I put it that way because I did not like to tell you how badly I had been used by those who should have given me only sympathy and love; but she—the girl whom you have come to win for your wife—*stole* it from me, my one little treasure, the only ornament I

had which I could wear in my humble position, and which I prized more than anything else in the world. But let her keep it; I relinquish it freely, now that I have discovered the baseness of the giver. My Lord Carrol, of Carrolton, alias Archibald Sherbrooke, the artist, I despise you, and I bid you farewell!”

She was gone before he could hardly realize that she had ceased speaking; she had sped down the avenue with the lightness and swiftness of a fawn, leaving him dazed, bewildered, almost paralyzed from the wild words, the terrible denunciation which she had uttered.

CHAPTER XVIII. EXPLANATIONS.

“Star! Star! my dear love, come back and let me undeceive you,” he called aloud, as soon as he could recover his senses sufficiently to speak.

But there was no answering sound, save the sad sighing of the rustling leaves which had so unnerved the unhappy girl a few minutes before.

He followed the direction she had taken. He wandered about the grounds for full half an hour, but could discover no trace of her; and at last, feeling greatly disturbed, he was obliged to retrace his steps, and returned to the mansion.

He had strolled forth at the close of dinner to smoke, and to get away for a little quiet musing, for he had intended, as he said, to seek out his beautiful love on the morrow, and put upon one of her white fingers the seal to their plighted troth, and, this done, to tell her that he was both an *artist and a peer of Victoria’s realm*.

During his stroll, and while thinking fondly of the bright girl, he had unconsciously strayed into the very avenue where Star had stopped to rest.

Wrapped in her heavy shawl, and with head bowed upon her hands, he had not recognized her, but thought it might be one of the servants, perhaps, who had got into some trouble.

Always ready to relieve suffering of whatever nature, he stepped up to the sobbing girl and gently laid his hand upon her shoulder to attract her attention, and when the tear-stained, suffering face of his own love was lifted to his, his astonishment rendered him speechless for the moment.

But it was a fact, nevertheless, that he had appeared in different places in different characters—he was at once Archibald Sherbrooke and Lord Carrol, of Carrolton; how, we must let his own words explain.

“Poor child! it is very awkward, and I never dreamed of any such denouement; but I cannot blame her. If she would but have given me one moment in which to tell her how it is; but she was wild with pain,” he said, with a troubled face, as he slowly went back to the house.

It is doubtless now made plain to the reader how he had happened to recognize the cameo ring upon Josephine’s hand at Long Branch, and knew at once that it was the very stone which he had given Star at parting on shipboard.

He did not like to question Miss Richards about it, but he was deeply hurt when she told him that it had been given her by a relative, for he felt sure that he could not be mistaken in the stone—there *could* not be another like it, for he had designed the figure upon it himself.

Yet, to be quite positive about it, he had told her that it had belonged to a gentleman named Archibald Sherbrooke; and then when he saw her start, and the color flame into her face, he knew that Star had parted with it for some reason or other. It had caused him a pang to know that she should have prized it so lightly as to give it away, while he had treasured that lock of gold as one of the most precious things in his possession, and had learned to love the face which he had painted as he never expected to love any object on earth.

Then he had met Star, and she had told him—not that she had given his gift away, but that she had “lost” it.

The two stories did not agree, but looking into her glorious, truthful eyes, he had believed her, and felt that some time she would make the mystery plain.

He had told her, on parting from her Saturday evening, that he should come to her Monday or Tuesday, and he had really intended doing so, and was deeply disappointed at not being able to keep his promise.

But all day Tuesday he had seen no time that he could escape from the company of which he seemed to be the center. He had about made up his mind to ask Mr. Richards to direct him to No. 56 — street after dinner, and go away to spend a quiet evening with Star; but Mrs. Richards upset this plan by laying out a programme in which he would be obliged to figure largely, and he was forced to bear it with what patience he could, hoping that the morrow would bring him the opportunity he desired.

He had never imagined that he could be a guest in the very house which he was so anxious to visit, and which was the home of his beloved; and now the knowledge was not pleasing to him, for Star’s bitter words, and the fact that she had not mingled with the family, told him but too plainly how she was undervalued there.

How she must have suffered, sitting at her window, as she said she had done, and been a witness to the reception which had been tendered him by her proud, cold-hearted relatives; and to have been led, too, by them to believe that he had come there as a suitor for Josephine’s hand.

This had been rather a startling and unpleasant revelation to him, for he had never once imagined that any such construction would be put upon his visit there.

He had been drawn toward Mrs. Richards upon first meeting her, for she was really a fascinating woman, and upon learning that she was of English extraction, and that he knew something of her relatives, he at

once felt almost like an old acquaintance, and in this way had been led to attach himself to her party.

Josephine was a brilliant and attractive girl, and had made herself very agreeable to him, and he liked her as a friend and acquaintance; but no thought of love for her had ever entered his mind. That fair face, with its crown of gold, its starry eyes and coral lips, which had lain upon his breast at sea, had made too deep an impression upon his heart to be easily forgotten.

But now, just as he thought he had won her—when he was on the verge of claiming her, he found himself in deep waters, from which he feared it might be somewhat difficult to extricate himself.

Star had a right to denounce him, believing what she did. He had parted from her on Saturday evening as Archibald Sherbrooke and her accepted lover, while on Monday she had seen him driven in great style to the Richards' mansion, and greeted as Lord Carrol, and a suitor for the brilliant Josephine's hand. Surely circumstances were against him.

"I must get out of this muddle as soon as possible," he said, as he ascended the steps and paused a moment on the porch to consider what he ought to do.

Entering the house, he avoided the drawing-room, where a gay company was assembled, and passed on to a music-room which led into the library.

Mr. Richards was in the latter room, seated at his desk, and the door between the two was open. As he saw his lordship, he arose and came forward to meet him.

"Can I have a few moments' conversation with you?" the young man asked, gravely.

"Certainly; as many as you wish. Shall we retire to the privacy of the library?" returned Mr. Richards, who at once jumped to the conclusion that he was about to receive a formal proposal for the hand of his daughter.

So also thought another listener, who happened to be standing on the veranda just outside the open window of the music-room, and who had caught the above sentences.

"No," Lord Carrol returned. "What I have to say can just as well be said here as anywhere. I find myself unexpectedly in a very unpleasant situation, and I have come at once to you, because I consider a straightforward course the wisest always to pursue. I wish to tell you a little story, and then ask your assistance in correcting an awkward mistake."

"Anything that I can do for you, my lord, I shall be most happy to do," blandly affirmed Mr. Richards, little realizing what he was

promising, while he followed the young man's example and sat down to listen to his narrative.

"I came over from England, nearly a year ago, on the steamer —," he began, "and on board that vessel I met a young girl of great personal beauty and intelligence, in whom I became intensely interested. She could not have been more than sixteen years of age, but her mind was far in advance of both her appearance and her years, while it was evident that she had been reared with great care, for every word and act betrayed her to be a perfect little lady, and every day spent in her society only served to make her more attractive in my sight. At parting, I gave her a trifle as a souvenir of our pleasant acquaintance, and asked in return for something to keep in memory of her. I did not know that I should ever meet her again, and had I not done so, the remembrance of what I had enjoyed in her society would eventually have become, it is probable, but a pleasant episode of the past, although I must confess that her face haunted me continually.

"But I did meet her again, and only a very short time ago. She had changed—developed into even greater beauty, and had become more mature, and I began to realize at once that I had even a deeper interest in her than I had imagined possible. Subsequent interviews—for I took pains to see her often—and the study of her character, convinced me that I had found the woman whom I could love with all my heart, and whom I should win for my wife if I could."

A rustling of the drapery at the open window just then made the young lord pause; but hearing nothing more, he thought the wind had simply stirred the curtains, and continued:

"Within a very few days I have brought things to a crisis—have, in fact, asked and secured a promise from her to become my wife as soon as she shall have completed her education, and I had intended to-morrow to seek an interview with her friends and make formal proposals for her hand.

"This may sound rather strange to you, knowing my position, and realizing something of the prejudice of the English against marrying outside the pale of their own rank. But I was convinced from the first that this young girl was of good blood and parentage, and upon a more intimate acquaintance with her, I have learned that her mother was an English lady from an excellent family.

"Now, what I have to tell you," Lord Carrol continued, with a smile, "has a slight touch of romance connected with it. When I left England, I came away known as Sir Archibald Sherbrooke, baronet. Two months after my arrival here, I was notified of the death of my mother's only brother—Lord Carrol, of Carrolton—and who, being a widower and

childless, willed his estates and all that he possessed to me, with the provision that I was to assume his name, and consequently his title.

"It would have suited me better to travel and remain plain Archibald Sherbrooke, as I always called myself, until my return; but I was with a company of friends—all artists, who were traveling and studying with an old painter—who knew all the circumstances, and they would not hear a word to my remaining incognito, and insisted upon introducing me everywhere by my newly acquired title.

"As plain Archibald Sherbrooke, I met, wooed, and won the young lady of whom I have told you, but I intended, when I formally asked for her hand, to reveal the circumstances which have made me Lord Carrol. I have not for a moment thought of deceiving her, for I abhor double-dealing of any kind; but, notwithstanding, I find myself in a very awkward situation.

"You will, perhaps, be surprised to learn that to-night, since going out after dinner, I met my betrothed by accident, and very much to my astonishment. She had discovered that I have been sailing 'under two flags,' or, as she supposed, under false colors. She had heard of my meeting your daughter at Long Branch as Lord Carrol, and the report seems to have preceded me, much to my surprise"—here the young man colored from embarrassment—"that I intended something more than a friendly visit here, and she has passionately denounced me for my duplicity—as it appears to her—and refused even to allow me to explain my position.

"This is the mistake that I wish you to help me rectify by securing an interview for me with her, so that I can exonerate myself from all blame in her sight."

Mr. Richards was greatly astonished at what he had heard, and in no small degree disappointed, for he liked the young man, and his wife had affirmed that Josephine was the magnet that had drawn his lordship thither, and she had also confidently asserted that he would propose for her hand before he left.

But, of course, he could not betray anything of this feeling, after having been made the confidant of another love affair; therefore he said, with as much self-possession as he could command:

"The situation is somewhat unpleasant for you, I admit, my young friend, but I think it may be easily made right. I must confess I am much surprised by what you have told me; the story is certainly romantic in every respect. And you met the young lady by accident to-night? She is, then, a resident of Yonkers. Who may she be? Perhaps she is no one whom I know."

"She is Miss Gladstone, and your wife's ward, I believe," Lord Carrol replied, and bending a grave look upon his host.

Mr. Richards nearly bounded from the piano stool upon which he had been sitting at this startling intelligence, while outside that open window there was a sound as of some one weakly sinking into a chair. But both gentlemen were so deeply engaged in the subject under consideration that they did not appear to hear it.

"Star!" ejaculated Mr. Richards, when he could recover his breath.

"Yes, sir; Miss Star Gladstone is the lady of whom I have told you," Lord Carrol replied, somewhat coldly, for he could not understand why any one so lovely and accomplished in every way as Star was should have been so slighted and ill-treated in his family.

"But I do not understand—I cannot see—I—I beg pardon; but, to tell the truth, I am completely taken aback by what you have told me," Mr. Richards stammered, for it was to him a most astounding revelation.

"I expected that my communication would surprise you; but you cannot be more so than I was upon learning to-night that Miss Gladstone is a member of your family," returned his lordship.

"But you tell me that you were intending to call upon her friends to-morrow, and here you have been in the same house a day and a night already."

"True; but I was not aware of the fact until within the last hour. Miss Gladstone gave me her address last Saturday evening. Here it is; you can read it. It was late when I asked for it, and she wrote it hastily upon this card."

The young man passed it to his companion as he spoke, and Mr. Richards read the street and number of his own residence.

"You will remember," Lord Carrol continued, "that I am an entire stranger in this place, and that I do not even know the name of the street upon which you reside, as Mrs. Richards was kind enough to say that some one should meet me at the station upon my arrival. I wished very much to go to Star to-day, but courtesy demanded that I should not disarrange Mrs. Richards' plans. I fully intended, however, to ask you to direct me to the place designated on that card to-morrow, never once suspecting that I was already in the house where the lady of my choice resides."

"And has Star never mentioned our name to you?" Mr. Richards asked.

"No; she has been very reticent regarding everything connected with herself save her studies and her music, and I have not thought to question her on that point."

Mr. Richards' face clouded.

Star had good cause for being reticent, he knew, and the subject was becoming an awkward one for him.

"You say you met her to-night?" he said.

"Yes; I went out for a stroll and a smoke after dinner, and came upon her suddenly in the grounds. She appeared to be ¹⁸⁴greatly distressed, and I, never suspecting the cause, pressed her to tell me. She turned upon me like an outraged queen, and denounced me in a manner that fairly took my breath away. She believed me to be simply Archibald Sherbrooke, an artist, until last night, when she saw me driven to your door and received as Lord Carrol; and, having heard exaggerated reports of my attentions to Miss Richards while at Long Branch, it is not strange that she should resent the seeming deception, for appearances are certainly against me. But a few words will set everything right, if you will explain something of this to her and secure an interview for me."

"Then it is our Star whom you want to marry, my lord," Mr. Richards said, reflectively, and as if he could hardly comprehend it even yet, while he wondered if they could ever live through the tempest which his wife would surely raise when she should discover that Star had won the lover whom she was bending all her energies to secure for Josephine.

"Yes, hoping for your sanction, of course," Lord Carrol answered, with a rising flush, for he could read something of what was passing in his host's mind. "But, pardon me," he added, fixing a look of grave questioning upon his face, "now that I find she is the ward of your wife, I cannot understand why I have not met her with the other members of your family."

"Ahem! Well," began Mr. Richards, with evident embarrassment, "she has been very deeply engaged with her studies ever since she came to us—is ambitious, you know, and also spends a great deal of her time practicing music, and my wife thought it would be best for her not to—to mingle in company much until she had—um!—completed her education;" and Mrs. Richards, sitting just outside that open window, where she had heard every word of the above conversation, thanked the fates that for once her husband had smoothed awkward things over for her quite comfortably.

¹⁸⁵Lord Carrol simply bowed in reply to this statement. It would not become him to question the truthfulness of what he had heard, but since his interview with Star, his opinion of the family had changed very materially.

"Well, I *am* nonplussed, and I reckon that this state of affairs will create quite a commotion when it becomes known," Mr. Richards resumed, after a few minutes of thought, during which his surprise

seemed to increase. "I never dreamed that our Star would ever step into such a chair of state, although she is of good blood, I believe."

"Of the best," Lord Carrol returned, decidedly. "She told me upon one occasion that her mother was a Miss Anna Chudleigh, of Chudleigh Manor, Devonshire. I know something of them, and they were a fine family, although I have been told that they were very much displeased at the marriage of their only daughter with a clergyman of limited means. But—have I your sanction to prosecute my suit with Miss Gladstone, and will you arrange an interview for me?"

"Certainly; I shall do what you wish, and I must say that I am glad that things are turning out so well for Star. *I* have been very fond of her, for she is a bright and winsome little body about the house. She is talented, too, to say nothing of her beauty, and she will make you a good wife. I congratulate you both, and there is my hand on it, my lord," Mr. Richards concluded, heartily, and extending his hand to the young peer, which he took and cordially shook.

But Mrs. Richards, her heart filled with bitterest rage, felt as if she could have strangled her husband with a good relish for taking such an interest in Star's prospects, while the gorgeous air-castle which his own daughter had built was tumbling to the ground about his ears.

Mr. Richards then rose.

"I suppose you are anxious to see Star at once?" he said.

"Yes, if you please. I desire to make my peace with her as soon as possible, for I know that she is deeply wounded, and I cannot rest until she knows the truth."

"Very well; I will go to her, and send her to the library. You will be free from intrusion there," Mr. Richards said, and immediately left the room in search of Star.

He came back very soon, however, saying that she had not returned to her room, and no one had seen her that day save Mrs. Blunt, who told him that she had been very ill, and not able to attend school.

Lord Carrol's face fell at this information, and he realized more forcibly than ever what Star must have suffered from this unfortunate misunderstanding.

"Perhaps it will be best for me to wait until to-morrow morning," he said, after a moment of thought. "She appeared so greatly excited when I met her this evening, and has been so ill all day, it may be well for her to get rest before exciting her any further. Yes, I will wait," he concluded, with a sigh, for he was deeply disappointed and anxious.

"Is Mr. Rosevelt a member of your family also?" he asked, after a moment, and suddenly remembering that Star had told him they were inmates of the same house.

"Yes; well, not exactly a member of my family," Mr. Richards returned, flushing over this, another awkward question. "He is my wife's uncle, and one of us; but his health is so poor, and noise affects him so unpleasantly, that he prefers to have a room at the lodge rather than here where there is so much gayety and confusion."

Mrs. Richards, still an eavesdropper, heaved another comfortable sigh over this rough place made smooth.

"You must have met Mr. Rosevelt also," he added, as it came to him that Star and his wife's uncle had shared that dreadful experience at sea.

"Yes; and I think him a fine old gentleman. I must see him also tomorrow," his lordship returned; and then he went ¹⁸⁷on to explain more fully how he had made the acquaintance of these two unfortunates, and described their sufferings and hardships so graphically that his listener, who did not know onehalf, was deeply moved.

"Miss Gladstone was considered quite a heroine on board our steamer after her rescue," the young man said, "when the passengers learned with how much fortitude she had conducted herself during the disaster and the dreadful events following. The captain told me, with tears running down his cheeks, how she had denied herself both food and drink in order that the life of Mr. Rosevelt, who, she declared, had less vitality than herself on account of his age, might be sustained. She did not even take the rest which she needed, but watched and worked over him unceasingly—in fact, she *saved his life*."

"She is a noble girl—she is a splendid girl!" Mr. Richards returned, tears in his own eyes, and his heart full of remorse over the life Star had led since she came into his house. "She will make you the best little wife in the world. God bless you both!"

Lord Carrol saw that he was sincere, and began to suspect where all the trouble lay regarding Star. He was inclined to think, and rightly, that jealousy or ill-will on the part of the petted Josephine and her proud mother was the cause of her unpleasant position in the family; but he inwardly resolved that it should be entirely different in the future, or she should not remain there.

But he had been absent a long time from the gay company in the drawing-room, and, feeling assured that he could not see his darling that night, he returned to it, trying to wait with patience for what the morrow would bring him.

CHAPTER XIX.

MALICIOUS FALSEHOODS.

As soon as Mr. Richards and his distinguished guest left the music-room, a white hand parted the curtains from the window, and a blanched, distorted face appeared in the aperture.

It belonged to Mrs. Richards, who had, as before mentioned, been a listener to all that had transpired. Seeing that no one was in sight, she stepped softly inside, for the window was a long one, reaching to the floor, and sank back into a chair, the picture of a woman whom a fierce passion had exhausted.

She had chanced to be out upon the veranda when Lord Carrol had entered the music-room and requested a “few moments’ conversation” with her husband, and feeling, with a thrill of delight, that the most important moment of Josephine’s life had come, she drew near to listen, as she supposed, to his lordship’s proposal for her hand.

Her emotions can better be imagined than described when instead she heard the story which the young man told her husband, and learned that Star, the despised and neglected waif, had secured the prize which she had so coveted for her brilliant daughter.

A perfect tornado of wrath, jealousy, and hate raged within her heart as she heard his praises of her, and his manly confession of love for her, with the intention of making her his wife.

Star, the beggar maid, as she had always regarded her, the burden reproach of her life, the wife of a peer of England!

It could not be; she would not have it so, when she had plotted and schemed to win this proud, handsome young aristocrat ¹⁸⁹for her daughter; when she had spent hundreds to snare him; and when, she knew but too well, Josephine had learned to love him with all the fire of her proud, passionate nature.

If it had been a girl in a position equal to that which Josephine occupied whom he had chosen, the disappointment would not have been less severe, but the mortification would not have been so galling.

This was what had made Star’s face so radiant, then, during the past week, making her seem to bloom into new beauty, and glorifying her with exceeding happiness. She had noticed, but could not understand it.

This was the meaning of the unusual attention which she had bestowed upon her toilet last Saturday—for Josephine had told her of that

little scene upon the veranda—and also of her protracted absence that day.

For half an hour she sat there, white as alabaster with passion, her eyes glowing with hate for the innocent cause of all her disappointment.

“Not in her room, eh?” she muttered at length, vindictively. “I’ll find the little vixen, and if it is possible to *widen* this breach, it won’t be my fault if it is not done.”

With a cruel expression on her still white face, she arose and swept noiselessly from the room by the same way that she had entered, and passed down the steps of the veranda out into the grounds.

With a quick, swinging pace she walked down the avenue, casting keen glances among the trees and shrubbery as she went.

But Star was nowhere to be seen.

Mrs. Richards, however, was determined to have an interview with her before either her husband or Lord Carrol could do so. She did not think she had returned to the house, and had an idea that she might be at the lodge with Mr. Roosevelt, so she persevered in her search.

She kept on her way until she came out by the lodge, where she saw John Mellen, who was both gardener and porter, sitting upon the porch.

He looked greatly surprised as the light from the lantern at the gate fell upon her face.

“Is anything the matter, marm?” he asked, touching his hat respectfully, but wondering to see her there at that hour, with no wrap, while he noticed that she was very pale.

“No, John; but have you seen anything of Miss Gladstone?” she asked.

“Yes, marm; she came running down here about half an hour ago, looking like a wraith, and bounded up stairs like a fawn, to the old gentleman’s room,” he answered.

“Is she there now?” Mrs. Richards demanded, quickly, her lips settling down into a hard, straight line.

“Yes’m—leastways, I’ve not seen her come down yet.”

The woman bent her head in thought a moment, then briefly remarked:

“I think I’ll go up.”

Gathering her rustling skirts in her hand, she passed inside the lodge, mounted the stairs with a noiseless tread, and paused before Mr. Roosevelt’s door.

Bending close to the keyhole, she heard sounds of sobbing, mingled with low, soothing words spoken by her uncle.

She softly opened the door, and standing upon the threshold, her face grew dark and wrathful at the picture which she saw within the room.

Mr. Roosevelt sat in his arm-chair by the table which stood between the two windows of his room, while Star knelt upon the floor at his side, her golden head bowed upon the arm of his chair, sobbing as if her heart was breaking.

The old gentleman had laid one hand upon her bright head, and was soothing it gently as he tried to quiet her with low, fond words.

"Dear child," he said, tenderly, "don't grieve so; you have been very brave so far; bear it a little longer, and all will be well. I know you have tried to hide it from me and every one else, but I've seen and known what you have had to contend with ever since I came here. You've had no love, no sympathy, and your poor, starved heart was well-nigh broken under it. But cheer up, my dear; you have been a blessing to me. I have been very lonely and forlorn many times, but I should have had a sorrowful time of it, indeed, if my bright little Star had not shed her genial rays upon my pathway."

"*Indeed!*" interrupted a voice from behind them, in its most sarcastic tones, causing Star to spring to her feet with a low cry of surprise, as she turned her flushed, tear-stained face toward the intruder, while Mr. Roosevelt looked up at his niece with a grave, displeased countenance.

"*Indeed!*" Mrs. Richards repeated, her anger waxing hotter and fiercer as she imagined that Star had been pouring the story of her love and trial into her uncle's ears. "You have both been sadly abused and heart-starved, haven't you? For a couple of dependents you fare very badly, don't you? And this is the gratitude and appreciation that you show. Stella Gladstone, go back to your room and remain there until I come to you; I wish to have a private conversation with you. As for you, Uncle Jacob, I am surprised that you should take sides with a sentimental schoolgirl against those who are providing most bountifully for her."

Mr. Roosevelt reached out his hand and took one of Star's.

"Remain where you are," he said, with a quiet authority which amazed while it enraged his niece.

Then turning to her, he continued, in the same quiet tone, but with a deliberation which made every word tell:

"Ellen Richards, you are a heartless, arrogant woman. You need not speak yet, for I am going to relieve my mind, once for all. I am your father's only brother, and when you were a child I helped him provide the very bread that appeased your hunger. When, later on, I became a rich man, and you were married and settled, you fawned upon and flattered me, protesting that there was nothing in the world that you would not do for 'dear Uncle Jacob.' Every time I returned from abroad, bringing you rich and elegant gifts, you urged me to quit my roving and come to live

with you—your ‘home and heart would always be open’ to me, you said. It was the same with your brother Henry; words cost nothing, and his protestations were as fluent as your own. But when misfortune overtook me, and I returned to remain and to take him at his word, everything was changed. He received me coldly, giving me the poorest accommodations his house afforded, when before the best were none too good for me. Finally, he and his family, by their coldness, neglect, and disagreeable hints, drove me to desperation, and I left them. I came hither, hoping that your woman’s heart would prompt you to receive a sick and failing old man with the kindness and sympathy which he so much needed and craved. But I met with even a worse reception; the very atmosphere of your house when I entered it told me at once that I was an unwelcome guest. You have ignored me when you could, and when you could not, you have taken pains to make me feel like an intruder and a dependent, although your husband evidently would be glad to be kind to me, if he could do so and keep the peace. This child alone,” the old man continued, looking tenderly up into Star’s sad face, “has given me love and sympathy. Her kindness and little attentions have been like a bright spot in the darkness and loneliness of my life since coming to you; while your treatment of her has been *culpable*——”

“Has she dared to complain of me to you?” cried Mrs. Richards, crimson with anger; for every word that he had uttered had been a reproach to her, and while she did not quite dare to vent her wrath upon him, she was glad of this allusion to Star, for upon her defenseless head she felt free to relieve herself.

“No; she has never complained—she has even tried to conceal your treatment of her—but I have eyes and can see for myself, and it has been patent to me how her young heart has been starved, how every bright and enjoyable thing has been crushed out of her life. I know how she has had to do battle for even her education, and that you would have made a drudge and a slave of her, had you dared and your husband allowed you to do it. It is disgraceful, Ellen, for you to treat your cousin’s child in such a manner, when you owe so much to her mother—”

“How do you know? Who has been telling you all this? I am out of all patience!” Mrs. Richards interrupted, passionately. “Everybody is continually throwing at me the fact that Anna Chudleigh once saved my life. Hundreds of people have saved the lives of others and considered it their duty to have done so. If I was drowning and Anna saw me, it was natural for her—it *belonged* to her to save me if she could, as I should have done, no doubt, had the circumstances been reversed.”

“True; but this view of the case does not lessen your obligation, nor license you to abuse the trust that has been committed to you,” Mr.

Rosevelt answered, sternly. "You bound yourself to this child's dying father to 'do the best you could for her,' to give her a home, and see that her education was properly attended to, and you owed it to him and to her to keep your promise."

"I owed her nothing," cried the enraged woman, losing all control of herself; "and you, Uncle Jacob, are overstepping all bounds by interfering with what is none of your business."

"The girl saved my life almost at the sacrifice of her own, and I shall *make* it my business to do what I can for her while I live," Mr. Roosevelt answered, with dignity.

"Well, you will find, I reckon, that you have not helped her ¹⁹⁴cause very much by taking up weapons against me for her," snapped his niece, vindictively, and with a glance of dislike at Star. "Saved your life!" she continued, sarcastically. "Well, perhaps, she did; but, in my opinion, that is all sentimental gush, for she is an artful jade, and has doubtless palavered and cooed over you until she has pulled the wool over your eyes in fine shape."

"What could have been her object, Ellen?" asked the old gentleman, dryly. "Certainly not the expectation of getting any portion of my fortune, since appearances must have indicated to her as well as to you that I had nothing to give her. If she had known me, and done all this *when I was considered rich*, there might possibly be some reason in your accusations."

This shaft told keenly, for his niece colored guiltily to the roots of her hair.

"Your irony is ill-timed, it appears to me, Uncle Jacob," she said, sullenly, "especially as you are indebted to me for the bare necessities of life, not to speak of its comforts."

"Indebted to you, am I, Ellen? I do not believe in recriminations, but allow me to ask, do you know the cost of those diamonds which you have on, and have you forgotten where you got them?"

Mrs. Richards' brilliant color forsook her in an instant, and she became as white as the mass of snowy lace which rose and fell with the angry pulsation of her heart.

Her passionate temper prompted her to tear those flashing stones from her person and cast them in the face of her accuser; but her pride and avarice were the strongest attributes of her nature, and knowing that she would not be likely to have them replaced, she refrained from so rash an act.

"I do not begrudge you your jewels, Ellen," Mr. Roosevelt continued, more gently, perceiving how keenly she felt his reproof, "but when you twit me of being indebted to you for the simple necessities of life, it is

rather more than I can tamely submit to. I was fond of making presents in the days that are gone, and I felt repaid for my diamonds by the joy that lighted up your face when I gave them to you; but I confess it is a little hard to be considered a burden by you now, while I am deeply grieved to have Star's young life made so unhappy."

"I tell you you do not know the girl; she is as artful as she can be, and I can prove it to you," Mrs. Richards exclaimed, glad to have the subject changed, for she was considerably conscience smitten over the diamonds.

"I do not think you can prove anything of the kind, Ellen," Mr. Roosevelt returned, quietly.

"Listen, then," she retorted, eagerly, "and I will tell you how to-night I have discovered her to be guilty of the most shameless conduct."

Star started and flushed at the accusation. She had not a suspicion that her secret had been discovered.

"It seems," continued Mrs. Richards, "that while going back and forth, to and from school this fall, she has been flirting in the most desperate manner with a young man—a perfect stranger to her, and one so far above her socially that it was rankest presumption in her to do as she has done. She has even entrapped him into—or rather, I should say, she has misconstrued his conversation with her to mean a declaration of love for her, and now that he has found her out and turns with disgust from her artful designing, she has shamelessly taxed him with unfaithfulness and treachery."

Star turned and regarded her accuser in perfect amazement. She could scarcely credit her sense of hearing.

How did Mrs. Richards know anything about her meetings with Lord Carrol, alias Archibald Sherbrooke, or of her interest in him? And who had represented it in this disgraceful light?

"This young man," the cunning woman went on, "is no other than Lord Carrol, who, for the month that we were at Long Branch, paid the most devoted attention to Josephine, and accepted our invitation here with the intention, as we supposed, of formally declaring himself to her and securing her father's consent to their marriage."

A convulsive tremor ran through every fiber of the young girl's being as she stood there and listened to this artful tale, and Mr. Roosevelt, who still held her hand, was sensible of it, and wondered what it could all mean.

He had not a suspicion that Lord Carrol and the handsome young artist whom he so admired were one and the same, but he knew that something must be very wrong to move Star so and make her look so deathly white.

"You look astonished," Mrs. Richards said, "and well you may, and your surprise will increase when I have told you all."

"I am sure," he answered, glancing from one to the other, "that there must be some mistake."

"There is no mistake," replied his niece, coldly, and fixing a merciless glance upon Star, "for Lord Carrol has just had an interview with my husband, during which he told him the whole story. He says his first meeting with Stella was caused by an accident, and that she appeared so bright and intelligent that whenever he met her afterward he spoke with her and treated her kindly. He did not even have the least idea where she lived until to-night, after dinner. He went out for a quiet smoke, when she presented herself before him, accused him of coming here as Josephine's lover, and denounced him as a traitor in the strongest terms and most unmaidenly manner, and telling him, greatly to his surprise, that she was an inmate of the house where he was a visitor. Of course, after such a denouement, he could do no other way than to seek Mr. Richards and explain everything, lest this rash girl should, out of a spirit of revenge and disappointment, destroy all his prospects with Josephine."

It was a cunningly distorted story, and Star, as she listened ¹⁹⁷to it, bowed her head and covered her face with her hands, while a low cry of despair broke from her lips.

She had not *dreamed* that the man whom she had learned to love, who, with his open, handsome face, his frank, manly ways, had won her deepest respect, her strongest affections, could be guilty of so cowardly an act as to betray her thus.

And yet he must have done so, else how could Mrs. Richards have known anything about the matter?

Yes, without doubt, he had feared that she would openly denounce him before the family where he had so unexpectedly found her, and so had given this version of the great wrong that he had done her in order to shield himself.

His own prospects of winning the rich heiress must not be interfered with, so he adopted this *coup d'état* of going to Mrs. Richards and, with apparent frankness, confessing that his trifling attention to a silly girl had resulted in leading her to believe she had won a wealthy and titled husband.

This was just what Mrs. Richards had wished to make Star believe, and she succeeded only too well, for the young girl was well-nigh crushed to the earth with a sense of shame, and humiliation, and wounded love.

And yet, even while she felt that Archibald Sherbrooke—she could not think of him in any other character—had been guilty of a most

cowardly and treacherous act, had steeped his soul in sin by winning her heart to break it, and thus ruining her whole life, *she loved him still*.

CHAPTER XX.

STAR'S DETERMINATION.

"Star, my dear child, what does this mean?" Mr. Roosevelt ejaculated, in a tone of wonder, as his niece concluded.

"It is unnecessary to ask her whether I have spoken the truth or not; her very looks and manner betray that she is guilty of what I have told you," Mrs. Richards said, scornfully. "I did not suppose, however, with her innocent face and apparently quiet, modest manner, that she could be quite so shameless. But it is always so; such cat-like natures always work in the dark."

Star's proud little head came up with a haughty air at this taunting speech, while her blue eyes grew dark and ominous.

"You are accusing me ignorantly and most unjustly," she said, in a hard tone, but with pained and quivering lips.

"How so? Do you presume to deny that you met Lord Carrol in the grounds to-night?" demanded Mrs. Richards, severely.

"No."

"You *did* meet him?"

"Yes."

"And denounced him as a traitor?"

"Yes. I believe him to be a traitor to truth and honor, and—a coward!"

They were hard, cruel words to be said of Archibald Sherbrooke, whom she had loved so dearly and believed to be so noble and true, and her heart thrilled with keenest pain as she uttered them, but she believed he had basely deceived her.

"Explain yourself," commanded Mrs. Richards, bridling.

"I shall explain nothing," Star answered, coldly, yet firmly. "What I said to Lord Carrol to-night was intended for him alone. If he has chosen to betray me, the responsibility rests upon himself, and you can go to him for explanations if you choose."

"Where did you meet him first—how did you make his acquaintance?" asked Mrs. Richards, longing to get Star's version of the story.

"I decline to answer any questions upon the subject," she returned, quietly.

"I command you to tell me."

"And I still decline," Star said, with an air that surprised both of her listeners.

She was as colorless now as a block of marble, but so beautiful in her proud sorrow, her agonized scorn, that they could but regard her with wonder.

"You have no right to refuse what I ask of you. I am your guardian, and I demand a truthful confession of this whole scandalous affair," Mrs. Richards reiterated, sharply.

"You have already had it, you say, from Lord Carrol's own lips; it will therefore be unnecessary for me to repeat or enlarge upon it," the young girl returned, with calm scorn, while her delicate nostrils dilated, and her sweet lips curled with supreme contempt.

"I cannot understand—there *must* be some mistake in all this," ejaculated Mr. Rosevelt, his face a perfect blank. "I thought, Saturday, Star, that you——"

A slight motion from her checked him in what he was going to say.

"No, there is no mistake; and this much I *will* explain to *you*. I did meet Lord Carrol to-night, as Mrs. Richards has told you," she said. "I did believe myself his betrothed wife, and him to be a man of honor, until he came here last night as Miss Richards' acknowledged suitor, and when I saw him this evening I did denounce him as a traitor. It seems that he has volunteered explanations to suit himself to Mr. and Mrs. Richards, and I decline to go further into particulars with them. I have no desire to blight Miss Josephine's prospects in life, and I wish her all joy with her high-born and honorable lover."

Pen cannot portray the scorn which pervaded those last words, ringing out so clearly, so scathingly that Mrs. Richards' cheeks burned and her ears tingled; for this was the man—if he really had been the traitor which she wished to make him appear—whom she was using all her arts to secure for Josephine's husband.

"I am amazed—I cannot understand!" Mr. Rosevelt repeated, with a troubled face.

He believed Star to be as pure-minded and as innocent of wrong as a little child.

He had been convinced from what had transpired on the previous Saturday that she loved Archibald Sherbrooke, and not knowing that he was also Lord Carrol, he, of course, was completely puzzled over the mystery.

"I do not see how you dare look any respectable person in the face, and confess what you just have, without seeking to clear yourself," retorted Mrs. Richards, sternly. "You are compromising your character in the most wretched manner. What can I believe of you—what can any one believe of you, if you own to having been upon such intimate terms with a

man of such standing as Lord Carrol, while he is here as the acknowledged suitor of my daughter?"

"The very worst that you can believe, madam," Star returned, calmly, and meeting the woman's eye fearlessly, but with a look which made her quail in spite of herself, "can only serve to compromise the man, whose favor and title you appear so anxious to secure, more than it possibly can me. Notwithstanding whatever claim I may have supposed myself to have heretofore possessed upon him, I now *most cheerfully* resign it in favor of Miss Richards."

Were ever words so cutting? Was there ever so barbed a sentence so calmly uttered before?

Mrs. Richards ground her teeth with rage over the feat that the man whom poor, despised Star Gladstone thus spurned, believing him to be the very soul of dishonor, she knew Josephine was using all her arts to win, while of course she could not undeceive her because it would spoil her plot.

"You are an insolent, overbearing girl," she said, in a low, hissing tone, "and I wonder how I have tolerated you in my house as long as I have. I wonder how you dare face me, and use such insulting language to me after your shameless conduct."

"I am neither insolent nor overbearing, Mrs. Richards. Ever since I came into your house I have striven to do as nearly right as I knew how, and to make as little trouble as possible. It is *you* who have been overbearing, who have wounded me by insulting the memory of my parents, and have tried to crush and trample upon me. In no way have I rebelled against your authority, except in the determination not to become a common servant and to pursue my education. This I did in justice to myself, and because I had promised my father I would do it. If you have 'tolerated me in your house,' believe me, there has been as much toleration exercised upon my part, for in no sense of the word has it been a *home* to me; instead, it has been merely a place of shelter, a spot to exist in until I could complete my education. I can bear it no longer. I shall consider your house no longer my home," Star concluded, with a decision which rather startled Mrs. Richards.

But she retorted, derisively:

"Your independent spirit ill becomes you. Where could you go? Who would take you, a penniless beggar, and give you the advantages which you have been enjoying during the ²⁰²past year? But it is folly for me to give heed to your idle words. I command you to return directly to your room, and hold no intercourse with any one, and to-morrow I will decide what course to pursue with reference to your future."

She had been planning to pack her off to Brooklyn with one of the servants until Lord Carrol's visit should be ended, and thus avoid all possibility of an interview and its attendant explanations.

But Star did not move. She remained standing quietly by Mr. Rosevelt's chair, as if she had not heard her command.

"Did you hear what I said?" she demanded, sharply.

"Yes, madam."

"Well, do you intend to obey me?"

"No, madam."

"What!"

"I refuse to recognize your authority over me from this moment. I refuse to obey any longer one who, from the first, has been governed only by feelings of personal spite in all her dealings with me," Star returned, firmly.

Mrs. Richards could scarcely credit her ears.

She had not imagined that the usually quiet girl possessed a tithe of this spirit.

"Well, Uncle Jacob, what do you think of your little pattern of excellence now?" demanded the astonished woman, turning with an injured air to her uncle, who was nearly as much amazed himself.

"I think the child has been severely tried," he returned, quietly, whereupon Mrs. Richards flew into another rage.

"I must say, Uncle Jacob, that I consider it very bad taste in you to take sides with her against me; and let me warn you, that you have both got yourselves into trouble by the doings of this night."

The arrogant dame did not wait for any reply, but turned abruptly and left the room, retiring, however, with a sense of defeat which it was not pleasant to contemplate.

The moment that the door closed after her, Star dropped again upon the floor by Mr. Rosevelt's side, heart-broken. He saw that she was utterly unnerved by what had just transpired, and for awhile he left her to herself. At length, when she became more calm, he said, sorrowfully, yet gently:

"My child, tell me what Ellen means. What cause has she for coming here to accuse you of such dreadful things? Who is this Lord Carrol, and what has he been to you?"

Star lifted her white, pained face to him.

"You do not believe what she has told you—you do not believe I would be guilty of anything so shameless as she would try to make me appear?" she questioned, brokenly.

"No, no; I think there is some terrible misunderstanding. I do not believe you would do anything which you knew to be wrong; and yet your own words have mystified me. I cannot comprehend them."

"I will tell you all about it. I would not explain anything to her—I could not after she had told me what *he* said," Star answered, but her face flushed with shame at the thought of confessing a tale of love and devotion on her part, of deception and treachery on the part of the man whom she had so trusted.

It seemed to her like a lack of dignity and of strength of character that she should have been so easily duped.

Then she told him all the story of her love for Archibald Sherbrooke, beginning with that day when they had exchanged souvenirs on the steamer, and which, she felt, had been the commencement of their love. She told him how he had prevented her from leaping on the cars when they were in motion, and how every day after that he had contrived to meet her, luring her heart from her day by day, until the previous Saturday he had declared his love for her, and won her promise to be his wife as soon as she should have graduated.

"Oh, Uncle Jacob," Star concluded, hiding her face on the arm of his chair again, "I believed him so true, so honorable, so *worthy* of my love, and now to find him so unprincipled and treacherous, it crushes me!"

Mr. Roosevelt looked very grave, almost stern.

"This is just as I supposed—as I was led to believe from your appearance last Saturday. I knew well enough, when we returned home from Coney Island, that you had promised to be Sherbrooke's wife. But I don't understand his treachery, as you call it, nor what connection all this has with the young lord who has come to ask for Josephine's hand," he said, coldly.

Star looked up again, at the unfamiliar tone.

"Oh!" she said, wearily; "I am so miserable that I have not made it plain to you—I have not told you; but Lord Carrol is only another name for the man who called himself Archibald Sherbrooke. Under the latter he cheated me into loving him, and he has ruined my life; under the former, which is his real name, I suppose, he has been trying to win the heiress."

Mr. Roosevelt was speechless from amazement at this revelation, and for a full minute could only look down into those piteous, uplifted eyes in mute dismay.

"Impossible!" he cried, at length. "I cannot believe it; I cannot think that young Sherbrooke would be guilty of anything so dastardly. There must be some mistake."

"There is *no* mistake," Star returned, with despair in her tones. "I was sitting at the window of my room when he arrived, and, of course, I

recognized him at once. His form, his bearing, his handsome face, the tones of his voice—everything was identical with the Archie Sherbrooke from whom we parted last Saturday evening. At first I was crushed by the blow; then I thought perhaps Lord Carrol had disappointed them, and Archie had come to me as he had promised to do Monday or Tuesday; but this hope fled when I heard them address him as Lord Carrol, and he replied at once to the name. It has broken my heart, Uncle Jacob,” Star wailed, pouring out all her sorrow to him. “I do not know how I ever lived last night through; I do not believe I was conscious half the time; while to-day I have been too weak, and ill, and wretched to care what became of me.”

“Poor child! poor child!” he murmured, softly.

“To-night,” she went on, “I felt as if I must get out into the air. I must see a friendly face and hear a kindly voice, so I came to you, although I did not mean to tell you anything of my trouble. I meant to bear it alone, and never let any one know how cruelly I had been deceived, or how readily I had given my foolish heart away.”

The old gentleman laid his hand on her shining head, smoothing her hair with a tender touch. He was nearly weeping himself to see this beautiful young girl so crushed.

“On my way down here,” she pursued, “I felt faint; my strength all left me, and I stopped and leaned against a tree to recover myself, and while I stood there *he* stole up behind me, laid his hand on my shoulder, and asked me in surprise how I came to be there. I gave him the street and number where we lived last Saturday, but I suppose when Mr. Richards and Josephine went to meet him at the station and brought him here, he did not once think it was the same place, for I have never told him their names. He believed me to be a poor girl, and never would have thought of finding me in a place like this; that was why he was so overcome with surprise when he saw me to-night. But when I charged him with personating two characters—having two names—he could not deny it; he owned that he was Lord Carrol, but tried to make me let him explain. I would not; there could be nothing to explain. He had deceived me, and it was enough; I could never trust him after that. I called him a traitor and a coward, and then I ran away and came to you, who are the only friend I have in this wide, weary world.”

“You did right, dear, to come to me; but were you not a trifle hasty and rash? I think you should have listened to young Sherbrooke’s—or whoever he may be—defense,” Mr. Roosevelt said, gently.

“What possible defense could he have had to offer?” Star cried, in a voice of scorn. “He has pretended to be Archibald Sherbrooke, a simple

artist, to me, while everybody else knows him as Lord Carrol, of Carrolton.”

“But he may have been traveling incognito under the former name,” suggested Mr. Rosevelt.

“Then why did he not keep it to the end? Why did he go to a fashionable watering-place and flourish as a titled Englishman, and devote himself to Josephine? Why did he *resume* the former name upon meeting me again, and lead me to love him, believing him to be a poor artist? No; there can be nothing said in defense of such double-dealing as this. He has cheated and fooled me. I have found him out, and compelled him to own it. It is enough to make me scorn him; but it has been a bitter lesson, and has taught me never to trust a man again,” Star concluded, with vehement bitterness.

“Never, Star? Surely that acrimonious resolve does not include me,” said Mr. Rosevelt, with gentle reproach.

“No; I know that you are kind and true, and you are the only one in the world who cares for me,” the suffering girl said, in husky tones.

“Indeed, my child, you have become very dear to me, and my life would be very forlorn without you.”

Star bent down and touched his hand with her lips. In her wretchedness it comforted her greatly to know that she had contributed to his happiness.

“But I cannot get over what you have told me. I never was so deceived in my life before; and if this young sprig of English nobility is the villain you represent him, he is not fit to live,” Mr. Rosevelt said, sternly, after a few moments of thoughtful silence.

Star shivered with pain. Much as she believed she scorned him, she could not endure that another should speak disparagingly of him.

“Never mind him, Uncle Jacob,” she said. “I have put him out of my life forever; and now I want to talk to you about something else. You say that I have made your life happier since you came here, and that you would be very lonely without me. I am going to tell you a little secret, and then I want you to promise to go away from here with me. I am not going to remain here another day,” she concluded decidedly.

“Is that your secret, Star?”

“Part of it,” she answered, with a sad smile. “I have a little money, as you know—a hundred pounds—which, at Mr. Richards’ suggestion, I put at interest last year. Now, I want to take this money and make a cozy little home for you and me somewhere, until I get through school—there will be enough to last till then, I think—and after that I shall be able to take care of us both in fine style, by teaching and giving music lessons.”

He smiled skeptically as she planned so hopefully what her poor hundred pounds would do, while a tear started to his eye at her thought for him.

She saw that he did not think she could do all that she told him, and flushed.

“You do not believe that I shall be able to take care of us both,” she said, eagerly, “but I know that I can, for I have not yet told you all. Listen.”

She bent nearer to him, and putting her lips close to his ear, ²⁰⁸told him something which even you and I must not know just yet, my patient reader.

He was nearly as much surprised as he had been to learn of Archibald Sherbrooke’s treachery.

“My dear,” he said, while his face lighted with pride and joy, “you shall have your way, and I will do just as you wish, and I——”

He checked himself suddenly, dropped his head in thought for a moment, then resumed:

“I am not happy here any more than yourself, and have been thinking for some time that I must go away; but I could not bear the thought of parting from you. Now we will go together, as you wish, unless——”

“Unless what, Uncle Jacob?” Star asked, anxiously.

“Unless you will let me see this young scamp of a lord, and take him to task for his faithlessness to you.”

“Never!” Star replied, proudly. “What good would it do to——”

“There *may* be some mistake; he might be able to explain everything satisfactorily,” interrupted Mr. Roosevelt.

Star’s beautiful lips curled.

“What would his explanations amount to? He is here as a suitor for Josephine’s hand—they all confess it; and did you ever listen to a more monstrous story than Mrs. Richards repeated here to-night? To think that he could say anything so basely false of me is almost enough to drive me wild,” Star cried, excitedly. “No, Uncle Jacob; although he has been guilty of the most cruel treachery, I will not contend with him. If he is such a craven that he would try to win a young girl’s heart for the amusement of breaking it, and then seek to blight her fair fame by charging her with what he has imputed to me to-night, he is too far beneath me to be worthy of anything save my supreme contempt, and I never wish to meet him again. I only want to get away from them *all*, and never see their faces more.”

Her voice broke with such a wail of despair in it that the old man could not find it in his heart to refuse her anything.

"Very well; we will go away to-morrow," he said, sorrowfully.

"Oh, thank you, Uncle Jacob!" the unhappy girl said, eagerly; "and will you go without letting them know? They would never consent, and I do not wish them even to know where I go."

"Yes; we will go without saying anything to any one. We can leave a note telling them why we go, and it shall be the object of the little time that remains to me to care for you and try to make your young life a little brighter than it has been," he returned, thoughtfully.

"How early can you be ready?" he asked, after a moment.

"By daylight; the earlier the better," she returned, earnestly. "Every moment here is full of pain for me."

"Very well; there is a six o'clock train—the workingmen's train—into New York; we will take it, and find a home for ourselves somewhere in the city. But how about your school, Star? They will seek for you there."

"I will go to Professor Roberts and tell him that circumstances compel me to leave, and ask him for a recommendation to some other institute. There are others in the city where they would never dream of looking for me, and where I can graduate next year, as I have planned to do."

"It shall be just as you wish, my dear; I feel that I am doing you no wrong in gratifying you. You shall be like a young daughter to me, and I—I promise I will be no burden to you, notwithstanding that I am old and feeble," Mr. Roosevelt answered, with a sad smile.

"A burden!" Star repeated, with quivering lips. "Oh, please do not imagine such a thing! It is *you* who are to take ²¹⁰care of me and shield me until I graduate, for without you to help me bear the responsibility, I should not dare to take such a step."

Mr. Roosevelt smiled again.

"You try to make the obligation appear all your own; but I share it, nevertheless; and I think you and I will be far happier away from the unpleasant influences which have surrounded us during the past year. I am quite anticipating the change, I assure you. Now you must go to rest. You look more like a ghost than a star just now; and my heart has been deeply pained to-night for the suffering that you have had to endure; but I believe it will yet be made up to you in some way," he concluded, with grave thoughtfulness.

He sat regarding her earnestly for a few moments. Then he said, while his eyes were fixed questioningly on her face:

"This is a different kind of a storm, child, from the one which you and I passed through at sea. Your faith was strong then; you were not afraid to die; how is it now? Do you believe your God rules this kind of a storm also?"

There was a skeptical smile on the old man's lips, and a bitterness in his tone as he asked this, which filled the young girl's heart with remorse.

She looked up at him with a startled glance, while her pained face almost instantly relaxed into an expression of trustfulness and peace.

"Uncle Jacob," she said, with a solemn sweetness which impressed him deeply, "you could not have said anything for which I should thank you more—you have recalled me to myself. I should not have forgotten for a moment that God rules everywhere and over everything. Yes, I *believe* He knows best, even though I cannot *understand* why I must suffer this bitter trial."

The old man sighed deeply, and his face was very grave.

"Good-night!" he said, abruptly, and rising, led her to the door.

When he reached it, he bent suddenly down and touched her forehead with his lips; and Star, with a low-spoken "good-night," went away with a sorely aching heart, indeed, but greatly comforted by his sympathy, while a spirit of submission had succeeded to the bitterness and rebellion of the previous hour.

Jacob Rosevelt locked the door after her, and went back to the table where he had been sitting when she came to him.

Opening the drawer, he took out a package of papers and letters, which he carefully looked over.

When he had read them all, he selected a portion, tore them into atoms, and throwing them into the grate where there was a slow fire, watched them until they had burned to ashes, with a white, stern face. Then he sat down again, and wrote far into the night.

The next morning when Mrs. Blunt went up to see how Star was feeling, and if she had any appetite for her breakfast, she found her room empty.

"Goodness gracious! the child has got up and gone to school, and without a mouthful to stay her stomach, or I'm much mistaken," she said, in a voice of dismay.

Then, as her eye fell upon the open drawers of the bureau and the empty closet, a sudden fear oppressed her.

A little note lying upon the bed now attracted her attention, and she eagerly pounced upon it.

It was directed to her, and with trembling fingers she opened it, and read:

"DEAR MRS. BLUNT:—Something has occurred which makes it impossible for me to remain here any longer, and I am going away to take care of myself. You have always been very kind to me, and I thank you very much for it, and shall never forget it. Sometime I hope to see you again, and I trust you will always think kindly of

"STELLA GLADSTONE."

The good woman sat down and wept bitter tears over this brief note, for she had learned to love the bright, kind-hearted girl who always had a cheery word for her. She knew the house would never seem the same again without her.

Then she went down to tell the news to her master. She met John Mellen in the hall, who had come with the intelligence that Mr. Roosevelt left the lodge early that morning, taking all that belonged to him—"which was not much, yer honor," he volunteered, and he handed Mr. Richards a note which the old gentleman had left for him.

CHAPTER XXI.

FRUITLESS EFFORTS.

Mr. Richards and his family were thrown into considerable confusion by the double surprise which this morning revealed to them.

He was really a kind man at heart, and had been very much troubled by the way that his wife had conducted herself toward her aged uncle, and also by her unfeeling usage of Star.

Mrs. Richards, however, found it difficult to conceal her satisfaction at the turn events had taken. She kept her own counsel regarding her knowledge of what had transpired during the interview between her husband and the young lord; neither did she consider it necessary to mention the stormy scene which had occurred at the lodge the previous evening, in which she was so prominent an actor.

“Josephine shall have everything her own way now,” she thought, exultantly; “at all events, *that girl* shall never triumph over my daughter by becoming Lady Carrol.”

Mr. Richards declared that he should go immediately in search of the fugitives. He could not endure the thought that the delicate young girl and feeble old man should go out into the world to earn their own living, for this he supposed they would be obliged to do, since what little money he knew Star to be possessed of could not support them both a great while.

But Mrs. Richards indignantly objected to this proceeding.

“Let them alone,” she said, angrily; “they will not thank you for your trouble, and doubtless would refuse to return if you should succeed in finding them. I am sure they have shown precious little gratitude for what we have already done for them. Uncle Jacob says in his note that it has been very unpleasant for him here, and if such is the case, let him go where he will fare better if he can find such a place. As for that proud-spirited, independent girl, I never want to see her again; I am glad to be rid of her.”

Mr. Richards did not reply to this tirade, but he felt very sorrowful, for every day only seemed to reveal some new trait of selfishness and heartlessness in his wife, which served to detract from his respect for her.

Nothing of all this, however, was mentioned before their guests, and when after breakfast Lord Carrol sought his host in the library to make further arrangements for an interview with Star, he was astonished and dismayed by the intelligence which he received regarding her secret departure with Mr. Roosevelt.

“Have you any idea where they can have gone?” he asked, with a very pale, anxious face.

“Not the slightest,” Mr. Richards answered, “and I am deeply concerned about the affair. You will believe me, I am sure, when I tell you that I admire Miss Gladstone exceedingly, although I am obliged to confess with shame that her sojourn with us has not been made as pleasant as it might have been.”

Mr. Richards made this confession with a lowering brow and in a stern tone.

“I judged that she was not happy here from something that she dropped last night,” Lord Carrol said, gravely. “And,” he added, with evident embarrassment, “it is a delicate topic to touch upon, but I believe plain dealing is best—she also stated that it is generally believed in your household that I am here as a suitor for Miss Richards’ hand. I trust, however, that there has been no such misunderstanding as this. I enjoyed a very pleasant month at Long Branch with both your wife and daughter. Perhaps I sought their society more than might have been deemed proper unless I had serious intentions; but this was owing to the fact that I discovered Mrs. Richards to be of English birth, and knowing something of her friends abroad, it seemed to become a bond between us, out of which a friendship naturally sprung. Mrs. Richards very kindly invited me to make one of a party here, and I accepted her invitation—I give you my word of honor upon it—with *only* thoughts of friendship and the pleasure of meeting congenial company, and with the intention, if she ever came abroad, of returning her hospitality in the same spirit. I hope—I trust, my dear sir, that my coming here thus has not been misconstrued, or placed Miss Richards in an awkward position.”

The young man’s face shone with a look of real concern as he concluded, and Mr. Richards was convinced that, notwithstanding his wife had asserted that he would propose to Josephine, he had never entertained any serious intentions regarding her.

“It is all right, my young friend,” he responded, heartily, and feeling great respect for him for his straightforwardness. “I am satisfied that you have been perfectly honorable, although I must confess that I was greatly astonished last night to learn that Star was the object of your affection. I regret sincerely the misunderstanding that has arisen between you, but we will do what we can to find the missing girl, and I trust that then it will not take long to effect a reconciliation.”

“Thank you,” the young lord said, but he looked very grave, for he did not feel as if it would be a very easy matter to find Star. He knew that underneath her usual gentleness and sweetness there lay a strength of purpose and determination which would lead her to do thoroughly

whatever she undertook, and if she had gone away to hide from him it would take both patience and sagacity to find her.

However, he resolved to devote all his time before the day set for his return should arrive in searching for her; and acting at once upon this decision, he sought Mrs. Richards and Josephine, telling them that, much as he regretted doing so, he should be obliged to cut his visit short, as business of importance called him unexpectedly away.

Josephine was bitterly disappointed and chagrined, for she was as yet in total ignorance as to the cause of his departure, and Mrs. Richards for the moment was rendered speechless from indignation. She had not once thought that he would go away before the expiration of his week.

"We shall see you again, I trust, before you leave America," Josephine said, with her sweetest smile, as he took her hand at parting.

"Perhaps so; I cannot tell," he answered, absently.

"We return to Brooklyn next week," Mrs. Richards now managed to say. "If you are in New York, you surely will find time to run over and call upon us now and then."

"Thank you. I may be able to do so," he replied, courteously; and then, with a somewhat formal bow, he went away to seek for his lost love.

"What under the sun is the matter with Lord Carrol this morning, mamma? He does not appear like himself at all; and what has possessed him to go away so soon?" Josephine cried, nearly ready to weep as the door closed upon the man she loved, and she was left alone with her mother.

Mrs. Richards then related what she had overheard the previous evening, and told her also of her subsequent interview with Star and Mr. Roosevelt, and the news that had come to them that morning of their flight.

Josephine listened to her in dumb amazement, hardly able to comprehend the romantic story.

"That girl has done nothing but set everybody by the ears ever since she entered this house," she burst forth, at length, quivering in every nerve with anger. "Lord Carrol in love with *her*! I cannot comprehend it, and I think it is scandalous for him to confess it, after the marked attention that he paid me at Long Branch."

"I think so, too," Mrs. Richards echoed, but rather faintly, for she knew how Josephine had almost been thrown at him, so to speak.

"Well, I am glad she is gone," the excited girl continued. "I hope now that we shall be able to take some comfort. She bewitched papa with her pretty face, her music, and pretended love of study. She was an artful thing, making herself so conspicuous at school that even the newspapers took it up, and was so puffed up on account of it that her airs were

insufferable. It is a mercy that Uncle Jacob lost his fortune before he came to us, or she would have been likely to wheedle him out of it."

"She has been as sly as a fox," commented Mrs. Richards, wrathfully, her ire against poor, unoffending Star waxing hotter and hotter, for she was as bitterly disappointed to lose his lordship as a son-in-law as Josephine was to lose him as a husband.

"I never heard anything like it. To think of his being engaged to her, and we never suspecting such a thing! I'll bet," the refined young lady continued, as a bright idea struck her, "that she went away to meet him last Saturday, and that was why she was rigged out so. That must be the secret of her insolence to me. She knew she was soon to become Lady Carrol, and she was trying how it would seem to lord it over me."

"You forget, Josephine," interposed her mother, "that she did not know anything about his title, and so you are all wrong in your surmises."

"True," she replied, somewhat crestfallen; "but when do you suppose he engaged himself to her?"

"I am sure I do not know—very recently, he said. I tried to make her tell me about it last night, but I couldn't get a word out of her. One would have thought, by the way that she faced me, that she was already my lady somebody. But I reckon I fixed it so that she will not be at present. I made her think that his lordship had told the story in a way to make her appear as ridiculous as possible, and she has gone away, believing him to be as faithless as it is in the power of man to be;" and the hardhearted woman threw herself back in her chair with a sigh of satisfaction at the thought.

"It is a shame, anyhow. Everything has gone wrong, and I—I really was fond of him," Josephine confessed, with a passion of tears.

Mrs. Richards' face darkened. She never could tolerate anything which interfered with the desires and whims of her only child.

"Well, we will not give up hope, even yet," she said, trying to speak comfortingly. "We shall go back to Brooklyn next week, and we will try to see him as often as we can. We will visit his studio, and look at his pictures and those of his friends, and if he is unsuccessful in his search for that girl, he may turn to you again for comfort."

"I cannot get over it that *she*, with her great eyes and yellow hair, should have attracted him and won him, when we have strained every nerve and spent hundreds for him," Josephine said, angrily.

At this moment a servant entered the room and handed her a note.

She opened it eagerly and read it.

Her face flushed a deep crimson, and, with a passionate gesture, she instantly tore it in two.

"What is it?" questioned her mother.

"It is too dreadful!" the spoilt beauty cried, stamping her foot; "and I believe that girl will be the death of me yet."

"Tell me what it is," persisted Mrs. Richards, growing pale.

"It is a note from Lord Carrol himself," Josephine answered, her cheeks still hot from mortification and anger. "When we were at Long Branch, he noticed this cameo ring that I wear—I happened to put it on the last night that we were there, unfortunately—and said that it was very much like one which belonged to a friend of his. He appeared rather strangely when he said it, and told me that his friend's name was Archibald Sherbrooke. Of course I can understand now why he would not say that it had belonged to him. I told him that it was given to me by a relative, and he did not appear like himself after that."

"But how came you by it—who gave it to you?" interrupted her mother, who had never noticed the ring until now, for Josephine had so many trinkets that she could not keep track of them all.

The girl flushed again, guiltily.

"To tell the truth, it belonged to Stella," she confessed, reluctantly, "and it was such an exquisite little thing that I took a notion to have it. I offered to buy it of her, but she wouldn't hear a word of it, saying she 'prized it too highly as the gift of a friend.' But I was bound to have it, and went to her room one day and took it, and had it made into a ring, for it was in the shape of a pin. Of course I intended to return ²¹⁹it sometime, but I meant her to understand that a girl in her dependent position had no business to refuse so simple a request. The initials A. S., with two strawberry leaves, their stems crossed, are engraved on it, and I knew, when he described it to me, that it was 'his friend'—or rather himself, as it appears now—who had given it to her. I heartily wish now that I had let it alone. But just listen to this."

Miss Richards took the pieces of the note, which she had held crumpled in her hand, and putting them together, read the following:

"Oct. 10th, 188—.

"MISS RICHARDS:—Doubtless before you receive this you will have learned that Archibald Sherbrooke—whom I represented to you as my friend, for reasons which you cannot now fail to understand—and Lord Carrol are one and the same person. Under the former name, which was the only one which belonged to me at that time, I became acquainted with Miss Gladstone on shipboard, and was so pleased with her that, at parting, I exchanged souvenirs with her, giving her a little cameo which I prized very highly. It is the same one which you have had made into a ring. When I met Miss Gladstone a short time since she remarked that she had 'lost' my gift; last night she told me *how* she had 'lost' it, and I would respectfully ask you to send it to the inclosed address, that I may return it to the owner, should I be so happy as to find her.

"Very respectfully,

"ARCHIBALD SHERBROOKE, Bart., and
Lord CARROL, of Carrolton."

"Why on earth can't you let other folks' things alone, Josephine?" cried Mrs. Richards, when her daughter had finished reading this formal note, and feeling almost faint from mortification upon learning of this disgraceful episode in her life. "I'm sure," she added, reproachfully, "you have trinkets enough without taking the only thing a poor girl had."

"Isn't your commiseration somewhat ill-timed, mamma, for the 'poor girl,' now that she is not here to reap the benefit of it?" sneered the dutiful young lady. "I don't care; it is an elegant trifle, anyhow, and I've half a mind to keep it, in spite of his lordship's demand," she added, defiantly, as she held up her hand, on which the ring gleamed, and regarded it covetously.

But she did return it, nevertheless; she did not quite dare to retain it, particularly as she could not relinquish all hope of winning the young lord even yet.

Mr. Richards, accompanied by Lord Carrol, proceeded with all possible dispatch to New York, and thence to Brooklyn, where they went directly to the seminary which Star attended, and inquired for her.

It was only half-past ten when they arrived there, but early as it was, Professor Roberts told them that she had come at the usual hour and severed her connection with the school, and very much to his regret, he added, as he considered her one of the most promising members of the senior class.

Both gentlemen looked blank at this information; they did not suppose Star would be so energetic to cover all traces of her flight.

She had asked, the professor said, for a recommendation, that she might more easily enter some other, as she hoped to be able to complete her course, although she did not tell him where she was going.

"And I did," he continued; "I gave her the very best one that could be put into words, for she deserved it. But what is this you tell me—that she has left her home without the knowledge of her friends?" and he appeared deeply troubled.

"Yes; but it is only on account of a slight misunderstanding, and one which would have been very easily explained if she had not been quite so hasty; and I hope we shall be able to find her and make it right very soon."

"I trust so; I am very sorry to part with her," said the professor, gravely, while he measured the young lord with his keen eyes, mistrusting that he was somehow concerned in the mystery. "I had anticipated taking her through the course and presenting her with her diploma. I tell you, sir, Miss Gladstone bids fair to become a most brilliant woman. Why, the essay which she read at our last commencement would have been a credit to the most profound literary talent in the country."

Lord Carrol's eyes glowed at these praises of his darling; but Mr. Richards winced under them, for his conscience was smiting him keenly for ever having allowed Star to occupy so questionable a position in his family.

"You will oblige me if you will account for her absence in some casual way, if you are questioned about it," he said. "I should be sorry to have anything unpleasant said of her."

"Certainly; you may rely upon my being very discreet, for *her* sake," Professor Roberts returned, somewhat stiffly.

He bowed his visitors out, and then returned to his duties; but all day long, and for many days, he missed the bright, earnest face of his "most promising scholar," her brilliant recitations, and the respectful attention which she had always given him.

As for Mr. Richards and Lord Carrol, their way seemed suddenly hedged up; they did not know which way to turn next. They knew it would be very difficult to find any one in the great city of New York, and it was possible that the fugitives had left the metropolis, although Mr. Richards, knowing how ambitious Star was to complete her education, was inclined to think she would remain there until she had accomplished this end.

Still Lord Carrol was determined not to relinquish his search for her, and he neglected painting and everything else, riding from one end of the city to another day after day, unweariedly visiting schools on week days, and haunting churches on Sunday, until the day of his departure arrived; but all his efforts were unavailing and fruitless.

An advertisement was inserted in all the daily papers.

"Star, let me justify myself!" That was all; and Star, in her hiding-place, read it many times with curling lips and scornful eyes.

"There can be no justification," she said; "one man bearing two names and deceiving two girls, can never be justified."

But her heart ached none the less, for, with shame she owned it, she loved him still. The days seemed endless, her duties arduous and monotonous; she grew thin, her step lost its elasticity, and she was as miserable as even Josephine, in her most malicious mood, could have wished.

November came, and with it the day of Archibald Sherbrooke's sailing for England.

No one ever returned to his native land with a sadder heart and deeper regret than the young Lord of Carrolton, and he would not have gone even then, but that some urgent business connected with his uncle's estate, and his duties as his heir, imperatively demanded it. He would have much preferred to remain and search for the fair girl whom he loved so devotedly.

But he resolved to return to America at the earliest possible date and resume his efforts to find her.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GOAL REACHED.

The winter passed, the summer came again, and on a sunny day in June the great chapel of the Normal College of New York city was packed with human beings to its utmost capacity.

Upon the broad platform were seated the professors, the tutors, and guests, while the body of the vast hall was filled with its fifteen hundred students, attentive and vigilant like so many soldiers at their posts.

These were girls all the way from fourteen to twenty years of age; girls of every shade of complexion and degree of beauty, or the reverse; bright maidens with latent mischief twinkling in their eyes, of every variety of color and shade; lasses of mercurial temperament, such as keep a household in a state of excitement and tumult, brimming with animal spirits and kittenish pranks. Others there were, however, with quiet serenity and dignity of manner, having sweet, clear-cut faces, and gentle ways shining through their countenances; and those, too—let us whisper it—with a suspicion of the vixen and virago; prudes and tomboys, angels and shrews—all mixed indiscriminately in that immense place, gathered for the final act of the school year—the graduating exercises, the distributing of the diplomas, and the departure of the senior class from the halls of learning out into the great world, there to take up their duties as teachers.

Among the large number of this class who occupy, on this occasion, the front seats in the chapel, there is one quiet figure, having a pale, delicate face, large, deep blue eyes, and a fair, gleaming brow, shaded by hair of brightest gold, which more than one of the numerous visitors have singled out from her sister graduates, on account of her peculiar loveliness and an indefinite something which seems to appeal to them from the depths of her lovely but rather sorrowful eyes.

Slight of form, unassuming in manner, but with a dainty, star-like beauty that was almost magnetic in its influence, she sat quietly in her seat until one of the professors announced the “Address in French,” as per programme, when she arose, and Miss Star Gladstone at once stepped upon the platform, saluting first the officers, teachers, and guests, then her fellow-students, with a charming little bow and a graceful inclination of her body.

In clear, bell-like tones she began her address, without the slightest appearance of self-consciousness or embarrassment, rolling out sentence after sentence in the smoothest and purest of French, until those who

were well versed in the language wondered at such proficiency in one so young, while those who could not understand it were spell-bound by her exquisite voice and graceful gestures.

Star had been well taught in French before coming to this country, until it had become almost like her native tongue; therefore, after a year of arduous study under the best of teachers at the Normal College, it is not strange that she should have been chosen, on account of her purity of accent, to deliver the French oration.

“Who is she?” questioned one of the visitors of a teacher.

“Miss Gladstone,” she answered, pointing to the name on the programme.

“How lovely she is, in that simple lace bunting, trimmed with its knots of blue ribbon, and those blush-roses in her belt!”

“So I think,” the teacher replied, with an affectionate glance at Star. “She has only been with us a year, however. She was hardly up to the mark when she entered the class, although she came highly recommended by Professor Roberts, of Brooklyn. Our standard, you know, is very high. But she was anxious to enter the senior class, and assured us that she would not drag, and said she was particularly anxious to graduate this year.”

“And she has done well, I am sure,” the visitor said, bending another admiring glance upon the fair graduate.

“She has been one of the most brilliant scholars of the class. Her recitations have been wonderful. I do not think she has made a single failure during the entire year. If she had been with us throughout the course, she must have taken the valedictory; but she has acquitted herself grandly in the French essay, which she composed and translated herself.”

“She has, indeed. I never heard purer French spoken, even in Paris. Does she live in the city?”

“I believe so, although I do not know where. She comes and goes very quietly, and her clothing indicates that her friends, whoever they may be, are in limited circumstances. She appears to have no intimates, and yet she is a favorite with all. There must be some sorrowful story connected with her life, I think, for there is a haunting sadness in her eyes whenever they meet yours, except when she smiles or becomes animated in conversation; then she is charming.”

“I should like to know her,” said the first speaker, musingly; but President Hunter here arose to distribute the diplomas, and she gave her attention to his remarks, although her glance frequently sought the lovely face which had so attracted her attention.

The subject of the above conversation, although unconscious of it, was none the less worthy of it.

After leaving Jacob Roosevelt on the night of her exciting interview with Mrs. Richards, she sped swiftly back to her room, where she gathered together a few articles of clothing and packed them into a small valise; her school-books also, with her portfolio and the small box which had so aroused Josephine's curiosity that day when she went to steal Star's lovely cameo.

These preparations ended, she retired to rest.

She awoke long before daylight, and dressing herself in a dark street dress, she sat down by the window to wait for the dawn.

She penned that little note to Mrs. Blunt the last thing before leaving the house. The woman had been so kind to her that she could not find it in her heart to go away without a single word of farewell; to the others she gave not a thought.

As soon as it was light enough, she stole softly down stairs and out at the front door, as it was nearer, and, besides, some of the servants might be up if she went out the back way, and turned her back forever upon the house in which she had only been "tolerated."

When she reached the lodge, she found Mr. Roosevelt waiting for her on the vine-covered porch.

He smiled a silent good-morning, motioning her not to speak, with a gesture which told her that John Mellen's wife was not far off; and together they went out from the grounds by a side gate and proceeded toward the station.

They were in time for the early morning train, and reached New York long before the household which they had left behind were aware of their flight.

"We will go to some quiet street and board for a few days," Mr. Roosevelt said, as they sat down in the waiting-room of the station to consult upon what was best to be done. "You must not lose a day of school if you can help it. I know just the place for us, I think, where there is a good, motherly soul of a landlady. Perhaps she will know of some rooms which we can obtain at a reasonable price until you graduate, and then, perhaps, you may not care to remain in New York."

Star assented to this plan, and they repaired to the boarding-place which Mr. Roosevelt had mentioned, and found the "good, motherly soul" very willing to take them in.

After partaking of a simple but wholesome breakfast, Star went at once to Brooklyn, and had an interview with Professor Roberts, as we already know.

She told him just as little as was possible, but said that circumstances obliged her to make a change, although she had not yet decided where she should pursue her education.

She was surprised at the recommendation which he gave her, for it was indeed the very best that he could put into words, and she felt very sad when he shook her cordially by the hand and expressed his regret at being obliged to part with her.

On her way back to New York she decided, if she could pass the examination, she would enter the Normal College, believing that among the multitude who attended there she would escape observation more easily than in a smaller school.

She went immediately to the corner of Sixty-ninth street and Fourth avenue, had an interview with the president, who consented to give her a private examination; but the curriculum was a little different from that of Professor Roberts' seminary, and she was not quite up to the standard in some of its branches, and being unwilling to go back into another grade, she was admitted to the senior class, "upon conditions."

She was not long in showing him, however, that such a stipulation was wholly unnecessary.

She gave up all thoughts of music for the present, and bent all her energies to her studies, and soon not one of the forty who were to graduate gave promise of a more brilliant ending to her career as a scholar than she who had been admitted "upon conditions."

Meantime Mr. Roosevelt had found three furnished rooms in a cheap but respectable locality, where they took up their abode, the woman, who owned and lived in the house, agreeing to furnish their meals and act as sort of housekeeper general for a reasonable amount.

Mr. Roosevelt would not hear a word to any other arrangement, although Star declared she could do a portion of the work herself.

"No; you shall do nothing of the kind. You will have all you can attend to to keep up with your classes," he said.

"But it will cost so much, Uncle Jacob," Star answered, ruefully, for she found that her poor hundred pounds was melting rapidly away—at least, it would do so if they paid for having all their work done. Mr. Roosevelt smiled.

"My dear," he said, though somewhat sadly, she thought, "you did not suppose I was going to allow you to assume the burden of my whole support, did you? I never should have consented to come away with you in that case. I am not quite penniless, and what I can afford to pay toward our support will at least relieve you of all necessity of laboring as a household drudge."

They were as cozy as they could well be with their simple yet home-like little parlor, and two bedrooms leading out of it, and with their meals served to them there, it was very much like a home of their own.

"It is just as nice as can be, and I am happy as a queen," Star declared, over and over again; but he often looked troubled when he saw how thin her cheeks were growing, noticed her oft-repeated but quickly suppressed sighs, and that "haunting sadness" in her eyes.

They lived in a very quiet way, never going out except for a quiet walk or to the little church near by on Sunday, and never met or heard anything of Mr. Richards or his family.

Star had read that advertisement relating to herself, and it had caused her bitter pain, for it brought all her suffering so freshly to her mind; but she had not the least faith that Lord Carrol could say anything which could justify himself in her mind. She felt that he only desired to cheat her still further with honeyed words, and so paid no heed to it.

Mr. Rosevelt also saw it, and wondered if she had read it; but she gave no sign, and he never mentioned that name to her; it was a topic which they avoided by tacit consent.

Once during the year, when speaking of what she should do as soon as she graduated, she said that she had decided to apply for a situation as teacher in the city; she had concluded to remain in America instead of returning to England, as she had at first planned to do.

He did not ask her why; he understood what she meant—she wished the sea to roll between her and the man who had so ruined her life; and perhaps, he thought, with a very tender feeling in his heart, she wanted to stay with him.

Thus the year sped round, and brought with its revolution another commencement day for Star.

"Uncle Jacob, you are coming to-day to see me graduate, are you not?" she asked that morning, as she poured his coffee for him, and looking up into his face with more eagerness than he had seen her manifest since her trouble.

"Of course I shall; I would not miss it for anything. Then you have really passed your final examination, and are going to receive your diploma?" he said, bending a look of pride on her.

"Indeed I have. You did not suppose I should *fail*, did you, if I really set about it?" she asked, with a little accent of scorn on the disagreeable word.

"I did not know, dear. I was confident that you would do your best; but you told me you were only received upon conditions, and I sometimes feared the work might be too hard for you."

"I should not have begged to be allowed to enter the senior class if I had not felt confident that I could do justice to myself," Star answered, quietly, as she buttered her roll. "I considered the matter thoroughly before I applied. I had already read almost as far in Latin as the whole

course demanded, and my French, thanks to papa's care, was nearly equal in pronunciation to monsieur's own. The review of some of the studies of the junior class, with which I was not familiar, and the training for teaching, were all that was very hard for me."

She spoke lightly, but he well knew that she had labored unremittingly upon those reviews, and that she had spent many extra hours with one of the "critic" teachers, who had kindly ²³⁰offered to assist her, in order that she might be up to the mark in the practice of "model school-teaching."

Thus she had persevered and overcome every obstacle until the goal was reached, and to-day she would receive her diploma.

And so Uncle Jacob had gone to the great chapel with other interested friends, and watched the dear girl with glistening eyes while she so creditably performed the part assigned to her, feeling that she was an honor to her class, and in his eyes, at least, the gem of them all.

That evening there was to be a grand reunion in a commodious hall near by, where graduates of previous years were to meet the senior class of to-day, to offer their congratulations on their success and their good wishes for their future career.

Star had no fine clothes in which to make a show of herself, and was obliged to go clad in the same simple lace bunting that she had worn during the day; but she gave herself an air of elegance by substituting some bright flowers for the knots of blue ribbon, and excitement lending a rich color to her cheeks and light to her eyes, no one thought of criticising her garments.

Jacob Rosevelt, too, dressed in a full new suit of handsome broadcloth, with a satin neck-tie and light kid gloves, did not look much like the bent, shabby old man who had arrived, dusty and travel-stained, at Mr. Richards' mansion a little less than a year ago.

"Where *did* you get it, Uncle Jacob?" Star exclaimed, as he came forth from his chamber and asked her if she thought he'd do.

He smiled mysteriously, then said:

"I told you that I was not quite a beggar, dear, when I left my niece Ellen's inhospitable roof, and so I've been saving up for this occasion, in order that I might do honor to you."

"You are just as fine as you can be," Star said, delightedly, as she went round and round him to examine the material and ²³¹fashion of his new garments, "and I do not believe any one will be more proud of her escort to-night than I shall be; and yet," she thought, "Uncle Jacob must have been *very saving* indeed to have been able to buy such an expensive suit."

His eyes glowed with pleasure at her words; but when they entered the brilliantly lighted hall, and he saw the elegant toilets of some of the young ladies, he could not help regarding her with something of regret, although very many admiring eyes were fixed upon the arm of the stately, gray-haired gentleman, as they went forward to pay their respects to President Hunter and his corps of assistants.

"Miss Gladstone, I have a friend who desires to be presented to you," said one of Star's teachers, seeking her out later in the evening.

She led her toward a lady who was standing a little apart from them, and who appeared to be three or four years Star's senior, and introduced her as Miss Meredith.

It was the visitor who had inquired so particularly regarding our heroine during the graduating exercises.

She was drawn toward her at once, and they were soon chatting as sociably as if they had been acquaintances of long standing.

While thus engaged, a gentleman approached them, greeting both young ladies in the most cordial manner.

"I was hoping that you two would meet to-night," he said, bestowing a smiling face upon them both. "Miss Meredith is a graduate of two years ago, Miss Gladstone, and I am sure you will find her a congenial spirit."

"Thank you, Mr. Appleton," Miss Meredith responded, brightly; "but you should have put it the other way, for I have been very impatient to meet Miss Gladstone. I singled her out from her class to-day, and felt sure that we should be *en rapport*, as the spiritualists say, if we could only become acquainted."

"Well, I think it does not matter much which way you put it, now that you know each other," the gentleman returned, smiling; then turning to Star, he added:

"So, my young friend, you have really 'run the race, and finished the course;' and now do you remember the promise which you made me several months ago?"

Star flushed vividly at this question.

"Did I make you a promise, Mr. Appleton?" she asked, evasively, adding, with an arch glance: "I thought it was *you* who made *me* a promise."

He laughed and shook his finger at her.

"You said that on your eighteenth birthday I might reveal a secret."

"And you *promised* you would *not* reveal it until I was eighteen," she retorted, brightly, although the color deepened in her cheeks as she continued: "I am not eighteen yet, Mr. Appleton."

"No, but you will be to-morrow. You see I have not forgotten the date. Now, let me take time by the forelock a little, and whisper to Miss Meredith *who* the author of 'Chatsworth's Pride' is. She has been on the *qui vive* to know ever since the book was published," Mr. Appleton said, bending a roguish look upon Star, who now stood with drooping eyes and appearing somewhat confused.

"Oh, do you know? Is it some friend of yours, Miss Gladstone?" Miss Meredith said, eagerly, to her. "I think it is so tantalizing not to know the name of the author of a book," she went on, "particularly if it is one you happen to like very much; and here this provoking man who published this one only put a great star where he should have printed the author's name. Do tell me, please, Miss Gladstone; I am, indeed, all curiosity."

Then remarking Star's embarrassment, she looked from her to Mr. Appleton, questioningly.

"Is it?" she went on, excitedly, as he smiled and glanced at the fair girl. "Can it be possible that it is Miss Gladstone herself? I believe it is," she said, with sparkling eyes, as she seized Star's hands; "and oh! what can I say to you? It is a charming little book, and I have enjoyed it more than I can tell you. There! let me shake the hand that wrote it, and if I had a laurel wreath here I would put it on this golden head and make you wear it the remainder of the evening."

And she squeezed and shook that small, white, gloved hand until Star laughingly begged for mercy.

"See what you have subjected me to," she said, with a half-reproachful look at Mr. Appleton.

"You might just as well make the best of it, my modest little friend," that gentleman replied, laughing. "I have kept silence for a year under the most trying circumstances, for I have been unmercifully besieged to tell who the author of 'Chatsworth's Pride' is, and I could not stand the fire any longer. My time is too valuable to be spent in any such way; and I came here to-night not only to congratulate you upon your graduation, but also to introduce my fair young author to my friends. Yes, Miss Meredith, Miss Stella Gladstone is the author of 'Chatsworth's Pride.'"

"Miss *Stella* Gladstone?" Miss Meredith repeated.

"Yes; and, you perceive, I was not far from giving the name after all. I was obliged to 'make her mark,' since I could not write her name," returned Mr. Appleton, jocosely.

"Ah, yes, I see. Stella means a star; and certainly," Miss Meredith said, turning to her new acquaintance again, "you bid fair to shine like one."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN INTERESTING STORY.

Jacob Roosevelt stood not far away during the conversation between Mr. Appleton, Miss Meredith, and Star, and a proud light beamed in his eyes as he listened to their praises of the girl whom he had learned to love so well.

But it was nothing new to him that Star was an authoress; he had known it for nearly a year.

That was the secret that she had whispered in his ear when, after Mrs. Richards' terrible accusations, they had been left alone and she had begged him to go away with her to make a little home of their own, telling him that what she should receive for her book, together with her hundred pounds, would be ample for their support until she could graduate and obtain a position as a teacher.

She had written it that first winter; for after Mr. Richards had vetoed his wife's plan of making her a servant, and insisted that she should be sent to school, there had been many lonely hours which would have been very irksome to her if she had not spent them in this way.

Her studies that winter were not hard; she had no associates to help her pass the time pleasantly, and so her heart had overflowed in this way, and she had penned the charming little romance which had at once set everybody to wondering who the author might be.

This was the package with which she had stolen forth so early one morning, taking it with fear and trembling, yet with something of hope, to the great publisher.

When she was shown into his office and made known her errand there, he looked at her in wonder, astonished at the temerity of one so young and simple as she appeared to be in bringing her manuscript to him and asking him to publish it.

But the deferential yet winning way in which she made her appeal, and the influence of her loveliness, won a reluctant promise on his part "to look it over."

He did so, opening the neatly folded package with an amused smile, and expecting after a casual glance at its contents to be nauseated with some sickly sentimental love-story.

But he became strangely interested in it at once, and read on and on, now with smiles, then melting into tears, until it was finished, and pronounced a "little gem;" while he was convinced that a sensitive,

refined, and talented girl had thrown her heart, and perhaps something of her own life, into those touching pages.

He sent a note to her at once, asking her to come and see him again, and when she obeyed the summons, he questioned her about herself, how she had come to write her book, and what incidents had suggested it.

She told him that the scene of her little romance was laid in Derbyshire, England, and that many of the incidents were connected with her childhood; and the tears sprang to his eyes as she related to him something of the misfortune which overtook her in the death of her mother, the subsequent loss of her father, and how she was obliged to come, a stranger, to this country; of the tempestuous voyage across the ocean, with its thrilling events, and that as soon as she could complete her education she intended to become a teacher.

He was greatly interested in her, and told her that he should publish her book, and if the first edition sold well, she should have a thousand dollars, and a certain per cent. on all other editions.

It seemed like a fortune to Star, who had not thought of ²³⁶receiving anything like such a sum, and she went back to her duties with a joyful heart to await the issue of her book.

Mr. Appleton was so pleased with her that he saw her often after that, and having received a card from her for the commencement exercises of Professor Roberts' seminary, he decided he would go; and the little package which he had given her in the presence of Mr. Richards was a copy of her book, which had just come to him from the hands of the binders; and it was he, too, who, admiring her fine essay, begged it of her and sent it, with those few flattering remarks which had so annoyed Josephine, to the next morning's papers.

Star had put no name to her work, telling Mr. Appleton that she did not care to be known as its author; and he, too, thought it best, since it was her first experience in literary matters; so, when she had told him that her name was Stella, he had put a simple Star in place of it.

But the book had sold beyond even the publisher's most sanguine expectations, and when it became evident very soon that a second edition must be published, he asked her to allow him to put her name to it, as everybody was besieging him to know who wrote it.

But she was firm, and insisted upon having his promise that he would not betray her until after her graduation and her eighteenth birthday.

When he wrote her a check for the promised thousand dollars, she had taken it directly to Mr. Rosevelt.

"Now we need have no fears for the future," she said, with a proud smile, as she put it into his hand. "You must have every comfort, Uncle

Jacob—fruits, and wines, and everything nice, to make you strong and well. There will be more coming, you know, as the other editions are sold, and when I begin to teach I shall have my salary besides.”

The old gentleman was deeply touched by her thoughtfulness for him; he could not speak for the choking sensation in his throat, but drew her gently to him and kissed her fair forehead, feeling that she was the only gleam of sunshine which his life contained.

Now, as he stood by and heard her praises sung, and knew that she would have the fame that belonged to her, he exulted over it; and when, a little later, she came to him and slipped an envelope into his hand, saying: “It is another check, Uncle Jacob, which Mr. Appleton has just given to me. Please take care of it, for you are my banker, you know; and,” a tear starting to her glorious eyes, “I believe I never expected to be so happy again as I am to-night,” he thought his own cup of joy was nearly as full as hers.

She was, indeed, a star after that all through the evening, and held a right royal little court, receiving and making the acquaintance of the admirers of “Chatsworth’s Pride,” until she became so weary that she longed to get home to quiet and rest.

As soon as she could find an opportunity to do so, she drew Mr. Roosevelt to President Hunter and made her adieu.

Just as she was turning away, some one touched her on the arm.

“Miss Gladstone, allow me to present my brother, Mr. Ralph Meredith.”

It was Miss Meredith—Grace Meredith she had told Star she was called—who spoke, and looking up, she found a pair of brilliant dark eyes looking into hers, a handsome face smiling down upon her, while a musical voice acknowledged the introduction with evident pleasure.

“I expect you are *the ‘star’* whom I have been wishing to know for a long time,” he said, significantly, as he took the hand she held out to him, and thought he had never seen a lovelier face in his life.

Star thanked him with a charming smile for his interest in her, and introduced him to Mr. Roosevelt; then turned to Miss ²³⁸Meredith to escape from the praises which she saw he was longing to pour into her ears.

The young man was somewhat chagrined at being thus summarily disposed of, but he was too polite and good-natured to betray it, and did his best to make himself agreeable to the old gentleman and win his goodwill.

Gradually, however, he managed to attract the attention of the young ladies, and then the conversation became general, and they chatted pleasantly for several minutes, until, at a look from Star, Mr. Roosevelt

declared they must go, "for he was not used to late hours, and Star, he knew, was nearly worn out with the excitement of the day."

Mr. Meredith regretted that they must leave, but begged, with his most captivating smile:

"May I have the pleasure, Miss Gladstone, of coming with my sister to call upon you?"

"Certainly," Star answered, graciously, for she was pleased with both brother and sister. "I shall be very happy to have you do so. We live—"

"Wait a minute, Star, and I will write our address down for them. It is so difficult to remember numbers, I am afraid they will forget;" and taking a leaf from a small notebook that was in his pocket, Mr. Roosevelt wrote both street and number and passed it to young Meredith.

Star thought he looked surprised as he read it. Was it because of the humble locality? she wondered.

They then exchanged good-nights and parted. When they reached the street, Mr. Roosevelt said:

"I am going to call a carriage, dear, for I know you are just ready to drop from weariness;" and Star did not object, for she was indeed exceedingly tired.

When they reached home she insisted upon making a cup of tea for Uncle Jacob, saying that he was not accustomed to such late hours and dissipation; "and besides," she added, with a smile, "she felt like having a drop herself."

But the old gentleman was so absent-minded over his tea, that she felt almost guilty for having kept him up so late, and feared he would be ill to-morrow.

She put away the tea things when they were through, and was about to light her lamp to retire, when he stopped her, saying:

"Star, my dear, come and sit down upon this ottoman by me; I have something I wish to say to you."

She obeyed, wondering what had happened to make him look and speak so gravely.

"Are you *really happy* to-night, my child?" he asked, tenderly.

A startled look came into the girl's eyes at this question, and her heart leaped with sudden pain as her thoughts went bounding over the sea to one to whom she had given the first grand passion of her soul.

"Uncle Jacob," she answered, gravely, though he could see the quiver about her lips, which she tried in vain to repress, "I am happier than I ever expected to be again. It is useless to regret or mourn over the past. I have tried to be sensible over it, but sometimes, I am afraid, I have not succeeded very well," she said, with a smile that was a trifle bitter.

"If," she added, more brightly, a moment after, "that *one episode* could have been left out of my life, I believe there would be nothing to mar it now."

"I would that it could have been so," Mr. Roosevelt sighed. "But I want you to listen to me for a little while. I know it is late, and you ought to go to rest, but I particularly wish to tell you a short story of my life to-night. It is a page which has been turned from sight for many years, and no one has ever read it save myself. You are about entering upon a new era in *your* life. I have learned to love you very tenderly, my child, and I want to bind you yet closer to me."

"Why, Uncle Jacob, you do not think I have any idea of going away from you, I hope," Star said, in surprise.

"No, for I have grown to feel that you belong to me. I want you to think so, too, and I am going to tell you why. Fate—or Providence, I suppose, *you* would say—has thrown us together in a strange way, considering all things. Do you remember telling me, on board that ill-fated steamer, that your name was Star Roosevelt Gladstone, and how surprised you were when you learned that my last name was the same as your middle one?"

"Yes, sir; and I still think it a strange coincidence," Star answered.

"Perhaps you will be more surprised when I tell you that you were named *for* me."

Star looked up astonished at him.

"How can that be possible?" she asked.

"In this way," Mr. Roosevelt returned, a shade of pain crossing his face. "When your grandmother, Stella Winthrop—that was her name before her marriage, was it not?"

"Yes; and that is all I know about her, Uncle Jacob," Star answered, with a troubled look. "Papa never said much about his friends. Indeed, he did not appear to have any relatives, and never would allow me to question him about them. Once I said something to him about my name, and he remarked: 'Your grandmother once told me that if ever I had a little girl of my own, she would like me to call her Stella Roosevelt, and that is how you came by it.'

"Where is my grandmother, papa?" I asked.

"She is dead," he said, and immediately left the room, looking so pale and miserable that I never dared ask him anything more about her."

"It seems strange that *I* should be the one to tell you about her," Mr. Roosevelt said, thoughtfully, "and I am puzzled to ²⁴¹know why he should have been so reticent. Did your father ever have any trouble with his family?"

“Not that I know of; and yet,” Star said, flushing, “there *was* some trouble about his marriage with mamma, though that seems to have been on the part of her family rather than his. Mrs. Richards once twitted me about mamma—who was a sort of cousin to her—having married beneath her.”

“I do not see how that could have been, for the Mr. Gladstone who married Stella Winthrop was a very wealthy and important man in the county of Devonshire—at least, I was told so—and if your father was his son, he might have married almost any one he chose, and have conferred an honor in so doing. But this is not telling you my story.

“When Stella Winthrop was of your age, and I three or four years older, we met at a large reception in London. That meeting was fatal to us both, for we loved from that hour as true lovers ever love. For six months the world was like Paradise to us, and then I was called away to the far East on business for the firm with which I was connected. I am an American, but most of my life has been spent abroad.

“If I was successful in my business undertaking, it was agreed that I might claim my bride when I returned at the end of two years. The vessel on which I sailed was wrecked—I have had more than one such experience you see, my dear—and it was reported that every passenger on board was lost, while only a very few of the crew lived to tell the story of the disaster. But I was fortunate enough to secure a large cask, and with this I managed to keep afloat for two days, when I was picked up by a sailing-vessel bound for the Philippine Islands.

“My first work upon reaching land was to write to Stella and tell her of my safety; but my letter never reached her. I also notified the firm that I was all right, and should proceed directly about the business upon which I had been sent, but they knew nothing of my connection with Miss Winthrop, and accordingly did not communicate with her. I kept writing at intervals to my beloved, but never heard anything in return. At last, in despair, I wrote to the firm, telling them of my engagement, and asking them to notify her of my safety and give her my address in case she should have happened to lose the one I had given her. In reply, they said that the Winthrop family had gone abroad for an indefinite stay. Of course this was a great trial to me, and I was exceedingly impatient; but my two years were over at last, and I turned my face toward England once more. I had succeeded in my business beyond my most sanguine expectations, and I looked forward to the immediate fulfillment of my hopes when I should return.

“My first duty on reaching London was to acquaint my employers with the result of my transactions, and my next thought was for Stella—my bright Star. Never for an instant had I doubted her fidelity; I believed

she would be as true to me as I was to her, and my heart beat high with hope as I bounded up the familiar steps leading to her home and rang the bell. I asked for Miss Winthrop of the maid who answered my summons, and she stared at me as if she thought me demented.

“‘Miss Winthrop?’ she repeated. ‘There is no Miss Winthrop, sir; she was married and went away nearly a year ago.’

“‘Married!’ The word was like a thunderbolt to me, and in an instant all the light went out of my life—my heart was paralyzed. I staggered from the place, and hid myself from every one for a week. Then I gained something of calmness and courage to go out among my friends and try to learn how it happened that Stella Winthrop had married. As I told you before, it was reported that every passenger on the vessel in which I sailed was lost. Those of the crew who were saved affirmed that such was the case, and my betrothed had believed that I was dead.

“She grieved herself almost to death over my loss, and her parents, fearing they would lose her also, took her abroad and traveled for many months. It was during this absence that the firm received my letter relating to her, but were unable to learn her address, as she was moving from point to point, and so could not communicate with her.

“Six months after learning my fate, she met Mr. Gladstone in Paris. He fell in love with her, and offered himself to her. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word, was kind and sympathetic, and she liked him as a friend. She told him the story of her grief, and that she could never marry. He did not sneer at her ‘girlish folly,’ as many would have done, but comforted her, speaking so kindly and regretfully of me that he won even a warmer place in her heart. He was patient with her, and when at length a second time he asked her to marry him, she told him that she could never love him as she had loved me, but if he could be content to take her with what respect she could give him, and the duty she would strive to yield him, she would become his wife. He told her he would be content, and they were married—a year and three months after I sailed on the fatal voyage.

“They traveled several months longer, and when at length on their return to London, only three or four months before I arrived there, she learned that I had not perished, but was soon expected back, the shock nearly killed her a second time. Her husband was all kindness and attention, took her immediately away again, and showered everything that wealth could buy upon her; and after a time children were born to her, and those new ties aroused her to her sense of duty as a mother. I never saw her, for I had not courage to look upon her dear face, knowing that she was the wife of another; for I never ceased to love her, with an affection that amounted to idolatry. They told me that she had two

children—two noble boys, one of them resembling her, the other his father—that she was a tender, faithful mother, and very much beloved by every one who knew her.

“That was forty years ago, Star, and for thirty I have not heard one word concerning either her or her family; but I have lived my life out alone; I could never take any one to my broken heart; and perhaps, if your belief is true, my child, and I can ever be made clearly to see it, I may find my lost love somewhere in the great future; but I do not need to tell you that my past has been one long season of longing and regret, of sadness and loneliness.”

His voice broke, his lips quivered painfully, and it seemed for a moment as if he must break down utterly.

Star softly slipped one of her small hands into his, and the sympathetic little act comforted him greatly. His closed over it in a strong, yet tender clasp.

“You pity the old man’s weakness, don’t you, dear?” he said, with a sad smile; “but it is not easy to open the secret chambers of one’s heart when they have been closed for forty years.

“When I first saw you,” he continued, after a moment, “there was something in your face that touched me—a light in your eye, a sheen on your hair, that somehow smote a familiar chord in my heart. I watched you, although you were not aware of it, and felt sorry for you during that dreadful storm at sea; for your white face and great, startled eyes appealed to me as nothing had done for many a year. But I would not yield to it. I had shut my heart to every one; I had vowed that I would never love any one again, and I mistrusted every one who sought to win me to a better mood. But when that lurch of the boat threw you directly into my arms, and you clung to me in such a helpless way, I could not resist you, and some good angel prompted me to gather you close to me and make you rest upon me. When you told me your name, the shock nearly unmanned me—‘Star Rosevelt Gladstone,’ you said—and I knew as well as if I had been told, that you were in some way connected with *my* lost Star, and I watched over you all the night through, feeling almost as if some sweet spirit had been sent from her to me, to give me a little ray of comfort at the end of my long, loveless life.

“When, the next morning, you told me that your grandmother had named you, and that her name was Stella Winthrop, I had not a doubt; I felt convinced that you must be the child of one of her sons. You thought it merely a strange coincidence, but I knew better, and all my boasted coldness and hardness melted away, and I began to love you then and there. When that dreadful explosion occurred, and you urged me to save myself, as ‘doubtless I had dear friends’ and ‘you had no one to love you’—

when you refused to leave me, and took up your station by my side to die with me, as we both believed, I felt as if something of the spirit of my lost love was shining through you. Then your tenderness toward, and your care of me—your heroic self-denial and efforts to save my life while we were helplessly afloat on the mighty ocean—your sweet voice singing those hymns of faith and cheer, completed the conquest of my hardened nature. I can never make you understand how disappointed I was, on arriving in New York, to find you gone. I meant to tell you something of myself, and learn your own destination, so that I might see you once in awhile.

“But I never forgot you; and when I visited my nephew in the West, and met only coldness and neglect, simply because of my misfortunes, I could not help contrasting it with your kind attention to an entire stranger.

“I left those heartless people and came to my niece, and met with the same reception, when before they had always fawned at my feet, flattered and humored me as if I had been something more than common clay.

“I felt forsaken; no one loved me, no one wanted me; I ²⁴⁶was a burden and incumbrance. But just then you appeared to me, and your heavenly kindness made my poor old heart glow again. Still, I was so embittered by finding my only brother’s children so heartless and selfish, that I was not quite sure of you. It made me mistrust everybody, and I feared you might grow to be like them. But for that I should not have remained a day beneath Ellen Richards’ roof; I should have gone my own way again as soon as I became rested and recruited. Do you remember how you came to me the next morning after my arrival, and cheered me with your merry chat and your thoughtful little gift? I said, ‘Surely this child must be artless—she must be true;’ but I resolved to stay awhile and test and study you, and you have been a blessing to me from the first. My dear, I began to love you for my lost Star’s sake; now I love you for your own. There, you have all my story now, and you must go to rest, for tomorrow will be your birthday, and we must celebrate a little in honor of it,” Mr. Roosevelt concluded, patting her softly on the shoulder.

Star lifted a flushed and tearful face to his.

“Uncle Jacob!” she cried, tenderly; “it seems as if you are *really* that to me now; and I am so glad that you have told me how you have loved my grandmother, and I shall try more than ever after this to make your life as bright as possible. I do not see how any one could ever have treated you unkindly or disrespectfully.”

Uncle Jacob smiled fondly at her.

"I know there is one at least who treats me kindly for my own sake, and who would share all her laurels with me. My child, I was very proud of you to-night."

"And I of you," Star added, quickly. "I never saw you look so nice—so like an *aristocratic* old gentleman."

He laughed, such a bright, hearty laugh that she wondered to see him so pleased over her little compliment.

"Now, good-night," he said, rising; "I want you to be as fresh as possible to-morrow."

He led her to the door of her room, and then, with a softly breathed "God bless you!" sought his own.

God bless you! Those words rang in Star's ears. Was he beginning to believe in her God, after all? She hoped so—she *prayed* so.

But she did not go directly to bed, as he bade her; his story had strangely stirred her heart, and she could not rest until she had decided some questions that were troubling her.

She opened a drawer of her dressing-case, and taking that worn portfolio to which we have before referred from it, unlocked it, and drew forth a sealed package.

"Papa told me to wait until I was eighteen before I opened and read it," she said, musingly; "but a few hours can make no difference, and I feel now as if I must know if he was *her* son, and why he never would tell me anything about his family."

With reverent fingers she broke the seals, a sob rising to her lips as she thought whose hand had fastened them there, and how tenderly it used to stroke her hair and call her "My bright little Star."

The package contained several papers, and it took her more than an hour to examine them; but when she had read them through, there was a look of wonder in her large blue eyes and an almost blank expression on her white face.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT NEXT?

Star Gladstone's eighteenth birthday dawned as bright and charming as it was possible for a morning to be. At eight o'clock she and Mr. Roosevelt sat down to their breakfast, and a merry meal they made of it, for both appeared in the best of spirits, in spite of the sad and exciting events of the previous evening upon which they had conversed.

About nine a handsome carriage drove to their humble abode, and the driver rang and asked for the "gentleman and lady who were going for a drive in the park."

Star looked surprised as she peered from the window and saw a pair of sleek, coal-black horses, with their silver-mounted harnesses, and the shining, velvet-lined coach.

"Uncle Jacob, did you order that carriage to come for us?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear," he said, with an expression of satisfaction, as he, too, looked out and saw the team. "It is not often that I ride, as you well know, but when I do, I like to go in style. One ride a year in 'ship-shape' would satisfy me, where a half-dozen in some broken-down hack wouldn't give me a bit of pleasure. Now, put on your hat, and tuck some roses in your belt, as you did yesterday, for this is to be a gala day, and I want you as fine as possible."

Star laughed and tripped away to obey, coming back after a few moments with such a bright and happy face that Mr. Roosevelt thought she had never looked so lovely before.

All the morning they drove, four long, delightful hours—hours that were always a pleasant memory afterward to both of them; and many who saw the nicely dressed old gentleman, with the fair, bright, golden-haired girl beside him in their elegant carriage, thought what a green old age must be his, with so much to make life pleasant.

About one o'clock they turned toward the city once more, and Star said, with a sigh of pleasure:

"Uncle Jacob, I believe there never was such a perfect day before, and I'm sure I never enjoyed a birthday more. You were very kind to plan this pleasure for me."

The old gentleman's eyes twinkled. Her delight, her bright, animated face were such a joy to him.

"If I had only been rich as I used to be, I should so like to have made you some nice present to-day—a watch, for instance," he said.

"You gave me something last night which I value far better—your confidence," Star said, softly. "I should like a watch," she added, after a moment, "and I mean to have one some time. When I have earned it, you shall go and select it for me, if you will. But what have you done with your own, Uncle Jacob? You had a very nice one when I first met you, and I remember seeing it on you after the wreck."

"Watches and I have not had much in common during the last two years," he answered, evasively; and she thought perhaps he had been obliged to sell it since he became poor.

All at once the carriage stopped in a quiet street up town, which, Star noticed, was lined on both sides with elegant brown-stone dwellings.

"What are we stopping here for?" she asked.

"A good woman whom I used to know lives here, and I thought, as we were in gala attire to-day, I would like to stop and make a call, and—introduce my Star to her," Mr. Roosevelt said, preparing to alight.

He helped Star out, and together they went up the marble steps.

Mr. Roosevelt rang the bell, and then took a card from one of his pockets, and, with an arch smile, said:

"It almost seems as if we were really fine people, doesn't it, dressed in our best, riding about in our carriage, and sending our cards in at a brown-stone house?"

"Yes, indeed; and it would be such fun if we could keep it up for awhile," Star said, gayly. "But," with a regretful little sigh, "like Cinderella of old, I suppose we shall soon be aroused to the fact that our coach and horses are gone, and find the stern realities of life staring us in the face again."

Mr. Roosevelt laughed.

"Would you like to be a fine lady, Star?" he asked.

"I don't know," she answered, thoughtfully. "I believe I should like to *try* it for a little while, just to see how it would seem."

There was not time for any more conversation, for the door was at this moment opened by a neat-looking servant.

She appeared to recognize Mr. Roosevelt, for she greeted him with a smile, and then her eyes wandered inquiringly to Star's lovely face.

She invited them to enter, and conducted them into a handsome drawing-room on the right of the hall, when, taking Mr. Roosevelt's card, she retired, leaving them alone.

"What a lovely room!" Star breathed, as her eyes roved about the apartment, over the beautiful pictures, the bright, rich carpet, the carved ebony furniture, upholstered in warm-hued satins, choice bric-a-brac, and all those fine things which add so much to a place like that. "Your friend must be a 'fine lady,' with plenty of money," she added.

Mr. Roosevelt merely nodded his head in reply, while he watched the door with evident impatience.

It was soon slowly opened, and a familiar face appeared in ²⁵the aperture—a face all beaming with smiles of pleasure and good nature.

“Mrs. Blunt!” cried Star, in astonishment; and springing toward the woman, she grasped both her hands warmly.

“Yes, Miss Star,” the woman returned, half laughing, half crying; “*I am* Mrs. Blunt, or I’m much mistaken, as I sometimes imagine I may be when I get to thinking about everything, and how strange it has all turned out. How well you’re looking, miss, and it does my old eyes a wonderful sight of good to see your bright face again.”

Star thought her language somewhat ambiguous; but everything seemed rather ambiguous just then.

“Do you live here?” she questioned.

“Yes, I live here; or——”

“Have you been in New York long? and why haven’t we seen you before? and what are you laughing at?”

The young girl’s astonishment seemed to increase, for the woman appeared strangely, and was shaking with suppressed laughter.

“I’m laughing because I’m so glad to see you. I’ve been in New York a month, and haven’t been to see you because the last time I saw Mr. Roosevelt he told me he was going to bring you to see me soon; so I’ve been content to wait,” Mrs. Blunt explained.

Star wondered if the present occupant of that elegant place allowed her housekeeper to entertain her friends in the drawing-room; if so, it was surely a new departure, and not exactly in accordance with Mrs. Richards’ ideas of the treatment of servants.

“Take off your hat, dearie,” Mrs. Blunt continued, “for I have a nice little lunch waiting for you.”

“A lunch?” repeated Star, in amazement, and with a puzzled look at Mr. Roosevelt, who was regarding her attentively.

“Yes; I had orders to get up the nicest lunch I could for my old friends, and I’m much mistaken if I haven’t done it,” the woman replied, with an air of satisfaction.

“You must have a very kind mistress,” the fair girl said, as she drew off her gloves and removed her hat.

“I have, the best in the world,” the queer creature returned, with a chuckle. “But come, I’ll show you the way to the dining-room.”

Mr. Roosevelt arose, and drawing Star’s hand within his arm, followed her to a room on the opposite side of, and farther down the hall.

As she opened the door, Star saw a charming dining-room, furnished in costly woods of different colors, its floor inlaid in an intricate and lovely pattern.

In the center stood a table, covered with a heavy white damask cloth, and spread with a glittering array of silver and cut glass, and where also a most tempting repast was awaiting them.

Mr. Roosevelt led his wondering companion to one side of the table, and, looking down upon her with the fondest look in the world, said, in a voice which was not quite steady:

“Star, my dear, my pure-hearted, faithful little friend, I here formally install you as *mistress of your own table and of your own home*. This is to be your seat henceforth—mine opposite; and, my darling—for such you have become to me—I trust you will be as happy as an old man’s love, gratitude, and wealth can make you.”

Star had grown suddenly pale while he spoke, and regarded him with a puzzled expression.

“I do not understand,” she said, clasping both her small hands around his arm and leaning heavily upon him.

“I will tell you,” he answered, tenderly. “When you met me on board that ill-fated steamer I was a very rich man. When it was wrecked, and I had discovered that you were the grandchild of the only woman whom I ever loved, and also what a ²⁵³kind, tender little heart you had, I formed a sudden resolution. I had always, as I told you last night, been flattered and cajoled by my relatives, who knew I was rich, and I resolved that I would test their sincerity. If they stood it, I would divide my fortune into three portions, one of which should be yours, the others theirs. If they did not, it should *all* be yours, if *you* proved the true, noble character which I believed you to be. That was one reason why I was so keenly disappointed to find you gone when I went to bid you farewell on the steamer; but I meant to search for you all the same. And so I pretended to be the poor old man whom you remember coming to Ellen Richards’ that night. You know the result. No one was true to me or kind to me but my Star. Yet I had become so suspicious of everybody, that I resolved to study even you thoroughly before I committed myself; and so I concluded to wait until you had completed your education before telling you of my actual position in life. It was very hard, though, when you were in such trouble that last night in Yonkers, when you told me your secret about writing your book, and offered to share your little all with me ‘because I was not happy there,’ and I was sorely tempted to tell you all, surround you at once with everything to make life beautiful, and place you in a position far above the daughter of the woman who had treated you so shamefully. On second thought, however, I deemed it best to wait until your education should be

completed, for then you would be more free to enjoy the good things of life."

"Then you have not been poor at all?" faltered Star, as he paused for a moment.

"No; I have had abundance. I own this house, and have for years. I own a block on Broadway, and—well, little one, there is enough to enable you and me to do pretty much as we like for the remainder of our lives," he answered, with a fond smile.

"Then I cannot take care of you. I thought I was going ²⁵⁴to make *you* so comfortable, and that, with teaching and the income from my book, we could have such nice times together," Star said, wistfully, and hardly able, even yet, to comprehend the change in her circumstances.

Mr. Rosevelt patted her softly on the shoulder, though a tear sprang to his eyes at her words.

"No, dear," he returned; "you cannot take care of me in that way. I am going to take care of you; but you can still make me so comfortable. We can still have nice times together, and I shall be very proud to introduce the young authoress of 'Chatsworth's Pride' as my *ward and future heiress*."

"Bless you, child!" he continued, his fine face glowing with happiness; "don't you suppose it is going to be a comfort to me to try to make you happy and give you everything you wish, after all your constancy, patience, and self-denial for me? Don't you suppose I enjoyed fitting up this house for you after my tenant gave it up, some six months ago? And don't you believe, too, that Mrs. Blunt was glad to come and be housekeeper for us?" and he turned kindly to the woman, who had been standing in the background during these explanations.

"You may be sure I'm much mistaken if I wasn't," she returned, eagerly, her eyes gleaming with delight, and her gratitude for the position shining through her homely but good-natured face.

"And I am very glad, too. It is the nicest arrangement in the world," Star said, heartily; "and just to think," glancing around the elegant apartment with a sigh of supreme content, "that I am to be surrounded with all this beauty! It is like a fairy tale, or a dream of enchantment."

"I *told* you I had the best mistress in the world," Mrs. Blunt said, chuckling; "but we didn't imagine anything like this, Miss Star, that Sunday when we were stoning raisins and stemming currants."

"No, indeed," Star answered, laughing. "But you don't mean to tell me that you consider *me* your mistress."

"I never'd ask for a better," the woman said, earnestly; then, turning to Mr. Rosevelt, she resumed:

"And now, sir, won't you please eat your lunch and tell the rest of the story afterward, for everything will be spoiled waiting."

"Yes, indeed—yes, indeed; to be sure we will. There, Miss Gladstone, sit down by your tea-urn, and make me the best cup of tea that was ever brewed, while I serve you to some of that tempting salad."

He forced her gently into her chair, and going around to the opposite side of the table, began to wait upon her in the most chivalrous manner.

"Ah! this is what I call comfort, dear," he said, in a satisfied tone, after Mrs. Blunt had withdrawn to see that the strawberries and cream were properly served; "this is what I have been dreaming about for a whole year; and now, after we have appeased our hunger—and, by the way, I believe I am half-famished, or else Mrs. Blunt's efforts in the culinary line are wonderfully successful—we will go over the house, and see if everything suits you. What are you looking at the clock for? Your school days are over, Miss Gladstone."

Star laughed somewhat nervously, and flushed.

"I was looking to see how many hours would elapse before the clock would strike twelve, and wondering if it would dissolve the spell that is on me."

"No fear of that, Starling. The hours, days, and months, and years, I trust, will roll by and bring you only joy and pleasure, with no rude awaking. You are to have everything that you want—and mind, by that I do not mean just what you *need*, and have you stop to count the cost on those pretty fingers of yours, as I have seen you do so often. You shall have music and painting to your heart's content. You shall have a pair of ponies and a phaeton of the most approved style; and, in fact, little girl, it will take you a good while to find the bottom of my purse. But how do you like your tea-service? I chose it myself, and had it marked expressly for you."

"It is perfectly lovely," Star replied, as her eyes roved admiringly over the beautiful and costly equipage, upon each piece of which there gleamed a star in delicate frost-work.

"I'm glad you like it. And now, my dear, suppose you open that small box by your plate."

Star gave him a wondering look—indeed, all her looks had been wondering ones during the last hour—and opened a little white box, which had until now lain unnoticed beside her plate.

She found inside a morocco case, and springing back the lid of this, an elegant little watch and chatelaine were exposed to her delighted eyes.

"Uncle Jacob! I cannot tell whether I am awake or dreaming," she cried, a rosy flush spreading over her whole face. "It is the dearest little watch in the world. And is this star on the case made of diamonds?"

"Yes; diamonds are none too good for *my* star."

"And you had this waiting for me, even when we were talking about my having a watch while we were driving?"

"Yes; I was only sounding you a little to see if you would like a watch best or something else. Now, if you are through, put it in your belt and come with me," he said, rising from the table.

She followed his example, and together they passed from the beautiful dining-room out into the hall, and thence to another room on the front of the house, which was fitted up as half library, half music-room.

In it there stood a new Steinway piano, with a richly carved case and pearl keys. The handsome bookcases, each surmounted by books of popular authors, were filled with choice volumes, while the other furniture, upholstered in olive and crimson, was most luxurious.

From here they went up stairs, and over the drawing-room found a most charming suite of rooms, furnished throughout in blue and white.

The dainty bed, in its pretty chamber, was draped with antique lace, over blue silken curtains, with a spread to match; draperies of the same kind hung at the windows, and all the toilet articles were of costly china, most beautifully decorated. The boudoir, or sitting-room, was fitted up with every convenience, and all those pretty trifles which young girls so much admire, carpeted with wreaths of forget-me-nots and golden-hearted daisies. The furniture was covered with richest brocade of the same design, while the full-length mirror, in its massive blue and gold frame, revealed, as Star went up to it, a beautiful maiden, with shining hair, gleaming eyes, smiling coral lips, and glowing cheeks—a fitting tenant for this lovely bower.

"Allow me to introduce you to the heiress of Jacob Rosevelt, the millionaire," said the old gentleman, taking her hand and bowing before the fair apparition in the glass. "How do you like her?"

"I can't tell just yet, she is such a new creature; but," with a roguish look up into his eyes, "I'm very fond of the millionaire."

"Thank you, Miss Gladstone; your favor is most highly appreciated," he returned, laughing. "But come, you must see my bachelor den;" and he led her across the hall to a room over the dining-room, and here she found every comfort, if something less of elegance.

Opposite her sitting-room there was a great chamber, furnished in crimson and gold, while up another flight were the servants' rooms. Mrs.

Blunt's room was on the lower floor, where she could conveniently overlook her assistants at all hours.

"It is like a story," Star said, when they had been the rounds and came back to the library; "and now what are we to do next, Uncle Jacob?"

Her plans had all been for work, and now that she found there was to be no more toil or care for her—nothing but pleasure and what her own sweet will dictated, she hardly knew where or how to take up the thread of her life again; therefore the query:

"What are we to do next, Uncle Jacob?"

CHAPTER XXV. STAR'S DELIGHT.

"What are we going to do next?" Mr. Rosevelt repeated. "Why, enjoy it all, to be sure. I have waited a good while for this good time, and now I am going to make the most of it. First, Miss Gladstone must attend to that very important item, Miss Gladstone's wardrobe, which must be suitable for her position; and Star, I shall be quite particular upon that point; let it be both rich and elegant. Then, as the hot weather comes on, there will be a trip to Newport and the White Mountains, or some other place equally pleasant, and after that—well, something else, I suppose," he concluded, with a smile.

Star heaved a sigh of delight.

It was nice, after all, to be surrounded by all this beauty and elegance, and to have everything heart could wish.

She had applied for a position as a teacher, and had hoped ²⁵⁹also to do something toward writing another book during the coming year; but now, of course, she could not teach, and there was no actual need that she should use her pen, although the enticing finger of fame seemed beckoning to her, urging her to try for even greater literary honors.

Her wardrobe!

Of what should it consist, to be suitable for her position as the heiress of a millionaire?

It was rather a difficult question to decide, when, during the last two years, her means had been too limited to allow of her gratifying her naturally exquisite taste, and all she had possessed in the way of dresses had been scarce half a dozen, and those of the commonest material.

The next fortnight was a busy one with dressmakers, milliners, and seamstresses; for Mr. Rosevelt said he wished to go to Newport by the middle or last of July, if possible.

Mrs. Blunt was jubilant over the change in "Miss Star's fortunes."

"Just to think of it!" she would exclaim every little while. "Who would have dreamed of it two years ago, when you were at Madam Richards', and she trying to make a drudge of you. Don't I wish I might be on hand when you and Miss Josephine meet, if you ever do, and she hears that Mr. Rosevelt was only playing poverty all the time, just to try his proud relations! I tell you there'll be music by the full band."

The young girl flushed.

Josephine had, indeed, been very unkind to her, and it had been hard not to resent the theft of her beautiful little cameo but she was not

one to treasure ill-will. Her little heart was full of "Christian charity," and full of gratitude for the blessings which were surrounding her, and she was ready to forgive all past injuries.

"I should at least try to remember," she returned, quietly, in reply to the housekeeper's somewhat vindictive speech, "that *I* wish to be a *lady* in the truest sense of the term, and treat her accordingly. But," she continued, wishing to change the subject, "you have never told me yet how you happened to come to keep house for us. I think it was one of the nicest arrangements that was ever made."

"Thank you, Miss Star," the woman answered, with a beaming face; "and you'd better believe it was a chance that I jumped at. I suppose I should have been slaving it for that ungrateful set now if I hadn't come over to New York one day about three months ago, and met Mr. Roosevelt on Broadway, all by chance. He seemed glad to see me, and asked how I was getting on; and I was that discouraged with the way things were being managed, the cross words, complaints, and everything, that I told him I was sick and tired of it all, and meant to find another place just as soon as ever I could, though goodness knows I hadn't an idea where that would be. Upon that he looked thoughtful, and, after a moment, said 'he didn't believe in hiring people away from their employers, but if I really meant to go away, he thought he knew of some one who would like just such a person for a housekeeper.' I tell you I jumped at the chance, for ever since that young lord took himself off so quick, the madam has been so irritable that nothing would please her; and Mr. Roosevelt said when I had worked out my notice to come to him, and I'd find him any day at home at ten o'clock. I suppose he set that hour because he didn't want you to know what was going on. I gave my notice the next day, worked out my two weeks, and came over to New York lighter of heart than I'd been for years.

"When Mr. Roosevelt told me about what he'd been doing, and what he was going to do, and said he wanted me for his own housekeeper, my eyes stuck out so that I thought they'd never feel natural again; but if ever an old woman was happy, I was, to think I was going to serve you; and here I've been ever since, helping him fix up for you.

"It's like a beautiful story, Miss Star," continued Mrs. Blunt, waxing sentimental, "to see you here among all these elegant things, for which you were just made, or I'm much mistaken; and when I see you coming out in all of these lovely clothes, nobody'll be prouder than I."

"You are very good, Mrs. Blunt, to be so interested for me," Star said, with a smile; "and if what you want is to see me 'come out in these fine things,' you will have your wish, for we shall have to take you to Newport with us, as I must have some one to attend me, and I cannot consent to take a stranger."

"That will be almost as good as to come out myself," the woman said, with a chuckle of delight.

Star's wardrobe and pretty things were all ready at last, and Mr. Rosevelt, who had taken a strange interest in it, for a bachelor, was perfectly satisfied.

He had made her elegant presents in the way of jewelry and laces, until she felt almost overwhelmed.

"Diamonds!" she had exclaimed, her face flushing all over with delight, when, the day before they were to leave, he came into her sitting-room and laid a case in her lap, telling her to open it. He had already purchased her several other sets, but this was the crowning gift of all.

She had thought when he had given her some beautiful point-laces, that if she only had some diamonds to go with them she should like it; they were the two things for which she had an especial passion—rich laces and those pellucid stones, like drops of dew which send back the light in gorgeous tints. She would have been content with just a pair of ear-pendants and a solitaire ring—she was content, indeed, without them, but she thought how nicely they would go with her laces; but there, dazzling her eyes upon their velvet bed, were ear-pendants, a cross attached to a beautiful chain, a solitaire ring, and a star for her hair.

"Oh, Uncle Jacob," she faltered, "I am afraid you are spending too much money for me."

"Don't you like them?" he questioned, although her glowing face should have told him all he wished to know.

"Like them? They are perfectly lovely; and I *do* particularly love diamonds."

"Then don't trouble your pretty head about the money. You know I have been denied all my life the pleasure of spending it for either wife or child, and now that I have found some one who appreciates and is worthy of it, let me get all the comfort I can in this way. You forget," he continued, with a smile, "that there are two years' income to be disposed of in some way, and I am only making up lost time. I like to go about the world, and I like to go in style, as I told you once before, and so my heiress must help me keep up appearances."

"Are you sure you are doing just right, Uncle Jacob, in giving me *all* your money?" Star asked, hesitatingly, after a few minutes of thoughtful silence, while she watched the sunlight play among her new treasures.

"To whom should I give it, I should like to know?" he questioned, bluntly.

"But I have no *legal* claim upon you, and you have relatives. I'm afraid it will make trouble——"

"No, it won't; I've taken care of that, I can assure you," he interrupted. "My will is made, signed, and sealed, and in the hands of one of the best lawyers in the city. *You* are to have the whole of my fortune, excepting what the law demands for blood. I've given a dollar to each of them, just to clear myself and keep them from breaking my will; and they'll never get another red cent," he concluded, with more asperity than she had ever seen him betray before.

"I'm afraid you are piling a mountain upon my small shoulders," Star said, with a little laugh.

"It is a mountain which I shall take care won't crush you; ²⁶³and, besides, I hope to help you bear it for a good many years to come, if my health keeps on improving as it has done during the last few months; and then, I reckon, it will not be *very* difficult to find some one else who would be willing to take a share of the burden," Mr. Roosevelt concluded, slyly.

Star flushed, and then her face grew sad.

She knew that he meant she would find suitors for her hand; but she could not forget her first love, and she knew that she should never meet another who would win the place in her heart which she had given to Archibald Sherbrooke, unworthy as she believed him to be of it.

That evening Miss Meredith and her brother called.

"How fortunate that you came to-night," Star said to the young lady during their conversation. "You would have missed us if you had waited longer, for to-morrow we go to Newport for a few weeks."

"Do you? That is delightful, for we have our rooms engaged there also for next week, and intend to remain a month," Miss Meredith returned, with evident pleasure, while Mr. Ralph Meredith, who was conversing with Mr. Roosevelt, but with one ear open toward the young ladies, felt a sudden heart-throb at the intelligence.

"Newport is very gay this summer, I am told," Miss Meredith continued. "'Everybody,' so to speak, is there, and it is one of the most charming places in the world to visit. Have you ever been there, Miss Gladstone?"

"No," Star answered. "I have been so busy with my studies ever since I came to this country, that I have not been anywhere."

"Since you came to this country!" Grace Meredith repeated. "Are you not an American?"

"No; I am an English girl, and it will be two years in November since I left merrie England."

"Are you some lady of high degree, come here to get your ²⁶⁴education? I am almost inclined to think so," laughed her friend, bending an admiring glance upon Star's beautiful face.

"No, indeed. Don't go to weaving any romances about me," she answered, flushing slightly, "for I am only plain Star Gladstone."

"But 'plain Star Gladstone' belongs to a very good family, nevertheless," interrupted Mr. Rosevelt, who had overheard the latter part of their conversation, and would not allow Star to depreciate herself; whereupon Miss Meredith did feel at liberty to "romance" a little on her own account.

Star was asked for some music, and delighted her listeners with her exquisite playing. Miss Meredith and her brother sang a charming duet, and after an hour spent in the most social manner, they took their departure, having formed numerous plans to be carried into execution when they should meet a week later at Newport.

"Miss Gladstone is the loveliest girl I have ever met, and you wouldn't let me get a word in edgewise with her, Grace," Ralph Meredith said, in a grieved tone, after they left the house.

"Are you 'star'-struck so soon, brother mine? You'll have opportunities enough to 'get your words in' widthways during the next few weeks, and you can comfort yourself for your disappointment to-night with the thought that I was paving the way to glory for you," laughed his sister.

"Were you not surprised to learn that she is English?" she asked, thoughtfully.

"Yes, rather; for I have been told that English girls are not very pretty; but she is wonderfully beautiful."

"What will you wager that she does not turn out to be some lady of high degree?"

"Pshaw! Grace, you are always imagining some unlikely story or other. You should not read so many novels. Don't put her entirely beyond our reach, if you please. It is quite ²⁶⁵enough for the present to know that she is Mr. Rosevelt's heiress and the author of that charming little book, without being some princess in disguise," returned the young man, somewhat impatiently.

"I think I shall like Miss Meredith," Star said, musingly, to Mr. Rosevelt, when their visitors were gone.

"She appears to be a very agreeable young lady. I should like you to form some pleasant friendship," the old gentleman returned; then, with a keen glance, he asked: "How are you pleased with her brother?"

"He is quite entertaining."

"Very fine-looking young man; don't you think so?"

"Is he?—yes—rather," was the absent reply; for speaking of England had sent Star's thoughts across the ocean again, where she saw in imagination a noble, patrician face, with dark, fathomless eyes, and

curling chestnut hair; for Archibald Sherbrooke—she could never think of him in any other character—was her ideal of all that was manly and grand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?”

Newport was teeming with all that was gay, beautiful, and attractive during this particular season of which we write.

Never had so much wealth and luxury been represented there, or so many elegant equipages seen driving through the streets or along the smooth, sweeping beach.

Not the least attractive among these equipages was the light and airy, though costly phaeton of “Mr. Roosevelt’s ward,” with its embroidered lap-robcs, its luxurious velvet-cushioned seats, ²⁶⁶its plump, sleek, and spirited gray ponies in their gold-mounted harnesses.

Star had created quite a sensation when she arrived at the hotel where they had taken rooms; and the tall, distinguished old gentleman, with such silvery hair and beard, and who appeared so devoted to her, was scarcely less a target for all eyes. But when it began to be whispered that Miss Gladstone was not only the heiress of Jacob Roosevelt, the millionaire, but also the authoress of that bright little book which for a year had created such a sensation in New York circles, the excitement increased, and everybody was on the *qui vive* to obtain an introduction.

When, on the second evening after her arrival, she came into the great parlors of the hotel—for there was to be a grand hop or assembly there that night—leaning on Mr. Roosevelt’s arm, and looking “so divinely fair” in her shimmering robe of cream-colored silk and mist-like tulle, garnished with velvet-leaved, golden-hearted pansies, her shining hair coiled like a crown about her small head, with a little cluster of pansies nestling lovingly among its glossy plaits, every eye was attracted by her loveliness, and everybody—of the masculine gender, at least—was ready to “rave over” her, “swear by” her, and “fight for” her if need be.

It is needless to say that she was not allowed to become a wall-flower, and it was amusing to observe the maneuvers of the battalion of gallant young knights who swarmed about her, like bees around their queen, eager to secure an introduction.

And now the excitement for Star began.

She was whisked away to the ball-room, and the evening sped like a vision of delight.

She had been taught to dance at home, notwithstanding the fact that her father was a clergyman, for in all English homes dancing is considered a necessary accomplishment, because it imparts ease and grace to the manners of the young.

Mr. Roosevelt followed, for he enjoyed looking upon the merry dancers, and taking up his station near a window, and by a stand of flowers where he was partially shielded from observation, he watched his pet with a fond smile upon his lips, proud of her beauty, proud of her intelligence and of the admiration she was attracting.

While standing here, a group of half a dozen ladies and gentlemen gathered near him, and he overheard a conversation which amused him, and caused at the same time something of a feeling of triumph to pervade his heart.

"Have you seen the new arrivals?" asked a gentleman of one of his companions.

"No; what new arrivals do you refer to? There are many every day."

"An old codger from New York—rich as a king, they say—and his ward, who bids fair to be *the* beauty of the season."

"Indeed!" returned the lady, assuming a piqued tone. "How dare you make such an assertion, and in the presence of three acknowledged beauties, too?"

"I beg pardon if I have offended," the gentleman roguishly replied; "but—I have had *Washingtonian* instructions regarding the principle of *truth*."

The young lady tapped him playfully upon the arm with her fan, while she remarked, significantly:

"How glad I am that you have *told* me of it!" whereupon the whole party joined in a laugh at the "truthful" gentleman's expense.

"But about this fair charmer," the lady pursued; "who is she, and what is the name of this 'old codger' who is 'rich as a king'?"

"The lady's name is Miss Gladstone, and she is not only beautiful, charming, and rich, but is also the author of 'Chatsworth's Pride,' which you have doubtless read."

"Oh! a blue-stockings!" cried the gay girl, with well-affected horror; and just here another voice chimed in—a voice which made Mr. Roosevelt start and listen more intently:

"Miss Gladstone! How strange I never heard the author's name before! There was only a simple star upon the title page where the author's name should have been. Mamma!" in a startled tone, as if a strange idea had suddenly come into the speaker's mind, "it cannot possibly be *Stella Gladstone*, can it?"

"Certainly not," returned Mrs. Richards—for both she and Josephine were among the group referred to, having come from a neighboring hotel to attend the hop. "Such a thing cannot be possible; *she* could not write a book."

The woman spoke contemptuously, and yet the utterance of that name produced an uneasy sensation in her mind.

“What is the gentleman’s name? Whose ward did you say she is?” she asked, a moment later, thinking that would throw some light on the subject.

“I declare I have forgotten,” the gentleman returned; “it’s a high-sounding name, though, and he is an aristocratic-looking old fellow, too. By the way, Miss Richards,” he continued, turning to the young lady, “I am willing to wager a handsome fan against a new pair of gloves that Miss Gladstone’s phaeton and pair of ponies will be the envy of every lady in Newport, for a more trappy turn-out I’ve never seen in my life.”

“Then she drives her own ponies, does she? Well, I must say you have aroused my curiosity to the highest notch, and I’d like to see this paragon of perfection, Mr. Pendleton,” Josephine said, a feeling of jealousy springing up in her heart at hearing another’s praises sounded so profusely.

“You can be gratified, for there she stands now—that slight, graceful girl in the cream-colored silk trimmed with pansies,” replied Mr. Pendleton, drawing her attention to the spot where Star stood surrounded by an admiring crowd.

Her back was turned toward them, and they could not judge of her beauty; but they saw a tall, willowy figure in trailing robes of exceeding richness, a stately head crowned with golden hair, and there was a familiar something about the fair stranger which made both mother and daughter look more closely, while their eyes were filled with anxious foreboding.

“She is elegantly dressed, I must confess,” Josephine said, putting up her glass to get a better view of the “belle of the evening;” “and, mamma,” she added, in a lower tone, “is it my imagination, or is there something really familiar in that figure? *Can it be Stella?*”

“Impossible! What could have put such a foolish notion into your head? Where under heavens could *she* get money enough to flourish in such style?” Mrs. Richards retorted, impatiently.

“But if she is really the author of the book—it has been very popular, you know——”

“Nonsense!” interrupted her mother. “I tell you such a thing could not be possible.”

Nevertheless, Mrs. Richards was closely watching the object of their conversation, and her heart was beating with a painful throb, for the young girl did strangely resemble that poor orphan whom she had so despised and ill-treated, and who had fled from her tyranny.

But her uneasiness increased, for just now she observed a tall, white-haired gentleman moving toward the girl, and upon reaching her side, he bent down and spoke a few words in her ear.

His back also was toward them, but the matron's face was dark with trouble; she grew white with the sudden fear which possessed her, and she moved forward to get a better view of the couple.

At that instant Star turned and lifted her bright face to reply to Mr. Rosevelt, who had left his position by the stand of flowers when she ceased dancing and approached her, her eyes shining, her cheeks glowing, and her coral lips wreathed with bright smiles, and both Josephine and Mrs. Richards recognized her instantly.

A low cry of surprise and dismay broke from Josephine Richards' lips.

"It is—it surely is Stella Gladstone," she said; "and that man talking to her is certainly Uncle Jacob Rosevelt! What can it all mean?"

"Rosevelt! Yes, that is the name," said Mr. Pendleton, who had caught it, and who had first called their attention to Star. "'Jacob Rosevelt, the millionaire,' I heard him called this afternoon, but I forget names so easily."

"Jacob Rosevelt, the millionaire!" repeated Mrs. Richards, with white lips and astonished eyes, while a tumult of emotions raged within her heart.

"Yes; he must be very rich, for they have every appearance of it, and Miss Gladstone's turn-out, which was sent on before them, is a marvel of luxury and elegance. But—do *you know* them?" Mr. Pendleton asked, regarding her curiously.

Mrs. Richards' thoughts worked very rapidly.

If this was really Jacob Rosevelt, and she could not doubt the evidence of her own eyes, he must by some stroke of luck have recovered a portion, if not the whole, of his fortune since leaving her house; and in this case he became at once an entirely different person from the feeble, poverty-stricken individual who had come to her a little more than a year ago to sue for food and shelter.

He had been a person of no account then—one to be ignored and neglected, for there was nothing to be gained by treating him otherwise.

But "Jacob Rosevelt, the millionaire," if such he had become again, must be propitiated, flattered, and cajoled.

²⁷¹Therefore she had a new role to play, and she would begin at once by claiming him as a relative before these friends of hers.

"It would be very strange if I did *not* know him, for he is my father's brother," she said, calling to her lips her blindest smiles; "but I am sure I had no idea that he was here in Newport. Come, Josephine, we must go

and speak to him;" and she drew the astonished girl away before they could question them any further, and she wished to collect her own scattered senses a little before encountering those two whom she had so deeply injured.

"What can it mean, mamma?" Josephine repeated, with a blank look, for she had no longer any doubt about the identity of the strangers.

"I don't know, but I am going to find out," she answered resolutely.

"Then you are convinced that it is Stella?"

"Yes, it is *that girl* fast enough; there can be no mistake about it; and what a sensation she is making! She seems to checkmate us at every move."

"Where can they have been hiding all this time?" Josephine asked.

"How do you suppose I know?" retorted her mother, sharply. "I am more interested to know where all the money comes from to enable them to cut such a swell. Why, the dress she has on must have cost a cool three hundred, to say nothing about her other expensive fixings; and then you heard what Pendleton said about her carriage and ponies."

"Well, he said she was the author of 'Chatsworth's Pride,' and if that is so, it must have brought her a good deal."

"Pooh! you don't suppose one book is going to enable her to live and dress like a young empress, do you?" returned Mrs. ²⁷²Richards, scornfully. "No; Uncle Jacob has recovered his fortune, or else——"

"Or else what?"

"He has played it upon us."

"Played what upon us?"

"Why, poverty, you goose!"

"Mamma! that would be too dreadful. I never thought of such a thing," Josephine said, feeling almost faint.

"Nor I, until this moment; but I can account for their appearance here to-night in no other way. If he has done this thing, and that girl gets all his money, it will be a bitter pill to swallow, I can tell you."

"But she could inherit nothing; she is no blood relation."

"But he could make a will."

"And we could break it."

"Not a bit of it; your Uncle Jacob is keen enough to look out for that, I assure you. But come this way; they are passing out into the hall, and I am going to sift this matter at once."

She drew her daughter from the upper door of the parlor, just as Star and Mr. Rosevelt passed out at the lower one, intending to waylay them and demand an explanation of their presence.

They turned and came toward those waiting women, walking slowly and chatting pleasantly, and wholly unconscious of the exciting interview in store for them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEFEATED.

When they were within a few feet of the upper door, Mrs. Richards stepped toward them and stood directly in their path.

The hall was nearly empty, almost everybody being in the parlors or the dancing-hall, so there was no one by just at that moment to witness what transpired.

"What does this mean?" Mrs. Richards demanded, in a low but authoritative tone. "Stella Gladstone, how is it that I find you here? Uncle Jacob, where have you been all this time, and what strange freak of fortune brings you here in this unaccountable fashion?"

Mr. Roosevelt started slightly on beholding his niece standing in that excited attitude directly in his path; while Star grew pale at first, for she had always stood somewhat in fear of the arrogant woman while she was an inmate of her house. But remembering that everything was entirely different now, she quickly recovered herself.

But for all that, she clung a little more closely to Mr. Roosevelt's arm, as if she was glad that he was there, though in no other way did she betray how disagreeable this encounter was to her, or appear as if she had ever met them before.

"Tell me what this means?" Mrs. Richards repeated, looking from one to the other, noting Star's delicate beauty with a pang of bitter jealousy, her self-possession and grace; Mr. Roosevelt's improved appearance, his rich apparel, and more than all, the air of pride and fondness which pervaded every look and attention which he bestowed upon his companion.

"Well, niece Ellen," Mr. Roosevelt returned, in a quiet tone, while he met her eye with a cold, steady glance that made her very uncomfortable, "it appears that you are considerably excited over this unexpected meeting. Suppose we retire to yonder anteroom, where we can converse unobserved."

He turned and led the way, with Star still upon his arm, to a small room upon the opposite side of the hall; they entered, and he shut the door, for he did not care that any one should overhear what passed between them, nor did he intend that Ellen Richards should do or say anything which should make them objects of remark.

"Now, Ellen, what is it that I am to account to you for?" he asked, in the same quiet tone which he had before used.

She colored angrily, but she was determined to get at the bottom of the matter.

"I have heard strange rumors to-night," she remarked. "I am told that Stella has become an authoress—that she is very popular, as well as her book, and I want to know what it means. A year ago you were both dependents upon my bounty; now I find you sailing about, like a couple of meteors, among the other shining lights of society. I want an explanation of the cause of this change."

"Certainly, Ellen; since you desire it, I will explain with pleasure. We left your house last October, as you doubtless will remember, and took up our abode in New York city. Star entered the Normal College at once, and by assiduous application to her studies, succeeded in completing the course, and graduated in June, since when we have been trying to get all the enjoyment out of life that we could. You have heard rightly, Ellen; she did write that popular little book, 'Chatsworth's Pride,' and it is a source of pride to me that I have the honor of introducing in society its popular author as my ward and heiress—"

"Your *heiress*!" Mrs. Richards cried, growing pale.

"Yes; Miss Gladstone is named as such in my will, which is now in the hands of my lawyer," the old gentleman replied, quietly.

His niece looked from one to the other in blank dismay. She had feared she should hear something of the kind, but it was none the less a shock to her when it came.

"Your heiress—heiress to *what*?" she demanded, sharply.

"To the whole of my fortune, madam."

"Your fortune!" she sneered, but her voice was hoarse from passion and baffled hopes. "A year ago it was—*beggary*!"

Mr. Rosevelt smiled serenely.

"*Apparently*, yes," he answered. "But I was *then*, what I am *now*—a millionaire. The mistake of your life-time was made then, Ellen; for if you had cordially received the feeble old man who came to your house in such a forlorn condition; if you had given him kindness and sympathy, such as you were wont to do when he was rich and prosperous; if you had shown him something of love and tenderness, instead of coldness and contempt, making him feel that he was a burden and an intruder, *you* would have had the bulk of my fortune, for your brother had already forfeited his share. I thought that my final return to this country would give me a good opportunity to test your and Henry's sincerity, and I resolved to do so. I went to him as a poor man; I was received coldly, and made as uncomfortable as it was possible for any one to be made. Then I said to myself, 'Ellen's womanly heart will prompt her to be kind to me, if not for

my own sake, for her father's,' and so I came to you also in the guise of poverty."

"It was mean—it was dishonorable to take advantage of me in that way," Mrs. Richards said, with white, quivering lips.

"Not at all. I wanted to *know* you as you were, not what you pretended to be. I do not need to tell you the result of my plan; we all know it but too well. No one gave me a word of sympathy or kindness save this dear girl"—he laid his hand tenderly on Star's shoulder—"who did her utmost to make the old man forget as far as was possible his bitter disappointment, and who had already earned his love and gratitude by saving his life, almost at the sacrifice of her own, during that terrible voyage across the Atlantic. She has been like a sunbeam to me from the first; and when I saw how unkind you all were to her also—how you were betraying your trust and breaking your promise to her dying father—I resolved that she should become my especial care for the future.

"I do not need to recall to your memory the last night that we spent in your house in Yonkers. It must be as fresh to you as it is to me. You taunted us both with our poverty and dependence. You drove *her* to desperation by your unjust accusations and your heartless language. She could not endure that kind of a life any longer, and she knew that I also was anything but happy; so she came to me, told me the secret of her success as an author, and of the income which her book bade fair to bring her, and begged of me to go with her to share her substance, asking in return only the comfort of congenial companionship and the protection which my presence would give her. I was sorely tempted, as I have told her, to confess the part I had been playing, and proclaim her my heiress on the spot. But I thought, considering all things, it would be better to wait until she was through with school, while I wanted to study her a little more closely before committing my all to her. She has stood the test most nobly. She has been the light of our home. She has labored early and late to minister to my comfort and happiness, and *now* she is going to reap her reward. Everything that I *can* do for her to make her life bright, I *shall* do while I live, and when I am gone, she will have the fortune which, under different circumstances, would have been mostly yours."

Mrs. Richards was pallid with anger, mortification, and bitter disappointment when Mr. Rosevelt concluded.

It was a terrible blow to her to lose this great fortune, and remorse for her heartless treatment of her uncle was gnawing keenly at her heart-strings.

Mr. Richards had met with heavy losses in his business of late, and it was only by straining every nerve, calculating, and contriving, that she and Josephine had been able to come to Newport at all that season, and it

was simply maddening to think that Star, whom she had so disliked from the first, should have won, by little acts of kindness, what she would have spared no pains to secure had she once suspected the truth.

"Well, miss, you have played your cards very cleverly, haven't you?" she finally found breath to ejaculate, and turning with blazing eyes upon the fair girl who, all unwittingly, had usurped her place in her uncle's affection and will.

Mr. Roosevelt's face grew stern.

"She certainly has, Ellen," he said, before Star could speak, even had she wished to do so, "especially as she could not, by any means, have known that there was anything worth winning by her acts of devotion and self-denial. And now let me tell you, that true kindness and sympathy will *always* win, where arrogance and pride will only gain contempt, and lead to disappointment and regret."

"Uncle Jacob, you cannot mean what you have said. Surely you will not discard those of your own blood, your kin, for the offspring of a stranger!" Mrs. Richards said, appealingly.

Mr. Roosevelt looked down at Star with a tender, tremulous smile.

"The offspring of a stranger!" he repeated, softly; then added: "Ellen, there is a stronger bond uniting this dear child to me than *ever* bound me to either of my brother's children."

"What do you mean?" cried his niece, in a startled tone.

"Surely, at *your* age, you do not contemplate—"

Mr. Roosevelt stopped her with a motion of his hand before she could complete her sentence.

"No; you are wide of the mark; although I am not surprised that a designing woman like yourself should jump at such an absurd conclusion. But, lest you should wound her by your foolish insinuations, I will tell you that Star is the granddaughter of the only woman whom I ever loved; and, therefore, you perceive that I had additional cause to be displeased with you on account of your unkindness to her."

"Really, Mr. Roosevelt, you have more of sentiment in your composition than I gave you credit for. There *was* a love passage, then, in the old bachelor's life!" sneered Mrs. Richards while an angry flush mounted to her brow.

Then, with more bitterness than she had yet betrayed, she continued, with a look at Star:

"I can congratulate Miss Gladstone upon being more successful in wheedling you out of your fortune than she was in her maneuvers to become Lady Carrol."

This was a cruel thrust, and wholly unexpected on the part of either Mr. Roosevelt or Star.

A shiver of agony ran through every nerve of her body at this rough probing of the still unhealed wound, and a painful crimson shot over her beautiful face.

But it quickly subsided, leaving only the bright spots on her cheeks.

She arose from the chair where Mr. Roosevelt had placed her, drew herself up proudly, her eyes gleaming as bright as the diamonds in her ears, and, entirely ignoring the coarse woman's malicious thrust, she looked up at her companion, and said, in her clearest, sweetest tones:

"Uncle Jacob, I believe we were going out to see the illumination."

"True, child, true," he said, taking her white-gloved hand and laying it upon his arm, while he cast a dark look upon his niece for her cowardly attack. "Come, we will go at once;" and with a formal inclination to Mrs. Richards and her daughter, but with an angry gleam in his eyes, he led Star from the room, shutting the door, with no gentle sound, after them.

"Did you ever hear anything like it!" Mrs. Richards said, hopelessly, after they had gone.

"No, indeed; and it is just as you suspected—he was *playing* poverty all the time," Josephine answered.

"Oh, if I could only have known it!" groaned her mother, to whom the calamity appeared to grow more appalling every moment.

"He makes a perfect fool of himself over that girl," snapped Josephine, ill-naturedly. "Just think of the amount of money it must have cost to deck her out to-night."

"I am going back to our hotel," Mrs. Richards said, rising, with a desperate air. "I am not going to stay here to see her play the fine lady and crow over us."

"I'm ready to go. I've had enough of this thing, and I never did like the — House very well, anyway," replied her daughter, in no amiable tones.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RESCUED FROM A HORRIBLE FATE.

If Mrs. Richards had conducted herself according to her own inclination, she would have left Newport at once. But she was unwilling that Mr. Rosevelt or Star should think that she had run away from them, or that she was heart-broken over the disclosures which her uncle had made to her.

Besides, Newport was full of wealthy and fashionable people, and among them several eligible young gentlemen, whose acquaintance, for Josephine's sake, she was desirous of cultivating; and surely she was not going to sacrifice all these advantages, and leave the field clear for Star to win even greater victories.

No; she would stay, and she resolved she would make things just as uncomfortable for the young girl as possible, while Josephine should be made to shine with all the splendor of which their means, and Mr. Richards' credit, were capable.

But all the proud woman's efforts were of no avail, for our fair heroine had created a sensation which threatened to turn the heads and lead captive the hearts of every unmarried man, at least, in Newport.

A week passed quickly by, and then Grace Meredith and her brother arrived at the watering-place, and immediately attached themselves to Mr. Rosevelt and Star by mutual consent; and many envious looks were bestowed upon the dark, handsome stranger, who appeared to assume the right of acting as escort to the two beautiful girls upon every occasion.

But Star, whenever she appeared in company, laughed, chatted, and danced with all that was possible of her admirers, dispensing her smiles and favors with an impartiality that was exasperating not only to her victims—if such they could be called who were each anxious to win the prize—but also to the many forlorn damsels who were all sighing for the attentions she was receiving and the honors she was usurping.

One day, about a week after the arrival of the Merediths, an excursion was arranged to visit a point on Narragansett Bay, and it was to be a picnic after the good old-fashioned style of carrying each his own basket and sharing with his neighbor.

A boat had been chartered to take the party down the bay in the morning and return at night by moonlight.

Ralph Meredith and two or three of his friends were the originators of the affair, and the invitations were very select, and limited to one hundred.

As it happened, Mrs. Richards and Josephine, with quite a number of others from their hotel, were included in this party.

The morning was delightful, and the spirits of the whole company at their highest point, while the jaunty, white-winged boat, with its inspiring band of music and its gayly dressed picnickers, seemed like a little floating world devoted entirely to pleasure, as indeed it was.

Josephine Richards had arrayed herself in a very elaborate costume for the occasion, determined that Star, who she knew was to be one of the company, should not outshine her.

It fitted her like a glove, and was vastly becoming; she never had looked more brilliant in her life, but she was too fussy for a picnic, and looked as if she was decked out for a fashionable reception rather than for a day in the woods.

In direct contrast to all this “fuss and feathers,” was Star, in a simple suit of white lawn, a belt of blue, of her eyes’ own hue, girdling her slender waist; a dainty, broad-brimmed hat, set in a jaunty way upon her golden head, and a little cluster of blue-fringed gentians nestling beneath her beautifully rounded chin.

The very simplicity of her attire made her conspicuous, and fashionable maidens, who had groaned in spirit over what they should wear and how they should wear it, glared at her with envious eyes.

Ralph Meredith had arranged a cozy little nook on the boat for Star and his sister, by taking some camp-chairs along and cushioning them with handsome rugs, with a couple of hassocks for their feet, while a sail had been adjusted as an awning to screen them from the hot sun.

But when, after they were well on their way, he conducted them thither, he found to his chagrin that this snug corner, upon which he had spent so much care, had been appropriated by Mrs. Richards and her brilliant daughter, who were holding a little court by themselves.

“Never mind,” Star whispered; “I do not care to sit just now, and I particularly wish not to disturb them.”

“But *I* particularly wished you and Grace to have a comfortable place where you could enjoy your sail,” he returned, indignantly.

“I know, and you were very kind and thoughtful; but I shall feel better to leave them to get what enjoyment they can from occupying seats which they must know were intended for others. What do you say, Grace?” Star asked, appealing to Miss Meredith.

“I do not see but what we shall be obliged to submit, since I do not wish to be rude to any of our party. But I must say I think they are very cool.”

They moved away to another portion of the boat, but when, an hour later, they saw the interlopers promenading the deck, they quietly slipped

into the vacated seats, and settled themselves for the remainder of the sail.

Here they were soon chatting in the most sociable manner, and were right in the midst of a most interesting discussion regarding their toilet for an approaching reception, when a cold voice broke out upon them, saying:

“Miss Gladstone, may I trouble you to vacate our chairs?”

Star started and flushed. Too well she knew those incisive tones.

But she quickly recovered herself, however, and looking up at Mrs. Richards, for it was she who had spoken, said:

“*Your* chairs? Are they yours?”

“Certainly; you have already seen us occupying them, I believe,” the woman responded, haughtily.

Star’s face began to dimple with amusement, for she knew well enough that this demand was only made to annoy her and make her unpleasantly conspicuous, and she was determined to turn the tables to their own mortification; for they could not fail to learn when they landed to whom the chairs and other comforts belonged.

She made a motion to Grace, who, she saw, was bristling with indignation, to keep silent; then she arose, bowing with graceful politeness to Mrs. Richards and her daughter, though her eyes were gleaming with suppressed laughter.

“I beg pardon if I have been occupying what does not rightfully belong to me, and I cheerfully resign *my* chair to your *prior claim*.”

Josephine flushed, for she saw that it was all Star could do to restrain her merriment, though what should have caused it she could not understand; while she looked so pretty and was so lady-like, it made her angry.

“I’m sure,” she began, hotly, and raising her voice so that others could hear her, “I don’t see what you’re so amused over, Stella Gladstone; and it seems to me that you’re putting on altogether too many airs for a girl who used to perform the services of a chambermaid in our house.”

For a moment Star stood as if dumfounded; then she lifted her bright head a trifle, as if in conscious superiority, gave Miss Richards a cool stare of surprise, and turned away without a word.

Not so Miss Meredith, however.

She kept her seat with the utmost composure, watching this little scene with both interest and amusement until Josephine so tauntingly insulted her friend.

Then she, too, arose, drawing her tall form to its fullest height.

“I cannot understand,” she said, in a voice of scorn, “why you should so maliciously insult Miss Gladstone; but allow me to say for your

enlightenment, that these chairs, rugs, and so forth, belong to my brother, Mr. Ralph Meredith, and he arranged them here especially for Miss Gladstone's and my comfort. However, I will emulate her example, and resign my right to ladies who have proved themselves so superior in point of *refinement* and *politeness*."

Having uttered this cutting sarcasm, Miss Meredith bowed mockingly and walked away to rejoin her friend, leaving those haughty and overbearing women about as chagrined and crestfallen as it is possible for two people to feel.

The gay company reached their destination after a delightful sail of two hours.

It was a lovely grove upon the shore of the bay, which people were in the habit of frequenting for picnics of this sort, and the party wandered about in groups for another two hours, exploring the beauties and attractions around them.

At two o'clock everybody gathered to dine in a place which had been prepared for that purpose; the tables were spread with the contents of the numerous baskets, which contained every delicacy which the season afforded, and the gay company, making the woods resonant with laughter and merriment, sat down to their rural meal.

It was four in the afternoon before this important part in the day's programme was concluded, and then the company scattered, some to lounge about and rest, others to stroll into the deep, inviting shadows of the woods.

Mr. Roosevelt and Star, Miss Meredith and her brother, with two or three others, wandered away by themselves, and finally sat down beneath a wide-spreading tree for a quiet chat.

While they sat there, Star got up quietly and slipped out of sight, some spirit of restlessness possessing her to get away for a ramble still farther into the far-reaching woods.

She had walked some distance, when she heard voices, and soon saw a gentleman and a lad, both with guns over their shoulders, approaching her, and looking heated and anxious.

They saluted her courteously, and then the gentleman said, abruptly:

"Have you seen anything of a small, white Spitz dog, miss? It is a pretty little creature, wearing a silver collar around his neck, and tiny blue bows tied in his ears."

"No," Star answered; "I have seen no dog to-day."

"We are in search of it because we are afraid it has run mad," the stranger continued, peering about with a troubled countenance. "It has not been well for several days, and this morning showed unmistakable

signs of hydrophobia. It escaped confinement from the cottage, a mile or so from here, and ran toward these woods about an hour ago.”

They passed on, and Star thought it would be best for her to go back to her friends, and therefore turned to retrace her steps.

She had only accomplished about half of the distance, when she heard a clear, musical laugh ring out from among the shrubbery on the right of the path.

Thinking it must be some of her party, she stepped forward to warn them of their danger. She parted the branches with her hands and looked through.

What was her horror to see Josephine Richards sitting at the foot of a tree, her hat tossed upon the ground beside her, and *holding in her lap the little mad dog* against which she had just been warned.

It was a beautiful little creature, and had evidently been made a pet and plaything. It had lovely brown eyes, looking out from beneath its shaggy brows; its coat was as white as snow, while around its neck there glistened the silver collar, and in its pretty ears were the tiny blue bows of which she had been told.

Miss Richards evidently had just coaxed the little pet into her lap, and was playing with it without a suspicion of the terrible danger that she was in, while just for that moment it showed no signs of the madness which possessed it.

Star’s face was as white as her spotless dress as she took in the dreadful situation; then she stepped quickly forward and said, in clear but authoritative tones:

“Miss Richards, put that dog down as quietly as you can, and come away with me instantly, for I have just been told that it is mad.”

Scarcely were the words uttered, when the little creature snapped at the hand raised to caress it, and, with a scream of fright, Josephine sprang to her feet and turned to fly.

But the act aroused all the fury of the maddened animal, and he seized hold of her skirts, biting and tearing them in the most furious manner, foaming at the mouth, and howling frightfully in its sudden paroxysm of frenzy.

“Save me! save me!” Josephine screamed, and flying toward Star for protection.

There was not a thought of personal danger in the fair young girl’s heart—not a thought of enmity, or of malice or evil; all her mind was concentrated upon one thing—how best to save her companion from this terrible danger and from a horrible death.

“Stand still!” she commanded, in steady, almost stern tones. “Let him bite at your clothes all he chooses, but do not allow him to get at your

feet; if you run, he will seize them and bite right through your boot. Have you courage to stand where you are for a moment? I will go behind him and slip the end of my parasol through his collar and pin him to the ground; then you can go and call help for me.”

She spoke calmly but rapidly, and Josephine saw at once how much wisdom there was in her plan.

“Yes, yes; I will do anything,” she said, hysterically; “but be quick, for I cannot bear this much longer; I shall faint dead away.”

“If you faint,” Star returned, in an awful voice, “you are lost! There! he has entangled himself in that ruffle which he has torn from your dress. Be still just a moment longer, and I will save you if I can.”

Watching her opportunity, she stole softly behind the struggling animal, and, by a dextrous movement, slipped the end of her parasol, which was quite a stout one, into his collar, and then, with all her strength, drove it into the ground and held it there, though the creature struggled furiously to release himself.

Her face had not an atom of color in it, but her lips did not falter as she said to the horror-stricken girl watching her:

“Go now quickly and call help for me, for, small as he is, I cannot hold him long.”

Josephine did not need a second bidding, but went shrieking back to the company in a way to arouse the dead almost.

She had not been gone two minutes—though those two minutes seemed like an age to Star, who found an almost superhuman strength in that writhing, twisting thing at her feet—when the bushes behind her parted again, and the same gentleman who had met and warned her of this danger sprang toward her, with his gun cocked and aimed at the dog.

His face was almost as colorless as her own.

“Can you hold him just an instant longer?—will you *dare* hold him while I shoot him? I will not harm you in the least,” he questioned, in rapid tones.

“Yes, I *will* hold him,” she said, resolutely. “If I let him loose now, he will surely bite somebody.”

Although she spoke so steadily and with so much fortitude, she *looked* like some beautiful spirit from another world, and the gentleman knew he must do what he had to do quickly, or it would be too late.

There was an instant of silence, then a quick, sharp report rang through the woods, and the little danger-fiend lay bleeding and dead at her feet.

All peril was past.

Star had saved an enemy from a horrible fate—she had done a heroic deed; but the tension on her own nerves gave way when it was over. She swayed, tottered, and would have fallen to the ground, but another figure sprang through the bushes to her side, and her fainting form was received into the strong arms of Ralph Meredith.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JOSEPHINE'S INGRATITUDE.

Confusion reigned during the next half hour among the company who had hitherto been so gay. Josephine Richards had rushed into their midst, startling everybody out of their senses by shrieking out:

“Go to Miss Gladstone! A mad dog! a mad dog!”

It was all that she could say, for she immediately after sank down helpless in a violent fit of hysterics, while the women, with white faces, huddled together in fear and trembling, and the men, with horrified eyes and quaking hearts, ran hither and thither in search of Star.

Then there had come that quick, sharp report, directing them to the spot, and telling them that all danger to them was past. But the terrible question arose:

“Was Miss Gladstone safe?”

Ralph Meredith, his feet winged with love and fear, was, as we have seen, first upon the scene of the tragedy, and caught her frantically to his heart just as she was falling to the ground.

“Is she bitten?” he cried, in a voice of agony, and with ashen lips, to the stranger, who stood, gun in hand, over the dead dog.

“No; she has not even a scratch; she has merely fainted from fright,” he answered; and throwing down his gun, he took a long pocket-flask filled with brandy from his hunting-pouch, and approached the unconscious girl.

He knelt upon the ground beside her and poured a few drops between her lips, though his hands trembled violently from the terrible excitement and anxiety under which he had been laboring.

“Go for some water,” he said to his son, who, having heard the report of his father’s fowling-piece, now appeared upon the scene.

He darted away like a fawn, and was back in less than three minutes with a pitcherful, which he had seized from the camp, while a frightened crowd followed at his heels.

But it was a long time before Star revived. The shock to her nervous system had been a terrible one, and nature seemed loth to resume her sway after it. But at the end of half an hour her chest began to heave, and a slight tinge of color returned to her lips.

Ralph Meredith, who hung over her in an agony of suspense and fear, would let no one touch her or come near her, save his sister and Mr. Rosevelt; and he found that it required all the strength of his will to keep

him from betraying to the gaping crowd the passionate love he entertained for the senseless girl.

Finally, to everybody's relief, those white lids were unclosed, those beautiful eyes looked up, and a long, shuddering sigh shook her whole frame.

"What has happened?" she questioned, with a vacant look.

"You are faint, dear. Drink this and you will be better," Grace Meredith said, gently, while she held a silver cup to her lips.

²⁹⁰She swallowed the stimulus mechanically, and then began to shiver, as if from the cold.

"I remember," she murmured, all the color fading from her face again, and they feared another season of unconsciousness would follow.

"Is he dead?" she asked, a moment after, beginning to rally once more.

"Yes; he was killed instantly," Ralph Meredith returned.

"And Josephine—Miss Richards—is she safe?"

Everybody looked surprised at this query, for no one had had any idea that that young lady had been in any danger until now.

"Yes; Miss Richards is safe," Mr. Roosevelt answered; but a frown contracted his brow as he began to understand that Star had sacrificed her own safety and endangered her own life to save that of an ungrateful girl.

No one had been able to gather from Josephine's excited and incoherent account anything save that a mad dog had attacked Miss Gladstone in the woods. She said not a word of how the noble girl had come to her rescue, warned her of her danger, and then put into execution a hazardous plan to secure her safety.

There was not an atom of gratitude in her heart toward Star for having done this heroic deed—no softening, no sense of sorrow or repentance for her own unkindness in the past, or for the insult which she had only that day offered her; there was only a sense of triumph that she herself was safe, no matter how or at whose risk.

When they came, bringing Star back—for she was still too weak to walk—to the spot where they had all gathered so gay and thoughtless that morning, there was a look of sadness and sympathy in every countenance save those of Mrs. Richards and her daughter, who stole away by themselves, jealous of the interest and concern manifested by the whole company for the object of their hatred.

When Star found that Josephine had kept the facts of the encounter with the mad dog to herself, simply stating that Miss Gladstone had been attacked by it, she also appeared very reluctant to converse about it, and

as the subject seemed to excite her, no one felt disposed to press her with questions.

The gentleman who owned the dog sent to his home for his carriage to have her conveyed to the steamer, although she had smilingly affirmed that she should be “able to walk with the help of Uncle Jacob’s arm.”

Upon reaching the boat they improvised a couch for her on deck, as she objected going into the saloon, and by resting quietly during the two hours’ sail, she seemed almost like herself, save her unusual pallor, when the vessel touched the pier at Newport.

A carriage was here procured, and she was driven, with Mr. Roosevelt, Miss Meredith, and her brother, to her hotel.

Grace insisted upon remaining through the night with her.

“You are not fit to be left alone, and—I *want* to stay,” she pleaded, as Star hesitated about accepting her offer.

So the two young girls passed the night together, and Star, growing confidential, and feeling that some explanation regarding Josephine’s insulting remarks that morning was due her friend, told her much concerning her life, and how it had happened that she was at one time an inmate of Mrs. Richards’ family; also relating the events that had transpired since she and Mr. Roosevelt left them, and how she had rescued Josephine from the mad dog.

Star was really ill from nervous prostration the next day, and obliged to keep her room; but Miss Meredith regaled curious ears with the whole story of Josephine Richards’ danger and Star’s courageous defense of her, and all Newport did indeed “ring” even as she had hoped.

Enough could not be said in admiration of the brave girl, while scorn and contempt were freely expressed for the recipients of so much heroism for refusing to acknowledge their indebtedness, and awarding her the commendation she deserved.

Mr. Roosevelt was even more unnerved, when he learned the truth, than he had been the previous day.

He came to her room, wan and haggard, after talking with Miss Meredith, and sank, weak and trembling, into a chair at her side.

“My child,” he said, brokenly, as he took both her hands and looked them carefully over with tear-laden eyes, “are you *sure* you did not get a scratch anywhere?”

“Quite sure, Uncle Jacob,” Star replied, reassuringly; “the dog did not touch me anywhere, and if he had, I had a pair of stout undressed kid gloves on, and they would have protected me.”

“But you were in terrible danger. Suppose you had not succeeded in pinning him down, and he had turned upon you?” he said, with a shudder.

"I did not think of that," Star answered; "but if I had *known* that he would turn upon me, I believe I should have tried to save Josephine just the same. *Somebody* was in danger of being bitten even if she escaped unharmed, and I felt that I must strain every nerve and not allow him to get among the company. The dog was a tiny little thing," she went on, flushing and becoming excited as she seemed to live over again that dreadful experience; "but, oh, Uncle Jacob, he was terribly strong. I thought once that I should have to let him go; I could not have held him one minute longer;" and she covered her face with her hands, weeping from nervousness.

"We must not talk about it any more; it excites you," Mr. Roosevelt said, soothingly; "but the world would have been very dark for me if anything had happened to you; and—I am bitter enough to feel that Josephine Richards' safety is dearly bought, even at the sacrifice of nothing more than your nerves and strength," he concluded, in a stern tone.

Star reached out one white hand and laid it gently upon his, saying, with grave sweetness, while she wiped away her tears:

"Uncle Jacob, let us not judge too harshly nor be unforgiving. 'Charity,' you know, 'suffereth long and is kind, and never faileth.' Surely you would not have had me run away like a coward, and leave her sitting there playing with that mad creature, *knowing* that she was in such fearful danger?"

"N-o," he admitted, reluctantly.

"Just think," Star went on; "she had him in her lap, and I did not speak one instant too soon, for hardly had I told her that he was mad, when he snapped at her. No; I am glad that I did what was right, and Josephine Richards' life was every bit as precious to me yesterday as that of any one else, and I should have done just the same had she been an enemy a hundred-fold more than she is. She has endeavored to injure me, I know, in every possible way, and, in all the ordinary walks of life, I should let her alone. Her spite and ill-will, however bitter, cannot do me any real harm, although they may annoy me exceedingly, and doubtless will, in the end, rebound upon herself; but I am glad that I did not falter yesterday. I did what I could with the kindest of motives; and if *she* does not feel that she owes me anything, it cannot alter the fact that I did *my* duty."

Mr. Roosevelt regarded her with an almost worshipful look.

"That good book, which you love so well, says that 'a little child shall lead them;' and truly, Star, you in your youth shame me in my maturer years by your Christian spirit," he said, in a humble tone.

Star did not reply, but she looked very happy.

“Surely Uncle Jacob must have been reading some in ‘that good book,’ to quote thus from it,” she thought, while his remark about a Christian spirit told that he was thinking upon the more serious questions of life—all of which was very encouraging to her who had so often been wounded by his bitterness and skepticism.

CHAPTER XXX.

“I LOVE HIM STILL.”

The first of the week following the events just related, Mrs. Richards and her daughter were suddenly “recalled to Brooklyn.”

Newport had become, as Miss Meredith had prophesied, “too hot for them.”

They were gone almost before any one knew that they contemplated going; and, it must be confessed, that it was a great relief to both Star and Mr. Roosevelt when they learned of their flitting, and knew they would be obliged to meet them no more.

Star had recovered her usual health and strength, but she had suffered such a shock that she could not meet or see a dog without a feeling of fear and an almost overpowering weakness, and she never entirely outgrew this feeling during her life.

She had seemed unusually thoughtful, too, since the event. Most people, noticing it, thought it but natural, considering the fearful danger she had been in, but Star had a very different reason for it.

The moment she had returned to consciousness and found herself in Ralph Meredith’s arms, seen his agonized looks, heard his tones of fear, realized the passionate, though trembling clasp in which she was held, the terrible throbbings of his heart as she lay against it, and noted the quiver of his pale lips as he hung over her and begged her to assure him that she was unharmed, she knew that he was no longer what she had hitherto regarded him—merely a kind and congenial friend.

Those signs she had interpreted in a way to make her feel very grave and deeply troubled.

She felt that he regarded her with feelings which she knew it would be impossible for her ever to return, and she feared he was cherishing hopes which, if not “nipped in the bud,” might ruin his whole life.

His every look and act since that day had told her as plainly as words could have done that he loved her, and she was constantly trying to think of some way to make him discover how hopeless his passion was without bringing matters to a crisis.

But this was not to be.

One evening they all went for a walk in the park, where they spent an hour listening to the music and strolling about.

As they were returning, Ralph succeeded in securing Star as a companion; perchance his sister knew his design in so doing, and aided

him by asking Mr. Roosevelt for his arm and making herself as agreeable as she could to him.

"Come this way," Ralph whispered, leading the fair girl down a path at right angles to the one they had been traversing; "we shall all meet at the gate;" and Star could find no reasonable excuse to offer, although her heart beat ominously at the request.

The evening was delightfully cool and pleasant, the air fragrant with the perfume of many flowers, while the music in the distance lent its own enchantment to the place and hour.

It was just the time for Cupid to be busy with his arrows, and Ralph Meredith felt that it was an opportunity not to be lost, and governed himself accordingly.

"Miss Gladstone," he said, abruptly, after a rather awkward silence, "I am obliged to return to New York to-morrow."

"Are you?" Star asked, in surprise. "Is it not a sudden departure?"

"Rather. I had hoped to remain a week longer."

"Surely your sister does not accompany you? I should miss her sorely; I should regret to lose her more than I can tell you."

The young man's face fell. *He* had not been included in her regret. But he rallied, and said, lightly:

"My sister is highly favored, Miss Gladstone; but I had flattered myself that I also should be missed."

"Pardon me, if my words conveyed to you the idea that you would not," Star said, quickly. "You have been most kind, Mr. Meredith, and I shall most certainly miss your companionship and your friendly attentions."

Friendly attentions!

Mr. Meredith had received another stab.

"But," she added, "will Grace go with you? You have not yet told me, and I have not heard her say anything about leaving."

She hoped thus to ward off what she feared was coming, and turn the conversation in another channel.

"No; Grace will remain for another week. But, Miss Gladstone—Star," he began, desperately, "I could not leave without seeking this private interview with you to learn my fate. You have called my attentions 'friendly.' Have you not realized that they have been vastly more than that? Have you not seen that I have grown to love you madly, idolatrously? You are modest as a violet, my bright Star; and although I have tried to win some sign of answering affection from you, yet you have not given me one. You have evaded my every look, my every word of love. But, my beautiful darling, it seems as if my true heart *must* find in yours a fond return. You will tell me to-night, will you not, dear, that you will give

yourself to me? Star, how shall I tell you of the depth of my love?—how you have become so necessary to me, that if you should send me away without hope, the future would hold nothing to tempt me, nothing to make life worth the living. When I held you in my arms last Wednesday, and believed that your life had been endangered—when you lay unconscious upon my breast, close to my heart, so white and still, so exactly as if you *were* dead, I said to myself that I could not, I cared not to live, if you were taken from me. My love, look up into my eyes, lay your hand in mine, and tell me you will give yourself to me.”

He stopped in the path and waited for her answer—waited for her to lay her hand in his, as he had asked her to do, and bid him to hope and be the happiest man in the universe.

But her beautiful golden head was bent, as if weighted with some heavy care or sorrow. The star-like face was pale and downcast, and the lovely eyes, into which he longed to read an answering tale of love, were hidden by their white lids and curling lashes.

“Star,” he breathed, a note of keen pain in his tone, “do not tell me that I must give up my bright dream of joy.”

“Mr. Meredith,” she answered, looking up at him with sudden resolution, “forget for a little while what you have just said to me, and listen, while I read you a page out of my own heart.”

A look of suffering came into his eyes, his lips trembled, and he breathed heavily, but he answered:

“I cannot *‘forget,’* but I will *‘listen,’* as you wish.”

“Nearly two years ago,” Star began, “I came to America in the —, a vessel that sailed from Liverpool to New York. Perhaps you remember that it was lost at sea. I was one of the few who were saved, and afterward picked up by the —, another homeward bound vessel. As I was lifted from the life-boat to the deck of the noble craft, I fainted from exhaustion, and fell into the arms of a stranger, who bore me to a state-room and gave me into the care of a stewardess. I met him a day or two afterward on the deck. He was a noble, manly looking gentleman, some four years my senior. We were thrown much into each other’s society during the remainder of the voyage, and there came into my heart during that time a feeling for him which will prevent me from ever loving another while I live. When we landed we parted as friends, though we exchanged souvenirs, and he expressed the hope that we should meet again. A few months later we did meet, our friendship was renewed, and soon ripened into something deeper—in fact, he won my heart entirely. We were betrothed, and for a few days earth became a paradise to me. I firmly believed him to be all that he appeared. I could have staked my life upon his truth and honor, and I would have defended him with my latest breath

had any one assailed his fair fame or doubted his allegiance to me. But I could not doubt the evidence of my own senses, and he proved himself a traitor in my very presence. He played me false before the vows which he had uttered to me had scarcely grown cold upon his lips. I spurned him with scorn; I denounced him as the traitor and coward which I knew him to be; but, oh, Mr. Meredith, strange as it may seem to you, I—I love him still. Perhaps it is unmaidenly in me to tell you this, perhaps it betrays weakness and a lack of proper dignity on my part; but I feel that I owe it to you, to make you understand how impossible it is for me to reciprocate your affection. He won my girlish heart, he bound me irrevocably to him by the power of his will and the charm of his oily tongue, and I can *never* love another. You will say that he is unworthy of such constancy, or even of a regret. I know he is, and yet while I own it, my soul is reaching after him with all the strength of a deathless love. I began to fear, a week ago, that you were entertaining feelings for me which would bring sorrow upon us both. You say that I have evaded you. I *have* done so; I have tried to show you that the hopes which I feared you were entertaining could never be realized, and I wish that you had never spoken the words which you have to-night; for I know—*you* know, that you could never be satisfied to take any one to your heart who was always turning from you to another, who, although she knew she was loving unworthily, would not yet have the power to keep her affections from straying from you, and who could not keep her vows of allegiance to you, for such vows, if spoken, would be but mockery. Mr. Meredith, you could never be satisfied with such a wife as that,” she concluded, in a voice which shook with emotion.

“No, Miss Gladstone,” he answered, sorrowfully. “I love you too fondly, too devotedly, to be content with anything save an affection as strong and true as my own. But,” with a note of earnest appeal in his tone, “could I not win you by and by? Could I not teach you to love me by proving to you that I am worthy of your love?”

Star shook her head sadly.

“I *know* that you are worthy at this moment,” she said. “I have the deepest respect for you, and value you as a friend; but nothing—no one can ever win the love which I must always bear for Archibald Sherbrooke. He has broken my heart and ruined my life; for I can never be the wife of any worthy man, since I will not live a lie. I can never have a home of my own; I can never have those sweet domestic ties and duties which other women have; I can only try to do my duty by the dear old man who is so fond of me while he lives, and, after that, live out my lonely life with what patience and courage I can,” she concluded, with such a pathos that the

young man for the moment forgot his own sorrow and disappointment in pity for her.

“Where is he—where is this coward who has so imposed upon you, ruined your life, and proved faithless to his troth? Tell me, that I may go and brand him the knave and villain that he is!” Ralph Meredith cried, in hot indignation.

“I do not know where he is,” Star answered. “I have never seen him since that night when I told him that I had discovered his treachery. That was nearly a year ago. I never expect to meet him again—I never *wish* to meet him again. I desire to ignore him—at least, to all outward appearances; and if he possesses such an attribute as a conscience, his punishment must come sometime. But,” she went on, in a voice of pain, “I hope no one else will ever learn to love me, for I cannot endure the thought that I shall spoil other lives as mine has been spoilt. Oh, Mr. Meredith, I am sorry if I have unconsciously done you a wrong. Pray, forget me if you can, and——”

“That I can never do,” he interrupted, gently, for he saw that she was deeply moved; “but I will try and be content if you will allow me still to be your friend.”

“Thank you,” she returned, while she wiped the tears which were falling fast; “it will be a great comfort to me if you will permit me to regard you as such. I feared I should incur your contempt by the confession I have made to-night; but I could better endure that than that your future should be ruined by hoping against hope.”

“Contempt!” he repeated, earnestly; “such a feeling I could never entertain for you; you have, instead, my deepest sympathy and respect. But if I ever meet and know the wretch who has played you false, let him beware; for I will surely make him repent most bitterly his treachery and baseness toward you,” he concluded, fiercely.

A faint smile of scorn curled Star’s lips.

Time would bring its own punishment to her faithless lover, she believed, and she had no desire that any one should act as her champion in this matter.

She had called him “Archibald Sherbrooke” purposely, for she felt assured that if, by any chance, Ralph Meredith should ³⁰¹yet meet him, he would not recognize in Lord Carrol the man of whom she had told him.

CHAPTER XXXI. A NOBLE RESOLUTION.

"You will remember that you have promised that I am still to be your friend; you will not avoid me and deny me the pleasure of your society because of what I have told you to-night?" Ralph pleaded, as he and Star drew near the entrance of the park, and knew that they would soon be rejoined by his sister and Mr. Roosevelt.

Star looked up at him with a grave face.

"You shall still be my friend. I will not avoid you if you will promise me that you will build no false hopes upon our friendship," she said.

"How can I, when you tell me that there is no hope?" he asked, yet his voice trembled and was full of pain.

"May I continue to visit you when you return to New York?" he resumed, after a moment.

"Certainly, as one friend would visit another. You have made my stay here very pleasant, and I should be very sorry not to see you occasionally, while Grace has become almost like a sister to me."

The young man thanked her with glistening eyes, and with a pang at his heart, as he thought how fondly he had hoped to make the two girls sisters, and how rudely his bright dream had been broken.

Then they passed out at the gate, where they found Mr. Roosevelt and Grace awaiting them.

Both saw at a glance that the interview had been a sorrowful one, and Miss Meredith was bitterly disappointed, for she had trusted that Ralph would be able to win the bright, beautiful girl for his wife.

Mr. Roosevelt surmised the cause of Star's rejection of his suit, and sighed heavily, for the young man had been a favorite with him, and he would have been glad to give her to him.

But he would never try to influence her upon matters of such a delicate nature. She should always do exactly as she liked, and he knew that whoever her choice might be, it would never be an unworthy one.

They parted at the door of the hotel, Ralph bidding them good-by there, as he was to leave early in the morning, and Star knew by the way he wrung her hand that he was bidding farewell to hope as well.

When they reached their private parlor, she went directly to Mr. Roosevelt's side and laid her hand upon his arm. Her face was flushed and sad, and he saw at once that she was very unhappy.

"What is it, my starling?" he asked, taking her hand in both of his, and speaking very tenderly.

"Uncle Jacob, I want to go home," she said, wearily.

"Bless you, child! you shall go wherever you like," he said, in surprise, and regarding her anxiously.

"I want to go where you and I can be by ourselves, and where I cannot do any mischief," she said, with a sob of pain, and he knew beyond a doubt that Ralph Meredith had proposed and been rejected.

"Mischief! tut, tut, little one! What has made you so unhappy? Have you sent our young friend away in sorrow?"

Star nodded her head in reply; she could not find voice to answer him.

"He is a fine young man—he is a *worthy* young man," Mr. Roosevelt said, gently.

"Oh, I *know* it, Uncle Jacob; but—*my heart is dead*, and it can never live again. Don't blame me, please—*you* know all about it, and you know that I could not help it and be true to him and myself," she returned, in deep distress.

"You have done everything to make me happy," she went on, a little more calmly, "and I thought I was beginning to be content and to enjoy life once more; but I cannot endure many scenes like what transpired to-night. Let us go home, where I can go to work again, and in my duties there forget, if possible, the misery of the past, which I have been made to live over again to-night."

"We will leave Newport to-morrow, if you wish," Mr. Roosevelt said, after a little thought; "but we will not go back to New York just yet—we will spend two or three weeks in sightseeing first. We will go to the White Mountains, from there to Montreal, then down the St. Lawrence and the lake to Niagara, and then home. That will give us a change and a nice little trip, besides a knowledge of something of the country. It is a long time since I went over that ground, and I think I should enjoy the journey, if the idea pleases you."

He was not going to let her go back to New York and bury herself at home, where she would brood over her trouble and grow pale, thin, and hollow-eyed again; so he put it in the form of a favor to himself.

Star assented, thinking if the trip would give him pleasure she would not say "nay." She only longed to get away from Newport; it would be a change, and a spirit of unrest had suddenly possessed her.

So it was arranged that they should leave the gay resort the next day but one.

"And, Uncle Jacob," Star pleaded, as they were about to retire for the night, "let us not say much about it until to-morrow; let us get away as quietly as possible."

“Very well; we will leave the announcement of our departure as long as we can, without appearing to *run* away,” he answered, understanding her motive.

The next morning Star sought Miss Meredith, and confessed, with many tears, her rejection of her brother.

“I knew he would tell you,” she said, “but I cannot bear that you should blame me, Grace. I have not meant to wrong your brother, and I would give much to make him as happy and free from pain as he was before he knew me. Do not take your friendship from me on account of it, for I need it more than I ever did before.”

And Grace Meredith, not knowing all, kissed her tenderly, while she thought in her heart, “Perhaps I can help to win her for Ralph even yet, if I am patient.”

“Do not grieve,” she said, gently. “I know you have intended no wrong. You cannot help being beautiful and attractive; you cannot help it if people *will* love you. I do not blame you, dear, in the least, and I am sure I should not think of breaking our friendship, which has been so exceedingly pleasant. Ralph did tell me something of this last night, and of course I am sorry for him, for he is a very dear brother, and a noble fellow, too; but these affairs of the heart, you know,” she concluded, smiling and flushing, for she knew something about it herself, “are entirely beyond our control.”

“Thank you, Grace,” Star said, gratefully, although the trouble did not fade out of her azure eyes; “you have lightened my burden considerably. It would have been more than I could bear to make an enemy of you.”

“An enemy, you dear little goose!” Grace cried. “Do you suppose I would be so foolish as to wish to drive you to marry my brother if you could not love him? I love you both too well for that; and now don’t let me hear anything more about broken friendships, unless I do something to forfeit your respect, for it would cause me great sorrow to have anything mar our intimacy.”

Star drew a long breath of relief.

“You are very good to me,” she returned; “and now I have a little message to you from Uncle Jacob.”

“A message from Mr. Roosevelt! Do let me have it, then, for it must be something good,” Miss Meredith said, gayly. She longed to drive the clouds from her friend’s face.

“We are going to leave Newport.”

“Going to leave Newport! When?”

“To-morrow.”

"If that is your message, it is anything but a welcome one," Miss Meredith said, looking very much disturbed.

"Oh, but it isn't," Star replied; "I was to tell you of our plans. We are going from here to the White Mountains, from there to Montreal, down the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario to Niagara, and then home; and Uncle Jacob commissioned me to ask you to be our guest during the trip. Will you go, Grace?"

Miss Meredith looked thoughtful.

It would be a sudden start, but the trip offered great attraction, to say nothing of the pleasure she would experience in Star's and Mr. Roosevelt's society.

Ralph was gone, and if these friends should go also, she would be very lonely, notwithstanding she had many acquaintances here.

"*I want you, Grace; please do not refuse,*" Star pleaded, as she hesitated, and she assented without further demur.

Accordingly, the next day they all left Newport, and many blank faces and wistful eyes watched their departure, for they had formed a nucleus around which a brilliant circle had collected, and they would be sadly missed.

The trip occupied three weeks, and proved a most delightful one also.

Star was a first-rate traveler, Miss Meredith a most pleasant companion, and they all regained much of their accustomed spirits before it was over, and Mr. Roosevelt congratulated himself that he had planned most wisely.

"I think it is charming to travel in this way," Star said, one day while they were at Niagara; "just a few of us who enjoy each other, stopping when we choose, going on when we like, and having everything our own way. I think there is nothing so pleasant as traveling."

"How would you like to go to California and the Yosemite Valley?" Mr. Roosevelt asked.

"*I think* I should like it," she answered, enthusiastically.

"Will you go this fall?"

"Oh, Uncle Jacob, aren't you tired? Do you not need to go home and rest after so much dissipation?" the young girl asked, but her eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed with anticipation.

"Do you call it dissipation to travel?" he asked, smiling at her eagerness. "I enjoy it almost more than anything else."

"*Almost more,*" Star repeated, quickly. "What *would* you enjoy more?"

"To see *you* perfectly happy," he replied, tenderly; "and," he added, "I believe that traveling does you fully as much good as anything else. We

will go home and rest a week, then we will start for the far West. What do you say to my plan?"

Miss Meredith's face lighted.

"Say 'yes' to it, by all means, Star," she said, "and—I will go with you, if you will have me."

"If we will have you," Star returned, with dancing eyes. "Why, I think it would be the very nicest thing in all the world—we three, with Mrs. Blunt to look after us, do have such delightful, cozy times."

"I have been wishing for just such an opportunity for a long time," Grace said, "and if you will take me along with you, I should esteem it a great favor."

"I think with Star, that it would be the best arrangement in the world; and, Miss Meredith, we shall consider you a member of our party," Mr. Roosevelt said, with a bow and a smile to that young lady.

Star looked up into the old gentleman's face.

"Uncle Jacob, how *good* you are to me!" she said; and her red lips trembled over the words, for she knew that he had planned all this expressly for her sake, to keep her thoughts pleasantly employed and from brooding over the past.

"My dear, do I not owe my life and all that I am at present enjoying to you?" he asked, gravely. "Remember," he added, "that when you are happy I am happy also, and *vice versa*; whatever cloud darkens your sky is sure to bring sorrow to me also; so let us make the most of our lives while we have them."

Star looked up brightly after Mr. Roosevelt's last remark, and glancing archly from him to Miss Meredith, said:

"Well, if so much depends upon my decision—if I hold the fate of two such important people in my hands, I shall be obliged to say, we will go to California and be happy. But," she added, laughing, "I warn you both beforehand that I shall not be easily satiated; I shall want to go everywhere and see everything. Yes; we will go home and rest a week, then turn our faces toward the 'golden gate,' and—'westward, ho!'"

CHAPTER XXXII.

“I PROMISE.”

On returning to New York, Star learned that Ralph Meredith had sailed for Europe a couple of days before their arrival.

The week that they had promised themselves for rest at home proved to be a busy one instead, for considerable preparation was necessary for the long journey they were contemplating, as it was to occupy three or four months.

Star was glad to be at home again, and went flitting about the house, full of business and life.

One day they were out making a few necessary purchases, when suddenly, in one of the stores, they came upon Mr. Richards.

He looked aged and care-worn, neglected and unhappy. His face lighted with momentary pleasure, however, when he caught sight of Mr. Roosevelt and Star, and he came forward to greet them with extended hand.

“I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you once more,” he said, heartily. “I am not going to reproach you either for running away from us, for, unpleasant as it is for me to say it, I could not blame you under the circumstances. But it is only within a week or two that I have learned of the change in your life; and, Uncle Jacob, I am sincerely glad that you did not lose your fortune, as we supposed.”

“Thank you. Then you do not feel aggrieved over the ruse I played upon you?” replied Mr. Roosevelt, regarding him searchingly.

“Not at all; it was no more than right that you should wish to know who was worthy to be your heir,” but he sighed heavily as he spoke, as he remembered how unworthy his wife had proved herself to be.

“How goes the world with you?” Mr. Roosevelt asked, and noticing the return of the care-worn look to Mr. Richards’ face.

“Rather discouragingly just now. I have met with some pretty heavy losses lately; don’t know whether I shall be able to pull through all right or not. A couple of weeks will tell the story, however.”

He spoke in a desperate tone, and there was a look in his eyes that made Star shudder and involuntarily draw closer to Mr. Roosevelt.

“You don’t mean that you are in danger of going under?” he said, in surprise, and remembering how his wife and daughter had flourished at Newport.

“Just that,” Mr. Richards returned, nervously; “but if it was not for the horror I have of debt, and the thought that others must suffer through

me, I would gladly lay down my arms and give up the battle; I am tired to death of this endless struggle to keep up appearances. But," he added, trying to speak more cheerfully, "I won't bore you with my troubles. How well you are both looking; and Star—they tell me *you* are the author of 'Chatsworth's Pride.' I declare I was never prouder of anything in my life when I heard it. I always knew you'd make your mark in the world."

Star colored. She was a trifle sensitive regarding compliments of this kind, and never talked about her book if she could help it, except with those whom she was sure were her true friends.

But she thanked him gracefully, and then turned the conversation to some other topic, while all the time she was wondering if there was not something that she could do to help or comfort him in his trouble.

"Now that I have found you," he said, later, "tell me where you live and I will come to see you. I will not invite you to Brooklyn," he continued, with a frown, "for I know you could not come there with any comfort, though I should be glad enough to see you there."

While he was speaking, Star had drawn a little back, so that Mr. Roosevelt was between her and Mr. Richards, and he could not see her face at all.

"Uncle Jacob," she whispered, close to his ear, "cannot we do something to help him out of his trouble? He looks so wild and desperate that he frightens me. He was always kind to me, and I'll willingly give up California or anything else you please."

Jacob Roosevelt's face flushed hotly at these words, and a strange gleam came into his fine eyes. He appeared to take no notice of her plea, but after giving Mr. Richards their street and number, continued:

"If you have no other engagement, George, come up and dine with us to-night, and see how cozy we are. We have dinner at six, and as we leave for California on Wednesday night, I am afraid we shall not see you again."

George Richards caught his breath with a sudden gasp at this intelligence, and Star noticed again that frenzied gleam in his eyes which had made her heart throb painfully.

"California, do you?" he said, trying to speak steadily. "Well, I will come, of course, then; for life is uncertain, you know, and I may never see you again," he added, with a harsh, grating laugh. "Thank you for the invitation, and as I have no engagement, I will be on hand in season for dinner. But I must be off now, for I have agreed to meet a couple of gentlemen at twelve, and it only wants fifteen minutes of that now."

He lifted his hat and bowed to them, then turned away; but the white-haired gentleman and the beautiful girl who stood looking after him saw the aged, dejected look return almost instantly to his face, and

heard the heavy sigh that escaped his lips, telling of some fearful burden of care that was wearing his life away.

“So you want me to help George Richards out of his trouble, do you, Star?” Mr. Roosevelt said, on their way home, and his eyes rested fondly on the graceful figure sitting by his side, driving her pretty gray ponies.

“Perhaps it was presuming in me to ask you to do so, Uncle Jacob,” Star answered, gravely, and flushing a vivid crimson; “but I feel very sorry for him. He was kind to me in many ways while I was living with his family, and but for him I should have been made a common servant.”

When George Richards was ushered into Jacob Roosevelt’s luxurious and cozy dining-room that evening, where the table was laid with exquisite taste for three, his eyes lighted, and the look of care vanished as if by magic from his face.

Three times after dessert Star made Mr. Richards let her fill his tiny cup with the delicious coffee; then she playfully told him that she should not give him any more, but if he would come into the library, she would try and see what she could do toward intoxicating him in some other way.

“I have not forgotten how fond you are of music,” she added, smiling, “and I want you to tell me if you do not think I have improved some since you last heard me play.”

She slipped her hand through his arm and led him into the library, while Mr. Roosevelt watched her with humorous eyes as she performed this labor of love.

Seated at the piano, she whiled away another hour, making George Richards forget everything disagreeable, and appear the pleasant, genial gentleman whom she used to know.

“‘Richard is almost himself again,’ I think,” she thought, with a happy little smile, as once, after a comic song which she sang to him, he leaned back in his chair and laughed long and heartily.

But this could not go on forever, and finally Mr. Roosevelt ³¹²gradually led him to talk business, and asked him to tell him just what his trouble was.

This changed everything, and he became at once the anxious, care-worn man again.

“I do not like to trouble you, Uncle Jacob,” he said, uneasily. “You have had your day of business, with all its cares and perplexities, without bothering your brain with those of other people. I’m in a terrible muddle, it is true; but—I guess there will be *some way* out of it;” and there came into his eyes that same wild, desperate look which Star had noticed in the morning, and which made her shudder with a terrible fear.

But Mr. Roosevelt insisted, and finally drew from him a true statement of facts.

"I am sorry you are having such a hard time of it, George," he said, thoughtfully, when he had concluded. "How much would it take to relieve you of your embarrassment?"

Mr. Richards cast a startled look at the old gentleman at this question; then, while a deep flush mounted to his brow, he said:

"I can raise enough to meet all my present liabilities with ten thousand dollars. I have tried to borrow it everywhere, but everybody seems to have become suddenly shy of me for some reason, and I might as well be without a dollar in the world as without the whole amount. If I *could* raise it, it would set me on my legs again, for my credit would be good, and, with care and patience, I believe I could retrieve my position."

Star almost held her breath while she waited for Mr. Roosevelt's reply to this.

To her infinite surprise, he turned to her.

"My dear," he said, gently, "you shall return some of the kindness of which you told me this morning. I think you understand what I want you to do."

He glanced as he concluded toward the private drawer in his desk, where he always kept his check-book, and she knew that he wanted her to go and fill out a check for the amount that Mr. Richards had named.

She arose, went to the desk, unlocked the drawer with trembling fingers, and drew forth the book.

Opening it, she filled out a check, as she had often done for him during the last few months, then tearing it out, carried it to him, with a pen filled with ink.

He turned it over and wrote his name on the back without a word, and then returned it to her to sign.

She took it mechanically, but stood irresolute for a moment, looking at him, while her cheeks grew crimson.

"Give it to him, dear; it is to be your gift," Mr. Roosevelt said, glancing at Mr. Richards, who sat staring at them both in blank amazement.

A brilliant smile parted Star's red lips; she shot a grateful look at Uncle Jacob, and advancing to their visitor's side, laid the check down before him.

One glance at the figures, and the overburdened man bowed his head upon the table with a groan.

"I cannot take it! I cannot take it—and from *you*, of all persons!" he said, brokenly.

"Why not from her?" Mr. Roosevelt asked, huskily. "All that I have belongs to this dear girl, and, as I have told her many times, I live only to make her happy. *She* asked me to do this to-day after we had met you,

because, she said, you had been kind to her in the past, and she longed to help you out of your trouble. So take it as her gift, my boy; make the best use of it that you can, and welcome.”

George Richards groaned again, while he reached forth and grasped the old man’s hand, wringing it in silent gratitude, yet overwhelmed with shame and remorse as he remembered all that he and the fair-haired, gentle girl standing beside him had suffered while they were members of his family.

He had no words of thanks to offer for this generous help in time of need, but if ever a world-weary heart was relieved of a burden too heavy to be borne, his was, when at length he folded that precious bit of paper and put it away for future use.

When he arose to take his leave, he took both of Star’s hands in his and drew her aside, where he could speak to her alone.

“But for you,” he said, in unsteady tones, “I should have been a ruined man a week hence. To tell you that I am *ashamed* to receive this gift from you does not express half what I feel, when I look back and remember your position in my family. But you have bestowed it so kindly and delicately that it would be churlish in me to refuse it; and you have taught me a lesson which, God helping me, I will never forget—a lesson of forgiveness and charity; and *no one* in my house shall ever be treated unkindly again, no matter what their position may be,” he concluded, with stern resolution.

“Please forget all the past, Mr. Richards,” Star returned, sweetly, but with evident embarrassment. “I never entertained any feeling save that of gratitude and good-will toward you, for you proved yourself interested in my welfare in more instances than one while I was with you. But,” she added, solemnly, while she clung tightly to his hands, and looked into his eyes with an expression which made them droop guiltily before her, “will you not promise me that, no matter how dark the future may be to you, no matter what trials or disappointments may come to you, you will never again meditate *doing yourself an irreparable wrong?*”

A streak of dusky red shot across the man’s forehead, while his veins filled out hard and full.

“Star,” he stammered, “what do you mean?—what do you know?”

“*You* know what I mean. I read it in your eyes, I heard it in the tones of your voice this morning. But, oh! my friend,” and her voice was full of tears, “remember that you are ‘bought with a price’—you are *not your own*. Promise me.”

He raised her hands and kissed them reverently, and two hot tears rolled over his cheeks and dropped upon them in the act.

"I promise," he whispered, hoarsely. "My child, I should indeed have been ruined, body and soul, but for you. God bless you!"

Star and Mr. Roosevelt followed him to the door as he went out, both trying to cheer him with kind wishes for the future.

"Good-night and good-by," the young girl said, in tones that sounded to him like an angel's voice, as she stood in the door-way and watched him go down the steps. "Be sure to come and see us again when we return; the latch-string is always out, as they say at the West, for our friends."

A mighty sob burst from the overcharged heart of George Richards as he reached the street, and the tears—tears of mingled remorse, gratitude, and relief—rolled thick and fast over his face.

"Thank God," he murmured, fervently, "for the light of that 'star' in the midst of what was worse than Stygian darkness. But for its friendly beams and cheering influence, I should have been lost indeed."

He had proceeded some distance, when he stopped short and seemed about to retrace his steps.

"How thoughtless of me!" he muttered, impatiently. "I meant to tell her all about Lord Carrol. He deserves to be set right with her, and she deserves—well, *nothing* can be too good for her; but they knocked everything out of my head by their unexampled generosity. I will not go back to-night," he added, after thinking a moment; "I will write her to-morrow the whole story."

But the morrow brought its busy cares and perplexities, and his resolution was forgotten. After that it was too late, for he did not know where to address her during her absence; and so Star still believed her lover to be false, and still mourned her shattered idol.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“YOU ARE THE TRAITOR.”

Mr. Rosevelt, Star, and Grace Meredith, with good-natured Mrs. Blunt to attend to matters of comfort, started on the day appointed for their Western trip, full of bright anticipations of the pleasures in store for them; and while they are gone, we will follow Ralph Meredith on his voyage across the Atlantic to the old world.

Arriving in London, he transacted what business he had to do there, and then turned his attention, with what interest he could muster while his heart was still so sore from his recent disappointment, to the attractions which the great city afforded.

He visited the House of Parliament, the Tower, St. Paul's Cathedral, the National Gallery of Art, and many other points of interest, reserving Westminster Abbey until the last, as he wished to give plenty of time to this wonderful and magnificent structure and its countless curiosities.

Upon his second visit thither, and while he was in the chapel of Henry the Seventh, with his guide, who was pointing out for his admiration the beauties of its architecture, the vaulted roof, with its magnificent carvings, and many precious relics gathered there, a clear, sweet voice suddenly broke the solemn stillness of the place by calling out just behind him:

“Why, Archie Sherbrooke, do you know what time it is? Quarter past eleven, and we promised Lady Dunham that we would be back in season to attend the rehearsal at the Albert Memorial Hall with her.”

Ralph had thought that he was the only visitor there that morning, and that silvery voice speaking that name, which he remembered but too well, gave him a shock which sent the blood coursing like fire through his veins.

“It is later than I thought, Vivien; we must go at once, if we keep that appointment,” a rich, manly voice said in reply; and turning quickly to look at the speaker, Ralph saw a tall, handsome young man of perhaps two or three-and-twenty, with the head of an Apollo, the form of an Adonis, and having a keen, intellectual face, with frank, truthful eyes, and a pleasant, winning smile.

The lady who accompanied, and who addressed him, was a year or two younger evidently, and *almost* as lovely as Star, Ralph thought, although her beauty was of a different style.

Archie Sherbrooke! There surely could not be two young men of the same age, handsome as one of the gods, and bearing the same name.

His heart had bounded into his throat as he heard it spoken, his face had flushed a painful crimson, while his hands instinctively clinched themselves in hot indignation, and he longed to confront the handsome traitor and denounce him for the villainous part he had played.

This, then, must be the man who had broken Star Gladstone's heart and ruined her life; there was not a doubt of it in his own mind.

Yes, he was sure this was the Archibald Sherbrooke of whom Star had told him.

Who, then, was the woman who had been with him? Was it his wife?

He did not think she was his sister, for, except in the color of her hair, she did not resemble him in the least.

Were they Americans, and traveling, like himself, in the kingdom?

Perhaps, if they were married, they were thus spending the honeymoon; but they had spoken of "Lady Dunham" in a way to make him doubt that they were his countrymen.

Such thoughts as these tortured him, and he became possessed to seek out the young man and discover if he were indeed Star's recreant lover.

The young lady had spoken of a rehearsal at the Albert Hall. He knew there was to be a concert there that evening, and possibly it might be an outgrowth of the rehearsal. He would go and see.

Accordingly, at the hour designated upon the bills, he went, armed with a powerful opera-glass, and procuring a conspicuous seat, he swept tier after tier of faces, searching for those which he had seen in the morning.

But disappointment was the result of his efforts; for that fair, girlish face was nowhere to be seen, nor could he find him who had been the young lady's attendant.

Suddenly, however, a strangely sweet, bird-like voice, rising clear and full on the air, drew his attention to the stage, and there, with a thrill which tingled through every nerve, he saw the lovely girl for whom he was looking.

Ralph Meredith sought for her name upon his programme, which stated that the concert was given, under the auspices of some of the nobility, for some charitable object, and that the talent was all amateur.

"Miss Vivien Sherbrooke," he read, and he again experienced that sudden heart-throb.

She was not, then, Archibald Sherbrooke's wife, but, in all probability, his sister.

He listened intently throughout her song; and then, as the ³¹⁹sweet voice died away, and she turned to leave the stage, he leaned breathlessly

forward to watch her, while thunders of applause went rolling up into the heights above him.

She came back again after a moment, slightly flushed at the *encore*, but in a graceful, modest way, and sang a simple ballad.

She was as sweet and charming as she could be, and when at length she ceased and went away again, Ralph Meredith heard a long-drawn breath, as of relief, directly behind him, while a voice said:

"I believe Vivien *never* sang so well before; but I am glad that part of the programme is over."

"Yes," replied deeper, but more familiar tones; "I was a trifle anxious myself, although I know she never fails in what she undertakes. Vivien is a jewel!"

"You are right, Archie. So is my son; and I am surprised that, at your age, some one has not won you both away from me," returned the lady, in suppressed, but fond and playful tones.

"You are not anxious to get rid of either of us, I hope, mother?"

"No, indeed; and yet it would be expected in the natural course of events; and with so many fair maidens and gallant young gentlemen playing the agreeable to me, I cannot but feel some curiosity as to who will eventually get my treasures."

There was no reply to this speech, but Ralph was sure he heard a sigh.

After a few moments he turned and ran his eye with seeming carelessness over the sea of faces behind him, glancing at those two to whose conversation he had just been listening.

It was even as he had surmised when he heard that manly voice.

Archibald Sherbrooke sat directly behind him, and beside him a noble, matronly looking woman whom he closely resembled; ³²⁰but there was an unmistakable look of pain upon the young man's face, and a wistful, anxious look in his handsome eyes.

"Not married, after all this time, and with that sorrowful face and bitter sigh. I begin to think there may have been a misunderstanding of some kind, instead of a willful wrong," he said to himself. "He does not look like a man to prove treacherous to a woman," he added; "there is something noble and prepossessing about him; and yet Star said she denounced him to his face."

When the concert was over, and while he was slowly passing out with the crowd, some one at his side suddenly exclaimed:

"Halloa, Meredith! where on earth did you come from?" and a friendly hand grasped and shook his with a vigorous cordiality.

"Alden! is it you?" he cried, in return. "I might ask the same question of you, since I had not a thought of seeing you here; but since it

is evident that we are both Americans, it is safe to assume that we came from 'over the seas and far away.'"

"When did you arrive? Where are you stopping, and how long do you stay in London?" demanded Alden, his tongue going like a race-horse.

"Well," Ralph returned, laughing, "you mean to know all about me, I see. I arrived a week ago yesterday; I am stopping at the Midland Grand, and my stay is—indefinite."

"Good! but now I have found you, I mean to keep an eye upon you. I tell you it sets a fellow up wonderfully to see a home-face. Have you any other engagement for this evening?"

"No."

"Then come with me. I have an invitation to Lady Stamfield's reception—and, by the by, she does entertain charmingly—with permission to bring as many friends as I choose. Come; ³²¹my lady is a delightful hostess, besides having two of the loveliest daughters in the world."

"Such an inducement as the latter I am unable to resist," Ralph responded, with a smile. "I will come with pleasure."

"You're a sensible fellow," replied young Alden, as, linking his arm familiarly in that of his friend, he led him away.

Ralph found Stamfield House a delightful place. Lady Stamfield all, and more, than Herbert Alden had promised him in the way of a hostess, and the Misses Stamfield, young ladies of eighteen and twenty, pretty and talented, and entertaining enough to make an hour or two pass very agreeably.

He was very cordially received upon being presented by his friend, and introduced to a number of pleasant people, and he began to think that he had not seen the best side of London after all, since he had not heretofore been favorably impressed with its citizens.

After he had danced two or three times, young Alden sought him again, and took him away to the billiard-room, which, for that evening, had been set apart for a smoking-room.

"I want to introduce you to some fine fellows," he said, on the way thither, "'bang up' boys, we should say in America, who will give you a good time while you stay here."

He found a dozen or twenty young men gathered in the billiard-room, and was introduced to several of them by his friend.

He spent half an hour very pleasantly there, and then began to think that it was time that he was getting back to his hotel, for it was a long distance from that portion of the city.

He stood by the billiard-table alone for a moment, waiting to bid young Alden good-night, when suddenly he heard his voice at his elbow, introducing him to "Lord Carrol, of Carrolton."

He half put out his hand, glanced up at the stranger, started, withdrew it, and bowed stiffly to his lordship. He had recognized Archibald Sherbrooke!

The fine, genial face of the young peer clouded at the act and his cool greeting; but, with his natural good-breeding, he appeared not to heed it, and expressed his pleasure at the meeting; while Alden, the introduction over, turned away, leaving them together.

"I beg your pardon," Ralph said, the hot blood mounting to his brow, for his loyal heart could not forget Star and her wrongs, "I have heard you addressed twice to-day by another name—Archibald Sherbrooke. Has my friend made a mistake in introducing you to me as Lord Carrol?"

His lordship laughed, and his face cleared instantly.

"No," he said; "I am both Archibald Sherbrooke and Lord Carrol. I am troubled with a plurality of names, which frequently cause mistakes, some of which are ludicrous, and some—painful."

This last statement was supplemented with a heavy sigh.

"But," he added, more lightly, "I will shake hands with you over either," and he extended his hand again.

But Ralph would not take it.

He drew back a step, and bent a perplexed look upon his companion's face.

"Pardon me again," he said; "but before I take your hand, allow me to ask you a single question."

"Certainly; a dozen if you like," Lord Carrol answered, haughtily, for Ralph's refusal to take his hand had hurt him keenly.

"You have been in America?"

"Yes."

"You met there a young lady by the name of Miss Stella Gladstone?"

Lord Carrol started as from a sudden shock, and grew pale to his lips.

"Stella Gladstone! What can you tell me of Star Gladstone?" he demanded, hoarse from emotion.

"That her heart is broken—her life ruined," Ralph Meredith answered, sternly, for he knew now that he had found his man, and he meant to show him no mercy.

He trembled with excitement, and his fingers ached to strangle the villain and coward who had so basely betrayed the trust of the loveliest woman on earth.

"Her life ruined! *Don't* tell me that," Lord Carrol whispered, with white lips, while the look of agony which leaped to his eyes would have moved the hardest heart, had it been less sore than Ralph Meredith's.

"Yes, and *you* are the traitor who is accountable for it," he answered, hotly.

The young man flushed, and he drew himself up with sudden dignity, struggling to regain his self-possession, which had been sadly disturbed at the mention of that dearly loved name.

"You forget yourself, sir," he said, haughtily. "What right have you to address me thus? Why do *you* speak to me in this way of Miss Gladstone, and arraign me for what you assert?"

"Why should I *not*?" Ralph Meredith demanded, in low, fierce tones. "Did she not tell me with her own lips of your baseness and treachery? And do you think that I can take the hand of the man, were he twice a lord, who has ruined the life of"—"the only woman whom I ever loved," he was about to add, but something restrained him and made him substitute—"an angel?"

Archibald Sherbrooke was very pale now. He was a proud, brave young man, and all the hot blood in his composition had been aroused by this sudden and unexpected attack from the stranger to whom he had been introduced by a mutual friend.

He had uttered words which, under any other circumstances, would have made him fell him to the ground and chastise him for his insolence.

But he controlled himself, for he saw that Ralph was a noble fellow, although he had constituted himself the champion of the woman whom he still loved with a deathless love, and meant to avenge her wrongs if he was assured that he had found the right man.

He reasoned, too, that he must be laboring under the same mistake of which Star had been the victim, and that the only way to deal with him would be to explain just how matters stood.

Besides, a wild hope was springing up in his heart that through him he might be able to find her whom he had lost, and whom he never ceased for one moment to love.

He laid his hand on Ralph's arm, and the young man felt it tremble with the emotion which thrilled him.

"Come with me," he said, in a low, earnest voice, "where we can be by ourselves, and I will talk this matter over with you. There has been a terrible mistake, and my two names have been the cause of it all. I loved Star Gladstone devotedly; I love her to-day. I have done her no wrong, as I will explain to you, and nothing would have kept me from her side if she had not hid herself from me. Come."

He linked his arm familiarly within Ralph's, and drew him from the room to a small antechamber leading from the hall, and shut the door, while the young man was dumb with astonishment at what he heard, and began to feel as if he had got himself into a very unpleasant predicament by his rashness.

CHAPTER XXXIV. MUTUAL EXPLANATIONS.

"Have *I* made a mistake? Have I wronged you?" Ralph Meredith asked, when the door was shut, while he gazed blankly at his companion, and feeling convinced in his heart that no man could show the emotion which Lord Carrol manifested at the mention of Star, and willfully betray her.

"If I were not confident that you *had* made a mistake," his lordship returned, drawing himself up with dignity, though he was still very pale and deeply agitated—"if I did not believe that you share in the misunderstanding which has been the cause of all Miss Gladstone's trouble and my own exceeding sorrow, I could not pass lightly over the disparaging imputation which you have cast upon me to-night. I am no traitor, Mr. Meredith. I have never willingly wronged Miss Gladstone, for I have loved her, and I *do* love her to-day, with a deathless love. My plurality of names, as I told you before," he went on, with a wan smile, "has been the cause of it all; and if Star has unconsciously been made a victim on account of it, I also have suffered in no small degree. Sit down, Mr. Meredith, and let me tell you all about it;" and he motioned him to a chair.

"Not until I have apologized for my rash words to you, my lord," Ralph said, in a manly, straightforward way, and advancing to him, convinced now of his honor, and that he had never intended Star even a thought of harm. "Miss Gladstone," he continued, "confided the story of her grief to me only a short time before I sailed for Europe, although she did not enter into particulars very minutely. I think she had not the slightest idea that I should ever meet you, but I made up my mind at the time that if I ever did come in contact with 'Archibald Sherbrooke,' which was the only name by which she designated you, that I should make him answer for the wrong which I believed he had done her. I saw you to-day with a lady in the chapel of Henry the Seventh, at Westminster Abbey. I heard her call you by the name that I remembered only too well, and was convinced I had found Miss Gladstone's recreant knight. I resolved at once to remain in London beyond the time I had originally intended, look you up, and call you to account for what you had done. You were at the concert in the Albert Hall this evening, but I had no thought of meeting you when I came hither, at the invitation of my friend Alden. You can imagine, perhaps, something of the shock which I experienced when

he introduced you as Lord Carrol. This will explain why I refused your hand, and why I addressed you in the way I did."

"I cannot blame you in the least, under the circumstances," Lord Carrol returned, smiling.

"Your words, however," Ralph went on, "regarding the young lady in question, convince me that you are entirely guiltless, and have been as great a sufferer from an unfortunate misunderstanding as herself. I trust you will accept my explanation, and also my hand with it," he concluded, extending his hand to the young peer.

Lord Carrol grasped and shook it warmly.

"I have no right to harbor any ill-will toward you for espousing so gallantly the cause of one who is very dear to me," he said, cordially; "and perhaps, after all, this meeting, which at first promised to end in a stormy manner, may be the means of restoring happiness to two very unhappy people."

"I feel assured that such will be the case," Ralph answered, but there was a keen pain in his heart, notwithstanding.

Lord Carrol now wheeled a chair forward and made him sit down; then, taking another near him, he related in substance what he had already told Mr. Richards regarding his relations with Star, the erroneous conclusions she had jumped at upon learning of his title, her refusal to allow him to explain his position to her, and her flight on the morning after her painful discovery.

Ralph Meredith found it hard to conceal the bitterness which he experienced, as he realized how gladly Star would give herself to her manly lover when she learned of his fidelity. His heart was still sore over his recent disappointment, but his nature was too noble, he was too generous in his love for her, to wish to place a single obstacle in the way of her happiness, or of the man whom he now deemed worthy of her in every respect.

He gave Lord Carrol a history of Star's life during the last year, telling him of her success as a young authoress, and of the happy change in her worldly circumstances as the acknowledged ward and heiress of Jacob Rosevelt, the millionaire. He spoke also of the admiration which her grace and beauty had excited during the past season at Newport.

"I am glad," Archibald Sherbrooke said, earnestly, and his lip trembled as he spoke, "that her life has been made so much brighter during the past year, and I shall always be grateful to Mr. Rosevelt for his kindness; and yet I am almost selfish enough to wish that *I* could have been the one to raise her to a more congenial sphere. I shall go to the United States at once. I must seek her and set myself right with her as

soon as possible. Will you be so good as to give me Mr. Roosevelt's address?"

"With pleasure," Ralph responded; "but you will not find them in New York just at present, for they, with my sister—who is a very intimate friend of Miss Gladstone's—are traveling in the far West, and will not return under three or four months."

Lord Carrol looked thoughtful and disappointed at this intelligence.

"I must wait, then," he said, with a sigh, "until their return. The time will seem very long, although I am greatly needed here just now, and it would be much to my own disadvantage were I to leave before my affairs are in a more settled state; but I should let no pecuniary consideration deter me from going to Star if I was sure I should find her. However, I must submit to the inevitable; and now, Mr. Meredith," he concluded, with a genial smile, "what can I do to make your stay in our city pleasant? I am at your disposal for any length of time."

"Thank you, my lord. My business will not permit my tarrying much longer just now; but I intend to return to London in the course of three or four months, and shall hope to meet you again then," Ralph answered.

"I shall most certainly see to it that we *do* meet again," Lord Carrol returned; "and now, if you have no engagement for to-morrow, will you do me the honor to dine with me?"

"It will give me great pleasure to do so. I have no other engagement," Mr. Meredith returned.

He was growing to admire Star Gladstone's handsome lover exceedingly, notwithstanding the fact that he was his own rival.

"Thanks. Now come with me and let me introduce you to my mother and sister, who are both here at Stamfield House; and, Mr. Meredith," the young lord added, grasping his hand again, and speaking with emotion, "I cannot be sufficiently grateful to you, for you have put new life and hope into my heart to-night."

Ralph tried to feel generously glad for this, but it was not in human nature not to experience a pang over the happiness which he knew was in store for him, especially when he knew, too, that it would be at the expense of his own.

"I am very glad if I have been able to atone in any way for my rudeness upon first meeting you," he said, smiling faintly.

"Do not mention it; you were espousing a good cause, and through your championship I shall regain what is far dearer to me than life; so we will forget the unpleasantness of a moment, and I trust I may call you my friend in the future."

Lord Carrol then led the way back to Lady Stamfield's drawing-room, where, seeking his mother and sister, he presented his new friend to them.

Mrs. Sherbrooke Ralph found to be a handsome, genial matron, with a large heart and plenty of Christian charity, although it was plainly to be seen that her two children, in her estimation, were perfect in every respect.

No one ever before possessed a more noble and devoted son; no one had so charming a daughter.

Miss Vivien Sherbrooke was truly that; she was even more beautiful than she had appeared to be when he saw her on the stage in the character of a songstress.

She was vivacious and witty, and exerted herself to the utmost to be entertaining to her brother's new acquaintance, and Ralph actually forgot himself and the haunting pain which had hitherto pursued him during all his wanderings, while talking with her and listening to her bright conversation, and watching her quick, graceful motions.

"Archie tells me that you are coming to dine with us to-morrow, Mr. Meredith," she said, as her mother came to tell her that it was time for them to go.

"Yes, I believe I am to have that pleasure," he returned, with a glance of admiration into her sparkling eyes.

"I am glad, for I have a hundred questions to ask you about America which only a true American can answer. You will be sure to come?"

"I certainly shall," he replied, thinking that those clear gray ³³⁰eyes, looking so frankly and smilingly into his, were about as beautiful as any he had ever seen.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MRS. RICHARDS' GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

The following day Mr. Meredith, according to his promise, went to dine with Lord Carrol at his mother's elegant mansion near Belgrave Square.

After the meal was over, and the other guests comfortably disposed of, Archie took his friend up into the "sanctum," as he called it, for a smoke and a quiet talk.

If Lord Carrol suspected anything of the feeling which Ralph had entertained for Star, he gave no sign, but confided to him, as they sat there together, more of his hopes and plans for the future, and spoke with much more of freedom regarding Star than he had done the day before.

When they had finished their cigars, Lord Carrol arose and said:

"Come inside, Mr. Meredith, and I will show you one of my treasures."

He went back into his "sanctum," followed by Ralph, and passing by all the beautiful paintings, drawings, and engravings which hung upon the walls, he walked to an easel which stood in a corner, and removing a cloth that covered it, stepped back for his friend to look.

Ralph Meredith gave one look, and then exclaimed, in unfeigned surprise:

"Star!"

"Yes, it is Star," Lord Carrol said, with a tender smile, as he looked upon the portrait. "I am glad you recognize her, for I should be sorry if she had changed so much that you could not. This is a picture which I love, and which I keep for myself alone. It is very seldom that I show it to any one, and I have never told its history to any living being until I told it to you last night. As she stood there that morning in her modest beauty, severing that tress at my request, I began to love her with a love that will never die while I live. I have that little lock of gold here now, Mr. Meredith," he said, touching the diamond-studded locket which hung from his watch-chain, "and untold wealth could not purchase it from me. Here is the cameo also which I gave her in exchange, and of which I told you, too, last night," and he held up his left hand, on the little finger of which gleamed the ring that Josephine Richards had made of it. "Ah," he added, with a sigh, "it is hard to think that she could believe me so false—so treacherous and cowardly, as to win her love and then cast it aside as of no value."

"Yet it was very natural for her to think so under the circumstances," Ralph returned, thoughtfully. "You must realize that yourself, for you say that on Saturday you declared your affection for her under the name of Archibald Sherbrooke, and won an expression of her own for you in return; while on the Monday following you appeared in Mr. Richards' family as Lord Carrol, who, she had been told, was a suitor for his daughter's hand. It does not seem strange to me that she should think the very worst of you. You certainly were in a false position before her, and it must have been a severe blow to her pride as well as to her affection; for, as we have seen, Miss Gladstone is not lacking either in self-respect or spirit."

"No, I suppose it is not strange; but, oh! if she would but have given me one minute, I could have convinced her of her mistake, and all the sorrow that has followed might have been avoided," sighed the young lord, as, with another fond glance at the picture, he covered it again and turned away.

"You will be more successful when you go to her again," Ralph said, cheerfully.

"Yes," Archie returned, with firmly compressed lips; "Miss Gladstone *will* listen to me when I go to her again. It is but right that she should hear my justification, whether she receives it favorably or otherwise."

"I have no fear of the result," his guest returned, smiling; "for Miss Gladstone acknowledged to me that, in spite of her belief in your unworthiness, her affection for you remained the same."

A flush of joy shot over Lord Carrol's face at this.

"Did she tell you that?" he asked, eagerly. "Then I will doubt no more; and I have *you* to thank for bestowing such happiness upon me as I never expected to know again."

They spent a half hour longer looking at other pictures, but sweet sounds coming up again from the drawing-room distracted Ralph's attention and tempted him below.

"Do I not hear the fair songstress of last night again?" he asked.

"Yes, that is Vivien singing," replied her brother.

"I am very fond of music; shall we rejoin the company?"

They went down, and, seeking the fair Vivien's side, Ralph Meredith spent a most delightful evening, the memory of which clung to him for many a week afterward.

The next morning he left London for a three-months' tour through Scotland, Ireland, and the Continent.

Mrs. Richards sat in her handsome boudoir one morning a few weeks later, reading a newspaper.

Something had evidently gone wrong with her, for her face was overcast, an angry red glowed in her cheeks, and her eyes gleamed with a sullen fire.

The reason for this was the flat refusal, on the part of Mr. Richards, to accede to her immoderate demand for five hundred dollars, to purchase for herself and Josephine new dresses for the coming winter, and she had just returned to her room after the stormy interview.

"I cannot let you have a dollar," he had said, with a gravity almost amounting to sternness, "for I haven't it to spare."

"Not a *dollar*, George!" she retorted, with a scornful laugh. "Who ever heard of anything so absurd?"

"It is true, nevertheless," he answered, gloomily. "Two months ago I expected that to-day would find us all beggars."

"What *do* you mean?" his wife gasped.

"Just what I say; and but for the appearance of a friendly hand just when and where I least expected it, I should have been obliged to fail, overwhelmed with debt and disgrace, and everything we have—house, furniture, horses, and carriages—would all have had to come under the hammer of the auctioneer."

"I cannot believe it," Mrs. Richards said, growing pale.

"That does not alter the fact, however," her husband replied, laconically.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"I *did* tell you. I kept writing to you when you were at Newport, Ellen, that I could not long endure such a drain upon my purse as you were subjecting it to, and that you must curtail your expenses; but you paid no heed to me, launching instead into greater extravagances."

"But I never dreamed that things were so serious as you represented," she said, a guilty flush mounting to her forehead, as she remembered that all her lavishness had been to outshine Star. "I never thought you were really embarrassed, or I would not have asked for so much."

"Well, then," he answered, in a gentler tone, "show your consideration for me now, for you and Josephine will have to ³³⁴wear your old clothes this winter. My trouble has been tided over for the present through the kindness of a friend, but it will require great care and calculation on my part to keep my head above board even now. I shall have to begin cautiously, or I shall be back again in the slough of despond."

"But I do not see how we can get along without *some* new things," began Mrs. Richards, selfishly.

"You must; that is all there is about it," returned her husband, positively. "If you can't go into society and wear what you have, then you must stay at home this winter; and I do not think it would do you any harm for once, either."

Mrs. Richards flushed angrily. When she saw her husband in this mood, she knew there was no turning him, and she would be obliged to submit to his edict.

"I'm sure I do not see what can have happened to make you so penurious all of a sudden," she said, sullenly.

"Penurious! Oh, Ellen!"

He looked at her yearningly for a moment.

She was a handsome, distinguished-looking woman, and had been a very fond and tender wife during the first years of their married life; but unlimited indulgence, and constantly mingling in the fashionable world, had made her selfish and unfeeling.

"My dear," he went on, after a moment, "why cannot you comfort me a little—give me a little sympathy in my trouble? My burden has been very hard to bear alone, and the worst of it has been that I was obliged to refuse your requests. You *know* that I am not penurious—that I never denied you anything that I could possibly grant you. Ellen, I wish you could be a little more kind to me than you have been of late."

"I do not know anything about business matters; I could give you very little advice or comfort in that way," she replied, coldly; and then she left him feeling very miserable, and in anything but a comfortable frame of mind herself, and not a ³³⁵little startled to know that they had been so near the brink of ruin as he had represented.

She returned to her own room, picking up the morning paper, which lay upon the hall table, on her way. Sitting down, she ran her eye carelessly over its columns, while her mind was busy planning some way to get along without her accustomed full purse, and "keep up appearances."

Suddenly her glance was transfixed by a paragraph which sent sharp, prickling pains throughout her body, and every nerve quivered with excitement as she read:

"The heirs, or nearest of kin to Sir Charles Thornton, late of Halowell Park, Devonshire, England, will find it to their advantage to communicate at once with Compton & Bailey, No. 54 Lincoln's-inn-fields, London."

Just below this advertisement was a notice of the sudden death of the young baronet from diphtheria.

Mrs. Richards sat like one overcome by some violent shock for a few moments after reading this account. Then springing to her feet, and taking the paper with her, she went back in hot haste to her husband, her cheeks crimson, her eyes glowing with agitation.

"If what I suspect should prove to be true, the dream of my life will be realized. Sir George and Lady Richards would sound very well, indeed," she murmured as she went.

Her husband looked up as she entered, and she was startled as she noticed how pale and care-worn his face had become; but she was too eager to communicate her news to pay much heed to it.

"George," she said, eagerly, "read this!"

She laid the paper before him as she spoke, and pointed to the paragraph which had excited her so.

"Well, I have read it, but I do not understand it; I do not know anything about Sir Charles Thornton," he returned, indifferently.

"What are you thinking of, George Richards!" cried his ³³⁶wife, impatiently. "*My mother* was half-sister to Sir Charles Thornton's mother. Sir Charles had no family; there are no other relatives to be found on either side, it seems, or his lawyers would not have advertised thus, and I believe that *I* am 'the nearest of kin.'"

"Nonsense, Ellen! Don't get such a wild idea as that into your head, for you will surely be disappointed," Mr. Richards answered, skeptically.

"I don't know about that. But one thing I have long known, and that is that the Thornton branch of the family is nearly, if not quite, extinct. It is evident that no heirs are to be found in England, or Compton & Bailey would not have advertised in the United States papers," she returned, feeling more and more sure in her own mind that her first impressions had not been at fault.

"That is a good argument, truly," Mr. Richards said, with sudden interest, and then began to question his wife, and to examine more closely into the matter.

The result was that the next steamer bore a long letter to Compton & Bailey, No. 54 Lincoln's-inn-fields, stating Mrs. Richards' relationship to Sir Charles Thornton, of Halowell Park, Devonshire, together with proofs of what they asserted.

A month passed, and they had begun to think they had been nourishing a chimera, when, one day, there came an answer from Compton & Bailey, saying that they had faithfully studied the chronological tables of both sides of the Thornton family, and had arrived at the conclusion that Mrs. Richards was undoubtedly the nearest of kin to the late Sir Charles.

They stated that they had been advertising for a long time in English papers, and no one had presented any claim. They had then concluded to publish a similar notice in the American papers, and as it had met with no other response, they would undoubtedly decide the matter in favor of her.

However, they suggested that she come to London at once, ³³⁷as they could conclude better what to do after a personal interview.

“If it should prove a ‘wild-goose chase,’ as I fear it will, I can ill afford the expense of the trip,” Mr. Richards said, when considering the question.

But his wife was all enthusiasm, as well as very sanguine regarding the result, and it was at length decided that they should sail as soon as practicable, and preparations were at once begun for the voyage.

Mrs. Richards merely remarked to her friends, when informing them of their plans, that Mr. Richards was not well; they all wanted a change, and had resolved to try what a trip across the Atlantic would do for them. Not one word was breathed regarding her expectations, however.

“If I am successful, there will be time enough then to make it public; if I am *not*, no one shall ever be able to crow over my disappointment,” she said, cautiously, to her husband; although in her own mind she had not a doubt as to the issue of the matter, while already visions of a title and a life among the nobility of England, presentation at court, and a marriage in high life for Josephine, were taking shape in her head.

CHAPTER XXXVI. JOSEPHINE'S AMBITION.

Mrs. Richards' vision of magnificence bade fair to be realized; for, upon arriving in London in November, she and her family were most courteously received by the firm of Compton & Bailey, who assured her that her credentials and proofs of her relationship to Sir Charles were incontestable.

"I do not see, madam, anything to prevent you from taking possession of the property," Mr. Compton said, in his most affable tones. "Your identity is proved beyond a question as the cousin or half-cousin of Sir Charles, and, as far as we have been able to learn, you are the only living relative. Lord William Thornton—Sir Charles' father—had a younger brother, but he left his home years ago to go as a missionary to the heathen, and has never been heard of since; so it is reasonable to suppose that he also is dead, and, as he was unmarried, of course left no issue. It will take a month or so to get things in order for you, and if at the end of that time everything remains as it is now, you can then take possession of your estate, and I am very happy to offer my congratulations upon your good fortune."

Mrs. Richards' face glowed with pride and happiness; Josephine was jubilant, while Mr. Richards was too astonished to be able to really appreciate this sudden turning of fortune's wheel in their favor.

The rent-roll of Halowell Park was fifty thousand pounds or more per annum; then there was a fine residence in London, and a sea-side resort at Cowes.

It was, indeed, a fortune, coming just at that time of need, calculated to turn one's head, so to speak.

"It is too good to be true," Mr. Richards said, with a doubtful shake of the head. "Ellen, we don't *deserve* any such good fortune," he added, remorsefully, as his mind went back to their treatment of Mr. Rosevelt and Star.

"Nonsense, George!" she retorted, scornfully. "We deserve whatever we can get, and I mean to enjoy this windfall to the utmost. I reckon that jade will find it hard work to outshine us after this, and Uncle Jacob's grand airs won't trouble me in the least in the future. I shall go down to Halowell Park this week, see for myself what kind of a place it is, and what repairs and improvements are needed on the estate," she concluded, ready to spend money with her accustomed energy and lavishness.

Accordingly, in a few days they repaired thither, and were charmed with the grand old place.

On their return to London they visited the late Sir Charles' town house, and found that in keeping with the estate in Devonshire, and surely their prospects appeared to be as bright as they or any one could wish.

One evening Mr. Compton, the lawyer, who was one of the first among his profession in the city, invited them to his mansion to meet some of his friends, and they were introduced to a number of people who frequented the highest circles in the great city.

Among others, they met Lady Sherbrooke and her charming daughter, Vivien, and who, they were not long in discovering, greatly to their joy, were the mother and sister of Lord Carrol.

Mrs. Richards was exultant over this piece of good luck, as she deemed it, and tried to make herself very agreeable to her ladyship, while Josephine sought to ingratiate herself with the younger lady.

"I had the pleasure of meeting your son, Lord Carrol, when he was in America," Mrs. Richards remarked, during her conversation with the young lord's mother.

"Indeed!" she said, looking interested at once, for her children were an all-absorbing topic at any time with her.

"Yes; we first met him at Long Branch, a fashionable watering-place, and he afterward favored us with a visit of a few days at our country-seat, in Yonkers."

Mrs. Richards was determined to make the most out of the advantages she had enjoyed.

"Ah, yes, I believe he has told me something about it," the lady responded, while she thought that if such was the case she must arrange in some way to return the compliment thus paid to her idolized son.

If they were successors to Sir Charles Thornton, they would occupy no mean position in the social world, she reasoned, and it would be no more than right to cultivate their acquaintance, while she could but acknowledge that Mrs. Richards was quite a superior appearing woman, and Josephine possessed beauty of a very brilliant type.

The half hour that she spent conversing with Mrs. Richards only served to strengthen the good opinion she had at first formed, and before they left Mr. Compton's she had arranged with them to spend a portion of the following week at their estate in Cheshire.

This was more than Mrs. Richards had expected, but she plumed herself upon her tact in managing things so cleverly, and looked forward to the visit with no small amount of interest.

The next day, through Lady Sherbrooke's influence, she received cards for a grand reception at Lady Tukesbury's, who resided in a palatial mansion in Piccadilly, and she felt assured that they were now fully launched upon a brilliant career.

Of course they accepted the invitation, she appearing in black velvet, point lace, and diamonds, while Josephine was resplendent in rich white silk and scarlet verbenas, and created quite a sensation in "Japonica-dom," greatly to her mother's delight and her own satisfaction.

"Who is she? Where did she come from?" was whispered on all sides.

"An American? Ah! that accounts for her brilliant style of beauty, then. Inherit Sir Charles Thornton estates, do they? In that case they will be quite an acquisition to society," were the opinions expressed and the conclusions arrived at by people who were careful in such matters; and then seekers for introductions—and seekers for fortunes—pressed forward for an introduction to the beautiful young heiress.

But notwithstanding Josephine enjoyed herself, and felt no small degree of pride at receiving these attentions from lords and baronets, she found herself looking everywhere for one familiar form, one dark, handsome face, which she had never forgotten, and which she knew she should recognize anywhere and under any circumstances.

"Mamma, I wonder if Lord Carrol is here?" she whispered, when once during the evening they happened to be together.

"I don't know; I will ask Lady Sherbrooke if I have an opportunity," she replied.

She managed to get near her ladyship soon after, and asked:

"Is your son out of town, Lady Sherbrooke?"

"No; he is not out of town. He had another engagement to-night, but he said he would drop in in season to take us home," Lord Carrol's mother returned. "Ah! there he is now," she added, as she saw him approaching, and her face lighted with both pride and pleasure.

He appeared to be greatly surprised to find Mrs. Richards there, but greeted her politely, although she felt the restraint in his manner which he could not quite conceal.

She beckoned to Josephine, who was not far distant, and presented her, with a feeling of pride in her brilliant beauty that she did not try to hide.

He shook hands with her, though his face flushed as he remembered the awkward position in which she had placed him at Yonkers by misrepresenting the motive of his visit there.

"You did not come to see us again before leaving America, after all," she said, in tones of playful reproach, when they had exchanged greetings.

"No; my time was so fully occupied that I found it impossible to make any calls," he returned, a shade of sadness coming into his fine eyes as he thought of *how* his time had been employed and the unhappiness it had caused him.

"You received my little package, I perceive," Josephine ³⁴²said, glancing at the cameo upon his hand, and with a flush rising to her cheeks.

"Yes; did you not receive my acknowledgment of it?" he asked, in surprise.

"No; I have never heard anything from you," she answered, with downcast eyes.

"But I wrote, thanking you. You must have thought me lacking in courtesy," Lord Carrol said, regretfully.

"No—but—Lord Carrol, there has been a misunderstanding about that jewel from the first. I really do not know what you believe regarding it, for your note was somewhat ambiguous, and I trust you will allow me to explain more fully to you sometime how I happened to have it," Josephine replied, with an appealing glance at him from her brilliant dark eyes.

He bowed somewhat coldly in return. He could not forget that his darling had said that she *stole* it from her—that one little treasure which she had prized more than anything else in the world, and there could be no excuse for, no explanation of, an act so cowardly and cruel, he thought.

"I presume you have heard that we have come to reside in England," the artful girl continued, desiring to change the topic of conversation, yet determined to keep him by her side.

"So I have been told. How do you like England and English people so far?" he asked.

"Very much. We have been down to Halowell Park, where we expect to reside most of the year, and it is delightful there. I hope now that we shall sometime see your home, of which you have told us so much. We intend to become familiar with all of England."

"I little thought that day at Long Branch, when Mrs. Richards was telling me that you were relatives of Sir Charles Thornton, that you would eventually become his heirs," Lord Carrol said, ignoring her evident desire that he should invite her to visit his home, and little dreaming that such an invitation had already been given by his mother.

"Mamma thought of it, however, although she did not really expect anything of the kind. Do you remember her asking you if Sir Charles had any family?"

"Yes."

"Well, she knew that there were very few relatives, and she did wonder then who would inherit the estates if he should die childless. But it seems like some romantic tale to me. I can scarcely realize it even yet."

"How does English society compare with American, in your opinion?" Lord Carrol asked, glancing over the brilliant throng around them.

"I am sure, my lord, I should not presume to judge upon so short an experience," Josephine answered, modestly, yet her glance told him that she admired one Englishman excessively.

"I should judge," he said, smiling, "if I could form any opinion from the court which I saw you holding as I entered, that you would be considered quite an acquisition in London circles."

He did not say that *he* should consider her such, and a thrill of pain shot through her heart at his indifference; but she appeared to take it as a personal compliment from him, and answered, with a shy look:

"Thank you; I find it very pleasant to be here, at all events."

Her tone, her glance, and the emphasis which she threw into that last sentence, would have turned half the heads in that room, but they did not move him in the least.

He was constantly thinking of a fair, sweet face, framed in gold; of azure eyes, with white lids and long, curling lashes, and smiling coral lips, with the gleam of small white teeth between; of his bright, beautiful Star—the light of his life.

He was thinking of that day when they drove on the beach ³⁴⁴at Coney Island, when he had told her of his love, and won her promise to be his wife; how she had called him "Archie" in those sweet, low tones, which had made his heart thrill with an ecstasy it had never known before; while this proud, brilliant girl had no power to stir even a feeling of friendship in his breast.

She kept him at her side for half an hour or more, and then she was obliged to release him, and fulfill an engagement to dance.

But her heart was full of a passionate longing to win his love; he had never appeared so grand and manly to her before; and as she stood before her glass that night, after her return from Lady Tukesbury's reception, and removed the flowers from her hair and bosom, she said, while she set her small white teeth resolutely together:

"I will move heaven and earth to win him; I will bend all my energies to become Lady Carrol. A whole year has passed and he has not married; there was not even any one present to-night to whom he paid particular attention, and it cannot be possible that he is still grieving for that milk-and-water beauty, Star Gladstone. No; I have the field clear to myself, and I swear I will yet be Countess of Carrol."

“But suppose he is not to be won—suppose you fail in what you have sworn to accomplish by fair means or foul?” whispered something within, with such startling distinctness that it almost seemed like a human voice.

“If I fail!” she repeated, growing white to her very lips. “If I *cannot* win the man whom I love with my whole soul, then”—and there was a look of wretchedness, almost of despair, in her midnight eyes at the thought—“then I will marry some poor fool who shall lose his head over my pretty face, and be lady somebody else.”

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE MOCK MARRIAGE.

When Lady Sherbrooke informed her son that she had invited Mr. Richards and his family to spend the following week with them at their country residence, and to help them make merry with a number of their friends, his face had clouded instantly, and she saw that he was not pleased with the arrangement.

"Have I done anything wrong, Archie?" she asked, much disturbed. "I thought you would be pleased. They spoke of your spending several days with them when you were in America, and I supposed you would be glad to return the civility."

His lips had curled slightly when she had mentioned that they had told of his visit to Yonkers. He thought they should have preferred to keep it to themselves, rather than boast of it in order to get a return, under the circumstances.

But he said nothing of this, and answered, as brightly as he could:

"No, mother dear; you have done nothing wrong, and I will try and make myself as agreeable as possible to your guests. But I must confess that neither Mrs. nor Miss Richards is agreeable to me."

"Why, Archie?"

"I would prefer to say nothing more just now, since they are coming to visit us. Perhaps sometime I can tell you why," he answered, thoughtfully.

"I am sorry," Lady Sherbrooke returned, regretfully, while she studied her son's face wistfully. "I wish I had known of this in season to have avoided anything so extremely unpleasant.³⁴⁶ But they were so profuse in their praises of you that I supposed of course that you reciprocated their friendliness."

"Never mind," he said, lightly; "a week will not be very long. No doubt Miss Richards—who, I admit, is a very brilliant girl—will be a great addition to your party, and I would not have any little whim of mine mar it for the world."

"Archie, did you ever—" began his mother, with a startled, rueful glance at him, as it suddenly came to her that there might be a more serious reason for this than she had dreamed.

But he interrupted her, with a laugh.

"No, mother; I never did," he said, with an amused gleam in his eyes. "And now ask me nothing more at present, please; but when your

guests are all gone, I have a little story for your ear, and shall want a share of sympathy and counsel from your wise head and great heart.”

Cheshire House, situated about a dozen miles out from London, and so called because it overlooked a little village which, at that time, bore that name, was filled to overflowing during the following week, and everybody appeared to anticipate a season of intense enjoyment.

We cannot follow the gay company in all their enjoyments, but it was an eventful time, during which the hospitable hostess and her lovely daughter, assisted by Lord Carrol, spared no effort to make it a memorable one; and when, right in the midst of it all, Ralph Meredith came by special invitation, one, at least, of that merry number felt that everything was complete, and nothing more to be wished for.

The last night of their stay there had been set apart for a great time.

Invitations had been sent in every direction through the county, bidding all the young people to gather there and make merry in their own way.

The evening was to be spent in games, private theatricals, ³⁴⁷and masquerade until twelve o'clock, after which hour they were to “trip the light fantastic toe” as long as they liked.

It was a merry, merry time indeed, and everybody seemed to vie with his neighbor to see who could contribute most to the enjoyment of the occasion.

Vivien Sherbrooke and Josephine Richards were declared by each and all to be the belles of the evening, notwithstanding they were entirely different in the style of their beauty.

The former wore a dress of rose-colored silk, with overdress of tulle looped with roses. Ropes of pearls were wound around her fair neck and arms and twined in her shining brown hair. Her clear gray eyes gleamed with a brighter luster than usual, a deeper flush was on her cheeks, and her lips wreathed with happier smiles.

Josephine was in simple white, with not an atom of color to relieve it. A peculiarly dainty dress of some soft clinging stuff fell in matchless folds of grace around her lithe form, with rare, costly lace for garniture, and great poppies, in which diamonds glistened like drops of dew, fastened on her breast and in her hair.

This spotless toilet was wonderfully becoming to her clear, dark complexion, and her mother's heart swelled with pride as she looked upon her and knew that she was the most distinguished-looking girl among all that company of aristocrats.

“She cannot fail to win a high position in the world,” she said to herself, as she saw several titled men hovering about her and hanging upon her smiles. “If she fail to win Lord Carrol—if he remains blind to her

charms—there are plenty of others, thank Heaven, who *will* appreciate her. There is his grace, the Duke of Anerby, who admires her very much, and it would be very nice to be able to say ‘my daughter, the Duchess of Anerby;’ but I’m afraid she loves Lord Carrol altogether too well,” she concluded, with a sigh.

There could not be much doubt regarding Josephine’s sentiments toward his lordship, for, as they stood for a few moments together beneath an arch of evergreen which had been erected at one end of the hall, her face was raised to his, as she listened to what he was saying, with a tender, almost rapt expression, and her eyes were humid with the love which filled her heart for him.

He thought that she had never appeared to so much advantage as now. During all her stay at Cheshire House she had been more kind and gentle, more womanly than he had ever seen her before; and now he lingered by her side, realizing how very beautiful she was, and feeling almost as if he had wronged her in the past by judging her so harshly, and his manner involuntarily became more gracious and friendly toward her.

She saw it, and it made her heart bound with a wild hope, and she became so radiant, so fascinating and bewildering, that he wondered if he had indeed been nourishing an unjust prejudice against her.

Lady Sherbrooke saw them standing there, apparently oblivious of everything and everybody else, and an anxious look shot into her face, for she had studied Miss Richards during her unguarded moments the past week, reading her character like an open book with her womanly intuition, and she knew that she would never make a good man happy; she would never yield that wifely self-sacrifice which was necessary to domestic enjoyment; and seeing how passing fair she was to-night, she dreaded her influence over her idolized son, notwithstanding what he had already told her.

Suddenly one merry sprite appeared to be possessed by a novel idea of some kind, and went flitting about the room, whispering, laughing, and making signs at the pair under the evergreen arch.

The company, who were mostly young people, appeared to join in with her proposals, whatever they were, and at length she danced gayly up to Lord Carrol and Josephine, saying, eagerly:

“Archie”—she had known him all her life, and being intimate in the family, felt privileged to address him thus—“Archie, we have been arranging such capital fun, and we want you to agree to help us in it.”

“Certainly I will assist you. You know you are to do exactly as you like to-night, and get all the enjoyment you can out of this occasion.”

“Oh, you are perfectly delightful! Isn’t he, Miss Richards?” returned the merry girl, with a glance at Josephine, and the look which that young

lady shot at him, half startled but wholly admiring, together with the flush which leaped into her cheeks, answered the question better than any words could have done.

"Well, granted that I am all that," Lord Carrol said, laughing, "what next?"

"We are going to have a mock marriage; everybody has agreed that it will be something new under the sun, and we're just in the mood for a wedding or any event equally exciting. It is almost on the stroke of twelve, and it will be just the thing to wind up with before we begin our dancing."

"Don't you think it will seem like trifling with a serious subject?" Lord Carrol asked, rather gravely.

"Oh, no. Of course we do not mean anything wrong; it is only for a little fun, and we do so want a bride to lead off in the dance," replied the thoughtless girl.

"Well," the young man returned, lightly, "anything you like, only do not let the ceremony be too tedious, for I am ready for my dance, and I believe I shall ask you to be my first partner, Minnie. But who are you going to have for victims?" he concluded, unsuspecting of the trap he was walking into.

"Oh, you're to be groom, and Miss Richards the bride. She is the only one in the room who is dressed all in white, as a bride should be, and this green arch is just the place for the ceremony to be performed."

Lord Carrol felt anything but comfortable over this arrangement. He glanced at Josephine to see how she would take it. But she stood with downcast eyes, looking the picture of lovely confusion, a beautiful color in her face, while he noticed that the hand which held her fan trembled visibly.

"Lord Henderson said he would play parson and pronounce the banns," the merry child rattled on, "and he is so portly he will make a first-rate one. Now, Archie, you and Miss Richards go into the anteroom yonder, so as to come in like a real bridal party. Wait, there is that lovely lace shawl of Lady Orton's; she will lend it, I know, for a veil, and it will be just the thing. Now don't stand there like a pair of bashful lovers, for it is only play, you know," she added, saucily, "but do as I tell you, and I will arrange everything, then bring the veil;" and giving her two victims a gentle push, the excited girl whisked away to another part of the hall.

"Well, Miss Richards, Miss Shelton intends to have everything her own way, and I do not see but what we shall be obliged to help her carry out her plans." Lord Carrol said, trying to speak lightly, and to make the best of a very—to him—disagreeable situation.

"You certainly do resemble a bride in your dress," he added, "more than any one else in the room, and, if agreeable to you, we will assist in the little piece of folly just to please the child."

Little piece of folly!

If he could but have known of the tumult that was raging within her at the mere thought of such a ceremony in connection with him, he would not have called it that—it would have been sacrilege!

She was trembling like a leaf, and she knew that that marriage service, though but the meaningless freak of a wild girl, would seem as solemn to her as if he were really to make her his wife.

That was "folly" without doubt, but she loved him so that she could not help the feeling.

He offered her his arm, and they retired to the anteroom together, and Lord Carrol could not help perceiving the strange thrill which pervaded the girl's whole frame as her hand came in contact with his arm.

But they were not left long alone, for Minnie Shelton soon came tripping in with an exquisite point lace shawl hanging over her arm.

"Everybody is on the *qui vive*," she said, breathlessly, "and we must not keep them waiting. Sit down, Miss Richards, on this divan, and let me pin this shawl on your head; it will make a lovely bridal veil. There, Lord Carrol, isn't she charming?" she asked, after she had dextrously arranged it in graceful folds. "Doesn't she look like a *real* bride?"

"I think your efforts have been eminently successful to make her appear like one," he answered, smiling; and certainly Josephine was as lovely as it was possible for any one to be.

"I only hope, my lord, that when you *do* get married you'll find somebody half as beautiful," retorted the saucy elf. "There, you'll do; now go, for they are all waiting, and the parson is ready to pronounce the banns."

Lord Carrol felt very uneasy, but he offered his arm to Josephine again, and her hand fell upon it, white and soft as a snow-flake.

They passed out into the great ball-room and paused under the green arch, while murmurs of surprise and admiration greeted them from every side, for the addition of the lace shawl to Josephine's already charming toilet had greatly enhanced her appearance.

Two or three young girls, led by Minnie Shelton, advanced ³⁵²and took their station by her side to act as bride-maids, and then Lord Henderson, clad in a long white robe improvised for the occasion, came forward and read the marriage service.

When the ring was called for, the gay girl who had planned all this reached behind the bride and tucked one into Lord Carrol's hand.

He was strangely impressed, a feeling of awe, a chill, creeping over him as he felt it and thought of its significance. But he took it and put it on the finger of the mock bride, repeating, "with this ring I wed thee, and all my goods endow thee," feeling as if he were going through a mockery almost too horrible to endure.

Josephine, too, trembled visibly, while the hand that he held was as cold as ice.

She would have given the world to have been able to control herself, for she feared that the company would suspect something of the tumult in her heart, but she could not.

However, when the ceremony was over, the gay crowd came forward, brimming with mirth, and in the jollity that followed, these impressions in a measure passed away.

There were laughter and compliment on every lip, shaking of hands and congratulation on every side, until at length Minnie Shelton put a stop to it by coming forward and saying:

"The musicians are all ready, Lord Carrol; you'll have to dance the first quadrille with your bride; I'll claim you for the second. Hasn't it been a lovely wedding, though?—just as if it had been real, you know—and we've had all the fun without any flurry. My!" perking her restless head on one side and eying Josephine out of her bright eyes like some pretty bird, "don't I hope I may make as charming a bride when somebody comes to marry me!"

There was a general laugh at this sally, for Miss Minnie was a favorite with everybody.

"Now come, please; and, Lord Henderson, if you have no objection, I'd like you for a partner, and we will be the happy couple's *vis a vis*."

Without waiting for his consent, she slipped her little hand within his arm and led him along after Lord Carrol and Josephine, who could do nothing but obey her commands.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“I HAVE BEEN MAD.”

When that first dance was over, Lord Carrol led Josephine to a seat, and, bowing before her, said, in as light a tone as he could command:

“Thank you, Miss Richards. I suppose our part in this little farce closes now. Allow me to congratulate you upon having assisted in carrying it off in the most perfect manner. I must confess,” he added, a slight shade falling over his face, “that it does not strike me as just the thing to make a mockery of sacred subjects; but since Minnie Shelton, who is a veritable witch, and our guests have enjoyed it, perhaps I should not preach about it.”

Josephine looked up at him with a strange glitter in her eyes, while her face was crimson.

Oh, if he would but utter one fond, tender word to her—if he would but give her a sign even, to show that his heart had been thrilled like her own while they were standing there side by side!

He noticed her heightened color, and thought she looked at him queerly, but he never mistrusted the storm that was tearing her heart asunder.

“I fear you are very warm,” he said, kindly. “Shall I get you an ice?”

“Thanks, no. I shall do very well,” she answered, constrainedly.

And then, with another bow, he excused himself and left her.

A convulsive sob broke from the girl’s lips as she watched him pass down the long room and out at a lower door; then she, too, arose and glided through the window near which she had been sitting.

She sped along the wide piazza until she came to the end, where a flight of steps led down to a little arbor, or cluster of small trees which inclosed a great piece of statuary.

She fled within it, and sinking down upon the granite base which supported the marble group, she gave vent to her misery in a burst of passionate tears.

Lord Carrol, too, as he passed out of the ball-room, was more deeply moved than he would have liked to betray, and not very well pleased either with the part he had been compelled to play so much against his inclination.

Had his companion been any other than Josephine, perhaps he would have felt differently; but he could not forget that he had once been represented as her lover, and something in her manner to-night warned him that she would not have regretted it had that farce been a *bona*

fide marriage service instead, and he was exceedingly annoyed over the affair.

He met his mother as he was going through a hall, and she detained him by gently laying her hand upon his arm.

"Has anything disturbed you?" she asked, looking up into his clouded face.

"No, mother; nothing but that farce which has just been enacted. I do not like such things; they seem too much like sacrilege," he returned.

"Neither do I like them, Archie," she said, gravely. "We have no right to make light of any subject so serious as marriage; but Minnie is a wild, thoughtless girl, intent only on the excitement of the moment, and did not stop to consider. I must say, though, that Miss Richards helped to carry it off splendidly, and appeared the blushing, modest bride to perfection. She is a fine-looking girl."

She said this to sound him, regarding him searchingly all the time that she was speaking.

"Yes; she appears to attract considerable admiration," he replied, indifferently, and then passed on.

He went out at the great hall-door upon the veranda, which Josephine had just a moment or two ago traversed, and followed almost in her footsteps, until he came to that little circle of shrubbery, when, instead of going within it, he went around it.

He could not shake off the unpleasant sensations that were upon him; everything in his nature had suddenly seemed to become out of tune, and he wished to get away from even the sounds of the gay revelers within the house, while his thoughts turned wistfully toward the new world and Star.

He was getting very impatient to go to her, and he had intended to be on his way thither before this, but circumstances had recently transpired by which he would be detained another month, and the time seemed very long to him.

He paced back and forth in the moonlight for some time, his footsteps making no sound on the velvety turf; but all at once, as he passed that evergreen circle, within which Josephine still sat, a sob fell upon his ear and startled him. He stopped to listen, and heard the sound repeated. With his usual energy and decision, he passed around to the entrance and approached the group of statuary to ascertain who was there.

At first he could see no one, for just then the moon was hidden by a cloud, and Josephine's dress being white, her form blended with the marble and could not be distinguished, while she was so absorbed by her

own emotions that she was not aware of Lord Carrol's presence until he touched her on the shoulder and said:

"Pardon me, you are grieving; is your trouble anything that I can help?"

She sprang to her feet instantly and confronted him, her cheeks blazing hotly, her whole form trembling from the touch of his hand.

"Miss Richards!" he exclaimed, in surprise, as he recognized her, while involuntarily he recoiled from her, so unexpected and disagreeable—in his present frame of mind—was this meeting.

"I thought," he added, "that you were in the ball-room enjoying yourself with the other merrymakers."

She noticed the coldness of his tone, as well as his unconscious shrinking from her, and it cut her to the heart, while at the same time it aroused her anger.

"Enjoying myself!" she repeated, passionately and unguardedly; "the evening is spoiled for me; everything is spoiled—the world and my life. That mockery through which we have just passed has made me *miserable*."

It was strange, he thought, that they should both feel thus.

"I regret that anything should have occurred to make you so unhappy," he returned. "I hoped while you were the guest of my mother that nothing would transpire to mar the pleasure of any one. But," he added, more cheerfully, "you must not allow that farce to oppress you thus. I do not, as I have said before, approve of making light of such serious things, and marriage, to me, seems like a sacred ordinance. But no harm was done, I trust; our friends were amused for a half hour; and really, Miss Richards," he concluded, smilingly, "if, when you come to be married in earnest, you make as charming a bride as you did to-night, the happy man will be one to be envied."

"*Don't*, Lord Carrol," Josephine cried out, in a sharp tone of pain, and laying her hand appealingly on his arm; "*don't* say such things to me!"

She was trembling like a leaf, and he saw that she was terribly excited, while the piteous tone in which she had just spoken went directly to his kind heart. He took her hand and drew it under his arm.

"You are nervous," he said, kindly. "Come and walk with me a few moments until you are calmer—the night is almost like summer—then I will take you back to the company."

His tone was so sympathizing, his touch on her arm so gentle, while it thrilled every fiber of her body, that it was more than she could bear.

She was going to-morrow, and this man whom she loved with a passion almost amounting to idolatry, would be beyond her reach. She

would not meet him again for months, perhaps never, and this thought, added to her other pain, broke her down completely.

She grasped his arm with both her white hands, her heart was beating like a frightened bird's, there was a choking sensation in her throat, and bowing her graceful head upon her clasped and trembling hands, she burst into a fresh fit of weeping, which was like a tempest.

The young lord found himself in a very awkward position. Those shaking hands, that bowed head lying so near his heart, that lithe, quivering form, those tears and sobs, told him but too plainly what caused this deep emotion.

"Miss Richards—Josephine," he said, unwittingly using her first name in his embarrassment, "let me take you in. You will make yourself ill. What can I do for you?"

But she could not control herself. She had abandoned herself too entirely now to her passion to conquer it readily, and she sobbed on, conscious only of how she loved him, and that she was near him.

Oh! if he could but have returned her love, she would gladly have given the best years of her life. There was no sacrifice too great, she thought at that moment, for her to make in exchange for the prize she wished to win.

"What can I do for you, my friend?" he asked again.

"*Love me!*" burst most unconsciously from her trembling lips.

He started violently. He had not imagined that she would dare to give utterance to such words as these; while she knew, the instant that they were spoken, that instead of gaining his affection, she had forfeited even his respect.

There was a moment of awkward silence. Then Lord Carrol said very gravely, but still very gently:

"Miss Richards, you have become so excited over what has transpired, that I think you are hardly conscious of, or responsible for what you have said. Shall we go in now?"

"No!" she answered, lifting her head proudly, and stifling her sobs, although she still clung tightly to his arm, as if she could not let him go. "No; I will not go in yet. Having said so much, I must say more. You are right. I am not responsible for the words which I have spoken. I did not mean to speak them—they escaped me unawares; but since I have spoken them, I cannot recall them, and my secret is mine no longer. Oh!" she continued, with a heart-breaking sob, "pity me, have compassion on me, *forgive me!*"

"I have nothing to forgive," he said, kindly; "and, believe me, I am very sorry that your nerves should have been so overtaxed to-night; but," and his face flushed, "perhaps it will be better for both of us if I tell you

that, however much I may esteem you, my heart could never respond to the wish you have expressed; it has long been given to another. I thought you knew this; I thought your knew that—I loved your cousin, Miss Gladstone.”

Her hands dropped from his arm as if they had been burned, while keen, quivering pains shot all over her body at this avowal.

Her head came up with a haughty gesture, her eyes blazed with sudden anger, her red lips curled with bitter scorn. She had humiliated herself—she had bowed her proud spirit to the dust to win him, and now he dared to tell her this—dared to tell her that he loved the girl whom she hated, whom she had triple cause to hate in that she was far her superior in every way—she had won the heart of the only man whom she had ever loved, and had laid her under an obligation which she could never repay.

“I believe I have been *mad!*” she whispered, fiercely, through her tightly shut teeth, which shone like lovely pearls in the moonlight. “Yes, I must have been mad,” she went on; “some spirit of evil must have possessed me to make me tell you what I have; for—hear me, Lord Carrol—I do *not* love you; I *hate* you! If I ever had any love for you, it has turned to hate now, and I detest the girl whom you profess to love, and for whom you have dared to confess your affection, knowing how I hate her.”

She pressed her hands wildly to her temples, with a low moan. It was not so easy as she thought to hate where she had loved so passionately.

“Do you think it is a light thing,” she asked, hotly, “for a girl to reveal the secrets of her heart, as I have revealed mine to-night? Do you think there has been no sacrifice of pride or modesty on my part to tell you what I have told you? My heart has been burning to ashes while standing here by your side, and you have pitilessly tortured me still further by telling me that you love Star Gladstone—that girl who has only crossed my path to mar my every prospect in life. I thought half an hour ago, when I stood beside you during that mock ceremony and spoke those sacred words, that if they could only have been real—if I could indeed have been made your lawful wife, it would have been like the happiness of heaven for me. If you could have but called me by that fond name only once—if you ³⁶⁰had looked tenderly into my eyes and owned me yours, I could have asked no greater bliss in life. But, heavens! when I break every barrier down, when I forget my womanhood and modesty and tell you how I idolize you, you coolly inform me that *you* love the girl *I* hate. Beware! you have made me an eternal enemy to you both, and I will ruin *both* your lives, as you have ruined mine, if I can.”

She would have dashed wildly by him after uttering those last fierce, revengeful words, but he placed himself directly in her path and would not let her pass.

He saw now that all his sympathy and kindly feeling had been worse than wasted. He had read her character aright from the first; she was totally selfish, and her love—if an unreasoning passion like hers could be called love—would have made any true man miserable, for her ambition would never be satisfied.

He did not wonder now that he had not had more faith in her, and his sympathy and sorrow for her were at once turned into contempt.

“Miss Richards,” he began, in a stern, cold voice, and looking down into her angry, blazing eyes with a glance which cowed her in spite of her passion, “what respect I may have entertained for you heretofore, what pity or compassion I may have experienced for your apparent suffering to-night, and the only emotion which ever made you appear really womanly or gentle in my eyes, has wholly vanished during those last vindictive words of yours. I had begun to hope that you had learned lessons of charity and kindness during the past year—that you had come to realize there was something *more* required in life than a continual seeking after pleasure and the gratification of pride and ambitious desires; but I perceive that I was mistaken, and I am sorry, for you will be the greatest sufferer. Your declaration of hatred, and your threat that you will ruin Miss Gladstone’s and my life, are but idle words; for our love is something that malice can never touch, and a month hence I shall be on my way to America to make her my wife.”

Josephine uttered a cry of mingled pain and anger at this, and made another effort to leave him, but he would not let her go even yet.

“I have not quite finished what I wish to say, Miss Richards,” he continued, “and we may as well come to a full understanding at once. I have been told of the change in Miss Gladstone’s fortunes. I have, indeed, learned much regarding her life while she was with you that has both pained and surprised me. I know, too, of some things which occurred this year, when you were both visitors at the same fashionable resort. You are, it appears, to remain a resident of England, and we may meet occasionally in society; but let me tell you I shall never allow any such indignity to be heaped upon the future Lady Carrol as that of which you were guilty this summer at Newport.”

He saw her start as he said this.

“What do you mean?” she demanded, haughtily.

“I do not think you are so ignorant of my meaning as you appear,” he returned, his handsome lips curling with scorn; “but if you wish to be reminded of the fact that you publicly twitted Miss Gladstone last

summer of having once performed the duties of a chambermaid in your family, I can do so. But do not let it ever happen again, or I shall feel it my duty to make *all* the facts of the case public."

"Who has told you all this?" she demanded, angrily.

"That does not matter," he replied, coldly; "it is sufficient that I know it."

"Ralph Meredith has told you!" she cried.

"Mr. Meredith is my friend—but that is a point we need not discuss, I think," he answered, quietly.

She beat the air frantically with her hands. She felt how little, how contemptible she must appear in his sight.

"Perhaps you do not know that he played the role of devoted lover to Miss Gladstone this summer," she sneered, hoping to make him jealous.

Lord Carrol flushed.

He had mistrusted something of this from what Ralph had told him. He did not believe that Star would have confessed what she had to him, except to convince him that she could never entertain feelings of affection toward any one save the man who, as she supposed, had wronged her.

"Miss Gladstone is my affianced wife," he replied, proudly feeling that he had a perfect right to regard and speak of her as such, knowing that she still loved him, and that his explanations to her would re-establish their former relations. "But," he added, as he stepped aside now to allow her to pass, "it is useless to prolong this interview; only let me caution you, Miss Richards, to remember that while you show proper respect for me and *mine*, I shall also tender *you* the respect belonging to a lady."

She was as white as her spotless dress now. He could see by the moonlight that she had grown perfectly ghastly, but there was a wild, fearful light in her eyes.

"My hate will follow you both," she said, hoarsely, "and I tell you I will ruin your lives if I can."

She dashed by him with the speed of a fawn and disappeared from his sight, leaving him standing there wonder-stricken that a creature so beautiful to look upon could possess so depraved a nature.

CHAPTER XXXIX. A CRUSHING BLOW.

The next morning when the company met at breakfast, Josephine experienced a feeling of intense relief upon learning that Lord Carrol had been called away to London at an early hour on "important business."

This was the day of their departure also, and she was not sorry to leave the house which had been the scene of her humiliation and despair over her unrequited love.

The meal was not a very social one, for every one was tired out with last night's dissipation, and it required more of an effort than they felt capable of making to be very merry.

After it was over, and as Josephine was passing through the hall on her way to her own room, she espied the morning papers lying on the table.

Mechanically she took up one, glancing carelessly over the columns, when almost the first thing she saw was a notice of the arrival of a steamer from New York two days previous, with a list of the passengers below.

A lurid light shot into her eyes and an angry exclamation burst from her lips as she read; for, among the other names in that list, she read those of Jacob Rosevelt, Miss Star Gladstone and maid, from New York.

"What on earth can have possessed them to come aboard just at this time?" she muttered, with lowering brow. "If they had only waited a month they would have missed him, but now they will be sure to meet."

She took the paper and went up stairs to her mother's room, and showed the notice to her.

She was very angry also.

"It seems as if that girl was bound to be the ruination of us. They are continually crossing our path, and I declare it is more than human nature can patiently bear. I wonder what has brought them to England?"

"I suppose Uncle Jacob thinks he must give his charming *protegee* every advantage possible," Josephine sneered, bitterly.

"Well, I'm sure we do not need to mind them now," Mrs. Richards said, with a sigh of satisfaction. "Even if she gets every penny of his money, your position will henceforth be far superior to hers."

"I don't know about that," the girl retorted, with a painful flush. "If Lord Carrol meets her, and they make up their quarrel, I shall still be rather in the background, I imagine."

"True; I had not thought of that," her mother replied with a blank look. "I wish you could have managed to entrap him, Jo."

"Jo" bit her lips until the blood spurted from them, as she remembered how her "trap" had sprung and wounded only herself.

"Lord Carrol is a *fool!*" she said, passionately.

Her mother looked up at her searchingly, mistrusting that her daughter had more reason for her pale face and heavy eyes than she knew of.

"If only that marriage last night could have been a real one, I should have been the happiest woman in England this morning," she said, wistfully.

"With one exception," Josephine thought, with a bitter sigh and a hard glitter in her eyes; but she said nothing.

They did not leave Sherbrooke House that day, however. A sudden storm came on during the afternoon, too violent to admit of the departure of any one, and Lady Sherbrooke would not allow any of her guests to mention such a thing. And so the long, dreary day was spent in rest and quiet.

But the next day broke bright and pleasant, and just as the company were sitting down to the morning meal, Minnie Shelton came dancing into the breakfast-room, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling, and her lips parted in the brightest of smiles, while a paper fluttered in her small hands.

"Such fun!" she exclaimed, merrily. "Here is a description of your ball, Lady Sherbrooke, in the *Cheshire Gazette*—the mock marriage and all; and the best of the whole thing is, they have written up that event so that at a first glance any one would naturally suppose that a real wedding had occurred. Listen."

She held up the paper and read:

"MARRIED.—At the country residence of Lady Sherbrooke, on the 10th instant, Sir Archibald Sherbrooke and Lord Carrol, of Carrolton, to Miss Josephine Richards, formerly of New York, U. S. A., but recently reported to be the heiress presumptive to the Thornton estates in Devonshire. The fair bride was lovely in her bridal robes, not the least noticeable of which was the exquisite point lace veil, which was also of great value."

"There— isn't that too rich for anything?" the gay girl cried; "and do look at the mock bride's blushes!" pointing at Josephine, whose face was crimson from varied emotions; "what a pity it is that our handsome groom is not here to see them; and one would almost imagine she was a real bride by her confusion."

"Then there follows a long account of the ball, which explains everything," she added, laying down the paper; "but I'm so out of breath that I can't read any more, and you'll have to peruse it for yourselves."

There was an awkward silence for a moment after she had ceased speaking; then Lady Sherbrooke said, in tones of grave reproof:

“Minnie, my dear, what a wild child you are; but you must learn to be more thoughtful of the feelings of others.”

“Why, what have I done?” she asked, with great, round, innocent eyes, yet a guilty flush rose to her cheeks.

“I am very glad if you enjoyed the ball,” her ladyship continued, still gravely; “but I regret that you should have proposed turning so serious a subject as marriage into mockery, and I am very sorry—yes, deeply displeased, that any one, in writing an account of our gathering here, should have given that farce such an appearance of reality, for it might make it very awkward, not only for my son, but also for some of our guests,” she concluded, with glance at Josephine’s downcast face.

Little Miss Shelton was very uneasy during this reproof, but she rallied, and said, lightly:

“But, dear Lady Sherbrooke, it was all done so nicely; and everything was so lovely that it almost seemed like a real wedding. I wish we *could* have a real wedding. Won’t somebody get married, please, and give me an invitation? I haven’t been to one since I was a little girl in short clothes.”

And the elf looked around her so roguishly, and with such an expression of mock distress on her pretty face, that the company broke into an indulgent laugh, and then the subject was for the time dropped.

But Josephine, watching her opportunity when some of the guests were leaving, and people generally were occupied saying farewell, sought and found that paper, and slipped it unobserved into her pocket.

In one of the rooms of a beautiful suite of apartments looking out upon St. James square, a young girl sat by a window, looking out upon the passers-by in the street below.

She was tall, and slender, and graceful as a young elm, her small head crowned with masses of golden hair, her eyes—“heaven’s own blue”—looking out from under a broad forehead, which was partially concealed by the shining mist which lay lightly upon it, her red lips parted with an expression of eager interest as she gazed upon the hurrying throng below. She was as fair as the day—a perfect picture, upon which the eye would love to linger.

It is our Star, fresh and beautiful as ever, but with something more of maturity and dignity in her bearing than when we last saw her.

She has been in London just one week, and is enjoying every day, despite the proverbial rain and fog, for she has returned to her native land once more, and every inch of ground is replete with interest for her.

The past few months have been full of enjoyment, for she has “been everywhere and seen everything” in the far West of the New World—at least as far as that was practicable, and as she had warned Mr. Roosevelt she should wish to do—and with such congenial companions as he and Miss Meredith always were the time could not fail to pass pleasantly.

But she had turned her face with even keener anticipations toward England’s shores, while not even the memory of her previous terrible experience at sea had power to make her shrink from the long voyage, or mar the delight of this glad return.

As she sits there in her handsome parlor, looking out upon the street, a door opens, and Jacob Roosevelt enters.

He looks younger and in better health than we have ever seen him before, while his face is animated and genial, as if life was at its brightest with him.

Star looked around as he entered.

“How quickly you have returned, Uncle Jacob,” she said, rising, and going to meet him, and taking his hat.

“Yes; I knew you would be impatient for your letters, and, as there is quite a budget to be gone through with, I thought it best not to keep you in suspense.”

As he spoke he drew from his capacious pocket a half-dozen letters, and as many papers, which he had just received from ³⁶⁸the American Legation, and half of which he gave into Star’s own hands.

“This is from Grace, this from Mr. Appleton, and—this must be from Nattie Browning, to whom I gave up my position as a teacher,” she said, running the letters through her white fingers.

She laid the papers, which, of course, were of minor importance, upon the table, and, sitting down in a low chair, carefully cut the ends of the envelopes, and was soon deep in the contents of her news from beyond the sea.

It took her nearly an hour to read them all.

Miss Meredith’s was full of chat and innocent gossip, just like that charming young lady’s own self, and contained a number of commissions and charges, not the least important of which was that Star must be sure to hunt up her brother Ralph, who wrote that he should spend nearly the whole of the month of December in or near London.

Mr. Appleton’s letter was mostly on business, and regarding the book she had written, as well as another which he wanted her to write. It contained also a check, and Star always felt very proud whenever these bits of paper came made out to her. They gave her a feeling of independence and pleasure which no other money did.

The third letter was an entertaining one from a classmate—a poor girl to whom she had, as she said, resigned a position as teacher upon finding herself the heiress to a million.

After reading these she took up her papers in a listless way; she did not feel much in the mood for looking them over; they seemed tame and uninteresting after the letters.

But all at once she noticed that one was not a home paper; it bore the London postmark, and was addressed in a hand she did not recognize.

“It cannot be from Ralph Meredith,” she said to herself, ³⁶⁹“for he does not know that I am here. Besides, it is not his handwriting. I wonder who could have sent it?”

She opened it with considerable curiosity, and yet with a feeling of foreboding at her heart.

The *Cheshire Gazette*, she read, as she espied the heading, and then her eye glanced down over the columns underneath.

Suddenly she started.

There is a paragraph marked.

Her eyes dilate—a look of horror comes into them; her lips grow pale, and she feels as if she is suffocating as she reads:

“MARRIED.—At the country residence of Lady Sherbrooke, on the 10th instant, Sir Archibald Sherbrooke and Lord Carrol, of Carrolton, to Miss Josephine Richards, of New York, U. S. A., and heiress presumptive to the Thornton estates in Devonshire, etc.”

Could it be true? The paper dropped from her nerveless hands. Was the deed really done at last, and Archibald Sherbrooke lost to her forever?

She had not realized until that moment how much of hope had lived in her heart during all this time.

But these dreadful words had suddenly cut it down, as the sharp sickle cuts down the tender grass.

Had she really read them, or had her imagination played her some terrible trick?

Feeling as if she were turning to stone, she picked up the paper and compelled herself to go over the horrible sentence again.

Yes, it was all true—it was as plain as print could make it. But what was this?

A new terror seized her—something that she had not thought of until now, she had been so stunned by the bare fact that her lover was married.

“Sir Archibald Sherbrooke *and* Lord Carrol, of Carrolton!”

A mist comes over her eyes; her heart drops like a thing of lead in her bosom.

In an instant a suspicion of the truth flashed upon her.

Had she done her lover an irreparable wrong? she asked herself, with a feeling of despair. Had she driven him from her, taunting him with treachery and cowardice, and refusing to listen to his defense, when perhaps he had the best in the world to offer her?

Oh! if she had but heeded Mr. Roosevelt when he begged her to let him see him and learn the reason of his mysterious conduct. Oh! if she had only answered that advertisement and allowed him to come to her as he had entreated.

She had been cruel, unjust, wicked; and now it was too late to atone for it.

She felt as if bands of ice were being bound about her heart—as if coals of fire were heaped upon her brain, and branded upon it, in letters which would haunt her till her dying hour, those two names, Sir Archibald Sherbrooke and Lord Carrol, of Carrolton.

Familiar as she was with English customs, she could understand readily enough how he had become possessed of them, and it was so strange that she had never thought of it before.

In all her suffering upon learning, as she had supposed, that she had been betrayed, she had never endured pain like this; and, with her sight failing, her senses reeling, without sound or warning, she slipped from her chair to the floor, where she lay white and still in a lifeless heap at Jacob Roosevelt's feet.

CHAPTER XL.

STELLA'S MENTAL AGONY.

"Bless my soul! what does this mean?" Jacob Rosevelt cried, as, looking up from his own letters, in which he had been deeply absorbed, he saw the beautiful girl lying so white and still at his feet.

He rushed to the bell and rang it violently, then back again to Star, whom he lifted tenderly in his arms and laid her upon a sofa, where he began chafing her cold hands vigorously.

Mrs. Blunt soon made her appearance in answer to her master's summons, and looked as alarmed as himself to find the girl she loved so devotedly in such a critical state.

But Star's insensibility did not last long.

All too soon she awoke to a consciousness of this new misery.

"What is the matter?" she asked, as, opening her eyes, she found her fond friends bending anxiously over her.

"You had a fainting turn, dear; but you are better now," Mrs. Blunt returned, holding a glass of wine to her lips.

Star passed her hand across her forehead and sighed heavily, as she began slowly to gather up the broken threads of memory again.

"What was it, Starling?" Mr. Rosevelt questioned, with a troubled look at her white face; "did you have bad news in your letters?"

"No, there were no ill-tidings in my letters," she answered, avoiding his eye, and wishing to conceal, if possible, the cause of her swoon from him. "I read them through," she added, "and was opening my papers, when I began to feel queerly. I believe I never fainted but once before in my life."

But she shuddered as she remembered how Josephine Richards had been the cause of that ill-turn also.

She sat up and tried to collect herself.

She still felt as if those icy bands were encircling her heart, and as if her brain was on fire; but she was anxious to get hold of that paper once more, and go away by herself.

She did not mean that Jacob Rosevelt should ever know that she had seen the notice of her lover's marriage; she meant to keep her secret locked close within her own breast, and not even let him suspect that she was still grieving for the man whose name had not been mentioned between them for over a year.

"I am afraid you are going to be ill," he said, noticing the great blue circles under her eyes with alarm.

"No; do not be anxious about me, Uncle Jacob," she returned, trying to smile. "I shall be all right again in a few minutes."

And she was, apparently.

She called all her will to her aid; she drank a full glass of wine, and soon felt much stronger, but oh! still so wretched and heart-sick.

She arose after awhile and began to move about the room, although both Mr. Roosevelt and Mrs. Blunt insisted that she was not able—that she ought to be still and rest all day.

But that paper was still lying upon the floor, with that marked paragraph staring her in the face.

She must get it and hide it, or they would learn all her trouble, and know how weak and foolish she was—how lacking in pride and self-respect to grieve thus after another woman's husband; and her lips curled with scorn at her own folly, while all the time the pain at her heart was growing more bitter.

Very quietly she gathered up her letters and papers, which had slipped to the floor when she fell.

With trembling fingers she folded that fatal sheet into the smallest compass, and tucked it slyly into her pocket; then laying the others on the table beside Mr. Roosevelt, she said:

"I do not think I will read any more now, Uncle Jacob; but perhaps you would like to look over these home papers. I will go and lie down for a little while, and try to sleep off my weakness."

He took her white face between his hands and looked anxiously into her eyes.

"My dear, my dear," he said, earnestly, "I hope you are not going to be sick; what should I do without you? You must take care of yourself for my sake, as well as for your own, my Star."

She smiled, and, taking one of the hands that held her face, touched her lips to it.

She knew that no daughter was ever more tenderly beloved than she was by this grand old man, whose deathless affection had been given to her grandmother.

"No, I shall not be sick, Uncle Jacob; do not worry," she returned, trying to speak lightly. "Many people frequently faint, and get entirely over it in an hour. I shall be as well as ever in a little while, and all right for the reception at the American Legation this evening."

"I do not believe you will be able to go," he said, doubtfully. "You must not expose yourself."

"Oh, I would not miss it on any account," Star answered, quickly. "Let me run away now for a nap, and I will show you how fresh I shall be when the hour arrives."

She was anxious to get away from his questioning eyes, and, gently releasing herself from him, she sought her own room and locked herself in.

All day long she battled there with her tortured heart; all day long she fought with the love which she still bore Archie Sherbrooke, for it rose up stronger by a hundred-fold now that she had discovered that he was innocent of any wrong toward her, and realized her own cruel injustice to him.

If she had but opened and read more of that paper, she would have learned her error; but the moment she found herself alone, she took it from her pocket and threw it upon the glowing coals in the grate, and watched it while it burned to ashes. She was determined that Mr. Roosevelt should never see it.

All day long she lay upon her bed, and thought bitterly of Josephine as the proud and happy wife of Lord Carrol—as the mistress of his elegant home, the sharer of his position and title.

Oh! it was too cruel, when she had loved him so; when she knew that she could have made him so happy, while Josephine had only sought to win him from selfish and ambitious motives.

She knew now that she had never despised him—never scorned him, as she told him that night at Mr. Richards’.

She knew that never for a moment had she swerved in the least degree from her allegiance to him; that her heart had been true and loyal to him, even when she had thought most bitterly of him; and she knew, too—this was the worst of all to contemplate—that she should go on loving him as long as she lived.

Five days they had been married.

The wedding had occurred the tenth of December, and it was now the fifteenth.

It almost seemed as if she would have given as many years of her life to have saved him from such a fate as she believed would be his with that vain and heartless girl for his life-long companion.

Of course it would do no good to grieve over that now; but her own future looked like a weary journey, marked only by the mile-stones of duty, without a stage of happiness to cheer her along the way.

She had known nothing of the Richardses coming abroad; that notice of Josephine’s marriage had been the first intimation that she had had of it.

She wondered if she had not sent her that paper—if, having seen their names and address registered at the American Legation, she had not, from a spirit of cruel triumph, sent it to wound and humiliate her.

Yes, she was sure it must be so.

But she should never know how fully her vile purpose had been accomplished. She would hide her anguish deep within her own heart. Wherever she went she would appear with a bright face and smiling lips, and no one should dream that her heart lay like a withered thing in her bosom.

Mr. Roosevelt came in to see her several times during the day, and she always smiled and told him she was resting so as to be fresh for the evening.

Mrs. Blunt tried to make her give up the reception, but she would not, protesting that she was as well as ever, although she could not hide her misery quite so effectually from that good woman's sharp eyes.

"Something has happened to upset her and break her heart again, or I'm much mistaken," she muttered, uneasily, while, according to Star's direction, she laid out her elegant dress for the evening.

She had learned to read that fair young face too plainly not to feel sure that something very unusual had occurred to prostrate her so.

Nine o'clock came, and Star Gladstone, a vision of bewildering beauty, entered the drawing-room of the United States Minister's elegant residence, leaning on the arm of her distinguished-looking attendant.

There was a buzz of admiration as she crossed the threshold, as there always was wherever she appeared, for it was not often that even that place was graced by the presence of one so wondrously gifted with beauty.

She wore a dress of pale ecru silk, rich and heavy, and made perfectly plain save for the deep flounce of costly lace which reached almost to her knees, and the delicate vine or fringe of drooping ferns that headed it.

Her fair, beautifully formed arms and neck, which were concealed only by the same rare lace, were clasped by unique ornaments of dull gold, and these, together with the cluster of fine ferns upon her bosom, fastened there with a miniature, diamond-studded bouquet-holder, comprised her only ornaments.

But her face, so pure and peerless, looking out beneath that golden crown of hair, though a little paler than usual from her recent pain, was the loveliest object in that vast room.

"American ladies are noted for their beauty, I believe; but though I have met many, I have never yet seen a more exquisite face and form than that," said one gentleman to another, who stood leaning against the frame of the door through which Star and Mr. Roosevelt had passed but a moment before.

"You are right; but Gladstone, which is the young lady's name, sounds more English than American," returned the gentleman addressed.

"They are registered as Americans, however, and she has the peculiar beauty of one," said the first speaker. "They have a way of enhancing their charms, too, by their perfect taste in dress. Our English ladies, as a rule, do not understand the art of dressing well, though there are, of course, exceptions to the rule, as Miss Vivien Sherbrooke's charming costume over there testifies. By the way," he added, with more animation, "they say that that handsome young American—Meredith, they call him—is going to win our Cheshire beauty away from us."

He glanced, as he ceased speaking, across the room to where Miss Sherbrooke was sitting, while Ralph Meredith, in an attitude of devotion, was bending over her chair.

He was talking to her in a low tone, a smile on his handsome lips, a new light in his fine eyes, while she listened with drooping lids and flushed cheeks.

But chancing to glance up suddenly, Ralph started and uttered a low exclamation of surprise.

"Excuse me a few moments; I see friends," he said; and then leaving her hastily, he made his way quickly across the room.

"Miss Gladstone!" he cried, approaching and holding out his hand to her, his face all aglow. "I never was so happily surprised in my life! And here is Mr. Rosevelt, too! How does it happen that you are here? It seems almost like home to see home faces."

Star and Mr. Rosevelt greeted him most cordially, while Vivien Sherbrooke sat and watched them with wondering eyes and sinking heart.

Who could this beautiful young girl be who appeared so delighted to meet the man whom she had been learning to love of late?

What was she to him that she had power to make his face light up like that, and cause him to forget for the time the existence of any one else?

It must be confessed that the charming Miss Sherbrooke was for the moment jealously inclined to regard Star as her rival.

"I am afraid that you are not quite so well as usual. Your Western trip was too much for you, was it not?" Ralph said, when their greetings were over, as he noted her paleness, and was quick to see the look of pain in her expressive eyes.

"Oh, no; I am very well, and you are looking finely. I think English air must agree with you," Star said, quickly turning attention from herself to him.

"Yes, I am in excellent condition," he confessed, with rising color, as he remembered how miserable he had been when he last saw her, and what had caused the change in his feelings and appearance. "How long have you been in London?" he queried.

"Only a week," Mr. Roosevelt answered.

"Wasn't it a sudden start?"

"Rather. I am here just now on a matter of business, but we intend to see something of this side of the world before we go back," the old gentleman explained, with a smile.

"We hoped we should find you somewhere on our travels, for a familiar face makes the heart of the stranger glad, you know," Star said. "I received a letter from Grace to-day, and she writes: 'Be sure and hunt up Ralph, who is, without doubt, in London now.' But who is that pretty young lady across the room with the blush-roses in her hair, and with whom I saw you talking as I came in?"

Mr. Meredith flushed again at this; but his eyes kindled as he glanced over at Vivien, and replied:

"Oh, that is an acquaintance that I have made since coming here. Come, and let me introduce you."

He purposely avoided mentioning her name, wishing to see how Star would receive the introduction.

As he turned to lead the way to Vivien, she looked up at Mr. Roosevelt and smiled archly.

He understood her, and gently patted the hand on his arm while he nodded his head, and said, dryly:

"He'll do, my young lady, never fear."

"Miss Sherbrooke, allow me to make you acquainted with Miss Gladstone, a friend from beyond the sea; also Mr. Roosevelt. Miss Gladstone, Mr. Roosevelt—Miss Sherbrooke."

Ralph Meredith watched Star closely while he introduced and she exchanged greetings with Archibald Sherbrooke's sister; and although she might have appeared self-possessed enough to the casual observer, *he* noticed the quick catching of her breath as she heard the familiar name, and remarked the flush which leaped into her hitherto pale cheeks, and which, although pain had caused it, enhanced her loveliness tenfold.

"It is Archie's sister," Star said to herself, as their two white-gloved hands met, and a thrill of keenest pain shot through every nerve.

"How lovely she is!" she added. "Her eyes are like his in their expression, although not in color. Oh! I should have loved her, I know; and how rashly I have thrown all my happiness away!"

It needed all the power of her will to sustain her as she stood there beside Miss Sherbrooke, apparently so calm, and chatted with her for the next fifteen minutes; and Vivien never mistrusted the wild emotions which were surging in the heart of her new acquaintance, with whom she was exceedingly pleased.

"How perfectly charming she is!" she thought, as for a moment Star turned to speak to Ralph, and she studied her face more closely.

Then she started violently.

Surely she had seen that face somewhere before—those great, earnest blue eyes—that white forehead gleaming through a golden mist—that straight, delicate nose, and those beautiful red lips.

Yes, surely it was the face that her brother had painted when he was in America; only there was a look of pain in those eyes now that there had not been then; there were tense lines about the small, sweet mouth, and a seriousness about the whole countenance which told that the passing years since then had not been full of unalloyed pleasure.

It was the same, nevertheless, she felt convinced, and she resolved that she would find Archie, point Miss Gladstone out to him, and ascertain if she were right in her surmises.

"Perhaps," she thought, light suddenly breaking in upon her mind, "it was something connected with this lovely stranger which had caused his own sadness during the last year."

A gentleman approached her just then, and, turning to Star, she said, with a smile:

"I must ask to be excused, as I have an engagement to dance now. I am sorry to leave you in the midst of our pleasant chat, but I will see you again before the evening is out."

Star, with an answering smile, said she "hoped they would meet again;" but, oh! how she longed to inquire about her brother. If she had but spoken just one word to tell her that he was well and happy.

Happy! The thought nearly made her cry out with pain.

He must be changed indeed if he could be that with Josephine Richards; and, loving him as she did, it was agony to contemplate it.

What if he himself was there among that gay throng, with the bride he had so lately wedded?

What if she were to meet them together?

For a moment, as this contingency presented itself to her, her brain reeled, and she felt as if her senses were forsaking her again; the next, she called all her pride to her aid.

This would never do; no one must ever mistrust her weakness and wretchedness, and Ralph Meredith surely would if she gave up to her feelings, for had she not told him of her false lover?

It was strange, she thought, that she should have found him with Archie's sister, and she wondered if they had met and Ralph had called him to account for his treatment of her, as he had said he should.

Oh! why had she not been more reasonable? Why did she not let him explain his position to her when he had begged so earnestly to do so?

She felt as if she could not bear to remain there—she longed to go away by herself until she could get a little more calm; and, seeing that Mr. Rosevelt and Ralph were deeply engaged in conversation, she slipped away unobserved to a small anteroom, which connected the drawing-room with the conservatory, and which she saw was at that moment empty.

Here she sat down in a chair near a large urn filled with flowers, which stood on one side of the door leading into the conservatory, and fell to musing sadly upon her broken hopes.

She had not been there long when she was aroused by hearing a gay laugh ring out close at hand. She started as if some viper had stung her.

She knew that sound but too well, and, looking up, she saw Josephine Richards, or Lady Carrol, as she believed her to be, standing almost beside her.

She was just upon the threshold and was looking back into the conservatory, from which she had come, and at a couple standing there among the flowers.

She had been exchanging some jesting words with them, and her laugh was in reply to some playful remark from them.

She was dressed all in white; she wore it almost constantly now, for she knew she looked lovelier in it than in anything else; everybody had told her that she had never been so beautiful as when she had stood beside Lord Carrol during that mock ceremony. There were great pearls in her hair and on her arms, and clusters of white lilacs on her bosom.

Star held her breath as she looked at her, thinking that she was indeed wondrously fair, and that it was not strange that she should allure any one by her beauty; but she believed she was dressed thus because she was a bride.

How bright and happy she looked, too, with the vivid color in her cheeks, her eyes sparkling from the excitement of the moment, and with that light laugh just leaving her red lips!

Why should she not be happy, Star thought, bitterly, as the wife of one of the noblest men in England, and occupying one of the proudest positions in the land?

A heavy sigh involuntarily escaped her, and, hearing it, Josephine turned quickly to see whence it came.

“Stella Gladstone!” she exclaimed, and instantly all the color went out of her face, all the light from her eyes, the laughter from her lips, and she stood regarding the beautiful girl with lowering brow and angry eyes.

CHAPTER XLI. REHEARSING THE PAST.

Star arose as she addressed her thus, and with the act all her pride arose as well.

“Yes,” she said, speaking with cold politeness. “I suppose you are surprised; you did not expect to meet me here, Miss—Lady Carrol.”

Josephine’s face lighted at those last words, and a wicked gleam leaped into her black eyes.

“No, I did not,” she returned, trying to call a happy smile to her false lips. “And—and—you have heard, then?” and, dropping her darkly fringed lids as if in confusion, she played with some flowers which she held in her hands, and looked the modest bride to perfection at being addressed by the title she had so lately assumed.

“Yes, I have heard of—or at least I saw your marriage in a paper which was sent me recently,” Star answered, trying hard to steady her voice, and resolving that the girl who hated her so should not suspect the torture she was enduring.

But Josephine did suspect it, and was determined not to let her go without wringing her heart with something of the agony which she had suffered.

Lord Carrol had dared to tell her, in the midst of her humiliation, that he loved Star, and she was bound to be revenged in some way for it.

She had sent her the *Cheshire Gazette*, even as Star had mistrusted, but she had not expected to get any such satisfaction as this out of it.

She had been down to the American Legation and found out where Mr. Roosevelt was stopping, and then had marked that paragraph and mailed that paper to Star, just to arouse her jealousy and show her that she had been a guest in Lord Carrol’s home for a week.

It had never entered her head that she would only read the notice of that mock marriage, and believe it real, not observing that it was connected with the remainder of the article describing Lady Sherbrooke’s ball.

But she now saw that such was the case. Star believed that she was really Lady Carrol; and she knew something of what she must be suffering on account of it, and with a sense of cruel exultation she resolved to give the wheels of the rack that she was on another vigorous turn.

She felt that the lovers would without doubt meet before long—perhaps that very evening, for she had seen his lordship there only a short time previous to this meeting, and she was assured he would waste no

time in coming to an understanding with Star; but now, while she had her in her clutches, she would make the most of her opportunity.

"I presume it is something of a disappointment to you to find me here, and—and situated just as—I am, when *you* so confidently expected to win his lordship," sneered Josephine. "You perceive that it is not always safe to be too trusting, and a young peer, even though he were traveling under an assumed name, and made love to a pretty, poverty-stricken girl, to while away an idle hour, could not be expected to marry her."

Star was very pale, but she was more than a match for the unfeeling girl in her proud beauty.

She stood like a tall and stately lily before her, and to all outward appearance she was no more moved by her scathing words than the snows on the peaks of lofty mountains are stirred by the fierce winds in the valley far below them.

"Lord Carrol did not travel under an assumed name. I have discovered that Sir Archibald Sherbrooke and Lord Carrol, of Carrolton, are one and the same," Star replied, with cold dignity.

Josephine started, then remembering, said:

"Oh, of course; I forgot that both names were given in the notice of the marriage. But," she went on, taking an intense delight in the torture she was sure she was inflicting, although her fair victim gave no sign, "you have no idea how lovely Cheshire House is—that is where the dowager Lady Sherbrooke lives; and Carrolton is even more delightful, I am told. We intend to go there before very long; but London is very gay just now, though it is out of season, and we are having such nice times that we prefer to remain here for the present."

She glanced at Star angrily.

If she would but betray the least suffering, to show that she was wounded by this apparent triumph over her, she would have been content.

But she stood there, her graceful form proudly erect, her shining head thrown slightly back, her eyes fixed upon her face with an indifferent glance that galled her almost beyond endurance, while her manner was that of indulgent politeness, as if she were but listening, in a well-bred sort of way, to the babblings of a spoiled child.

"I presume you have heard," she resumed, "that we came abroad to take possession of the estates of Sir Charles Thornton, whose death leaves mamma the nearest of kin, and therefore we shall all henceforth occupy a very high position in this country."

"Indeed?" Star responded, as if it were a matter of no moment to her. "I have heard of Sir Charles Thornton, but I did not know that you were 'nearest of kin' to him."

"Well, you know it now," Josephine retorted, sharply, beginning to lose her temper at Star's immobility; "and fortunately we can do exceedingly well without Uncle Jacob's money, which you so cunningly managed to wheedle him out of. We shall not return to America, for we can enjoy so much more here among the nobility, where, as I told you before, our position is so high, and mine *particularly*, you know, as—as Lady Carrol, is one to be rather envied."

This last, she thought, must be a dagger in the fair girl's breast, but she was wholly unprepared to have it turned against her own.

"May I take the liberty to ask Miss Richards what she means by the statements which she has made—to explain herself, if indeed that is *possible*," said a deep, stern voice just behind her.

Both girls started and turned instantly at the sound, and both uttered a cry—one of surprise, the other of dismay.

Lord Carrol himself stood in the door-way of the conservatory from which Josephine had entered, and through which he had passed on his way from another portion of the building back to the drawing-room.

He had seen Ralph Meredith and Mr. Rosevelt but a moment or two after Star slipped away. They told him that she was there, and he had instantly left them to seek her.

He had seen her standing there in the anteroom through the glass as he approached, and he recognized her instantly, although the sight had nearly unmanned him.

As he drew near, however, he heard Josephine's voice, sharp and scoffing, and addressing the strangest words to her.

He stood still and listened, perfectly aghast at what she was saying, until he comprehended the whole situation; and, when she made that last amazing assertion, he could endure no more, and entered to confront her.

Star, with one look into his white set face, and a glance of astonishment from him to Josephine, whose countenance, for once in her life, expressed blankest dismay, sank back pale and shivering into the chair from which she had risen when Miss Richards addressed her.

That young lady felt for the moment as if she would like the ground to open and swallow her forever from sight.

But the situation was a desperate one—so desperate that she did not care for anything; so, quickly rallying, she tossed her dark head and retorted with a light laugh:

"Miss Gladstone was just telling me, my lord, that she had heard of my marriage, and I was only carrying out the joke a little further."

"I *understand* you," he said, briefly, but in accents of intense scorn.

Then, with a quick, eager step, he came between her and Star, who, with her white hands folded helplessly in her lap, her face like purest marble, felt as if earth was again slipping forever out of her reach, for her senses were reeling.

With a stern, authoritative gesture he motioned Josephine away, and, reaching down, he took Star's hands in his.

"My darling," he said, in low, thrilling tones, "has she been torturing you to death? There is not one word of truth in what she has told you. Come with me, and let me explain everything to you."

A mocking laugh, which, however, was full of misery, rang through the room.

Lord Carrol looked back and saw Josephine, her face almost convulsed with pain and passion, passing out.

"Don't think that it is going to be all clear sailing even now, my proud, spirited lord, for I will spoil it all if I can."

"Come," he murmured, gently turning again to Star, and paying no heed to those threatening words.

He drew her unresisting hand within his arm, and led her through the conservatory out upon a covered porch at the rear.

This porch was more like a room, for during the winter it was inclosed with glass windows, and, being heated with steam, formed a part of the hot-house.

He placed the fair girl in a chair in a secluded corner, and then he knelt down before her.

He took her hands again and drew them to his breast, where she could feel the great heart-throbs which made his strong frame quiver like a tree struck by the woodman's ax.

"My darling," he said again, "I have seen Mr. Rosevelt, and he told me that you were here. I have been looking for you everywhere during the last fifteen minutes. Dearest, you will let me defend myself now, will you not? You will not turn away from me—you will not spoil both our lives by again driving me from you, believing me to be a 'traitor and coward?'"

Star shivered. Those words smote her with terrible pain; but her heart had been bounding with new hope since he had so sternly confronted Josephine Richards and proclaimed her assertion a lie.

She could not comprehend it, for she had read the notice of their marriage with her own eyes. Yet she instinctively trusted him, and it was so sweet, after all the miserable past, to have him there, looking so fondly down into her eyes, and calling her his darling in those dear, familiar tones.

“Archie—Archie!” she murmured, with a sob, “I know all about it—you were never a traitor or a coward. I know you never deceived me, and I alone am guilty of a great wrong to you.”

With a low cry of joy he gathered her close in his arms, and laid her shining head upon his breast, calling her by every endearing name with which his heart was filled.

“You know all about it, my love? Who has told you?” he asked, surprised.

“Just one little sentence in a newspaper, which told me also that, when at the very moment I found you had been true, my life was to be a blank as long as I should live,” Star said, with unsteady voice and quivering lips. “I read,” she added “the notice of your marriage with Miss Richards in the *Cheshire Gazette*. These two names, Archibald Sherbrooke and Lord Carrol were printed there, and told me the whole story. I knew then *how* I had been deceived. But I cannot understand.”

She broke off suddenly, and drew herself away from him shivering and sick at heart again.

Surely that notice would never have been printed if he was not married, and she had no right to be thus in the arms of another woman’s husband.

She knew that he neither loved nor respected Josephine from the way he had addressed her; he called her Miss Richards, too, but it was a puzzle that she could not comprehend.

Lord Carrol read her thoughts, and saw by her white face how she was suffering, and he said, with infinite tenderness:

“My love, it was all a farce, a mock marriage planned by a wild and thoughtless girl, while I was chosen as one of the unfortunate victims and Miss Richards the other. Did you not read the description which followed that notice?”

“No; I read nothing but those horrible words, which told me of my own injustice, and that you and I would be parted forever. They burned themselves into my brain as if they had been branded there with a hot iron, and I cared to read no more.”

“If you had,” he returned, “you would have been undeceived; but I was very angry when I saw how the affair had been published, and if I could ascertain who wrote it up, I should be tempted to chastise the writer severely.”

Star was weeping now; great, glad tears of joy chased each other over her cheeks, and she did not resist him when he drew her into his arms again, wiping with his own hands the glittering drops as they fell, while in low, tender tones he told her all about the strange events which had conspired to separate them for so long.

"Will you forgive me, Archie? I was very hard upon you, but I was nearly mad with my misery that night when I refused to listen to you," Star said, when the story was ended.

"Forgive you, my own? This moment compensates for everything. How were you to know that a titled relative had died, making me his heir, and changing or adding to my name? I was indeed Archibald Sherbrooke, bound for America, to travel and study art there, when we went on that steamer. I merely dropped the 'Sir' lest you should be shy of me. I did indeed know of the change in my circumstances when I next saw you in the station in New York, but in my fear of losing you, I resolved not to tell you until I had won you, feeling afraid that you, in your modesty, would refuse to Lord Carrol the love you would perhaps give to Archibald Sherbrooke. I never suspected, when I accepted Mrs. Richards' invitation to visit her, that I was going into the very house where my own love dwelt. I had paid Miss Josephine some attention at Long Branch, but her mother was always included, and it was only in a friendly way, as I was drawn toward them from having discovered that they were of English descent, and connected with people here whom I knew. I intended, as I told you that night, to seek you the very next day; and when I had won the consent of your friends to an engagement with you, in the character of Archibald Sherbrooke, I was going to tell you of my real position in life. Now, dear, you know that I have never swerved from my allegiance to you. I have been as true as truth itself," he concluded, smiling fondly down upon her.

"I have been very foolish, Archie," Star whispered, "but, oh! I am very, very happy now. I was so utterly wretched this morning. I have been so wretched all day that it required all my courage to come here to-night; but I forced myself to do so because I did not wish Uncle Jacob to mistrust anything."

"And I hear that my modest little Star has become a great heiress; she is no longer the quiet, retiring little maid whom I was so proud and happy to have won that day when we went to Coney Island," Lord Carrol said, half regretfully.

Star lifted her head from his breast and looked at him inquiringly, and he thought rather more searchingly than the occasion required.

"I mean," he explained, "that Mr. Meredith has told me that Mr. Rosevelt has adopted you as his heiress."

She drew a long breath, but merely returned, in an absent way:

"Yes."

"Mr. Meredith told me more, too, my darling," her lover resumed; "he was the one who lifted the burden of sadness, caused by your sentence of banishment, from my heart. I imagined, also, although his confidence did not extend quite so far as this, that he had been my unsuccessful rival,

and that was why you confessed what you did to him regarding your affection for me.”

“Did Mr. Meredith tell you that—” Star began, blushing crimson as she remembered what her confession had been.

“Yes, my beloved, and no hungry heart ever feasted upon sweeter words. They changed the whole future for me, and I was intending to start again for America in just three weeks, to search for the star of my life; the past has been very lonely and hopeless.”

“Yes, indeed,” Star returned, with a long sigh; “and yet,” she added, looking up with a smile, “I am glad that I am not to come to you *quite* so empty-handed as you found me.”

“You surely do not regret the promise that you made me then?” Lord Carrol questioned, reproachfully.

“No; for it proves that you won me for myself alone; but now that I know you are a peer of England, it is a comfort to feel that no one can point the finger of scorn at me and say that you have chosen beneath you.”

He stopped her with a tender caress.

“No one should ever have said that to me with impunity, under any circumstances,” he rejoined, gravely.

They talked a long time, and everything was explained—all the events of the past rehearsed, all Josephine’s duplicity and hatred made known.

“She is a heartless woman—a most contemptible woman,” Lord Carrol said, with curling lips and stern brow; “and I deeply regret that she is to become a resident in England, as we shall doubtless be obliged to meet her in society. She has wronged you shamefully, my darling. However,” he added, with a luminous smile, “she considers that the ‘position of Lady Carrol will be an enviable one,’ and, since *you* are to fill it, I think her punishment will not be a light one.”

Her punishment *was* to be no light one, but *he* had no idea *how* humiliating it would be.

Another blissful half hour slipped unheeded by, and then he said:

“Come, dear; people will begin to wonder what has become of us, and besides, I want to introduce you to my mother and sister.”

He arose as he spoke, and drew her toward the conservatory, through which they must pass in order to regain the drawing-room.

“I have already seen your sister,” Star answered, with a bright smile, “and I began to love her immediately, and to mourn what I had lost in not having her for *my* sister, too.”

“She is a dear girl, but I begin to think we shall not keep her with us very much longer,” Archie returned, with a regretful sigh.

"I thought so, too, when Mr. Meredith introduced her to me to-night," Star said, archly.

"Ah! then *you* read the signs of the times," he answered, smiling. "But here comes my mother, and she is looking for me, I know, by the expression of her face."

They were just entering the drawing-room as he spoke, and Lady Sherbrooke was coming toward them, looking right and left for her son.

Her handsome face lighted as she saw him, and she quickened her steps, while she wondered at that new light in his eyes, at the bright and youthful expression on his face.

"Mother," Archibald Sherbrooke said, and there was a proud ring in his tone, "I want to introduce to you Miss Gladstone, a friend whom I met while I was in America."

Lady Sherbrooke shot a keen glance into that lovely, blushing face, and there came a look of surprise into her own, while for once she lost something of the graceful self-possession that was habitual to her as she greeted Star.

Her heart went forth to the young girl at once, and she experienced a shock akin to that which Vivien had felt when she met her.

CHAPTER XLII. THE LAWYER'S REBUKE.

There was something strangely familiar about that slight, graceful form and in those lustrous eyes—in that golden-crowned head, and the now happy, smiling lips.

"Miss Gladstone, I am very glad to meet you," she began, as she cordially put out her hand to her; then turning abruptly, and speaking with a slightly startled accent, she added:

"Archie, surely I have met her before?"

"Yes," he answered, his face glowing; "I see that you have recognized her."

"Star," and the tender inflection on that name told his mother everything, "she has seen the picture that I painted when I was in America, and she has now discovered who the original is."

"Yes, my dear," Lady Sherbrooke added, while she studied the beautiful, flushed face; "I do recognize your countenance, and I am quite proud of my son's achievements as an artist. You are an American, I believe. I am very happy to welcome you to England."

Star's heart beat rapidly at this cordial, almost tender greeting, and wondered if she was indeed the same girl who, feeling so wretched and forlorn, had entered that room only two hours before.

"No, mother; Miss Gladstone is not an American," Archie explained. "She is an English lassie, and we met on shipboard while crossing the Atlantic; but more of that story anon," he ³⁹⁴said, significantly. "Now, will you entertain her for a few moments while I go and find Vivien?"

"With pleasure," Lady Sherbrooke responded, her heart bounding to hear those clear, joyous tones ringing through her son's voice—sounds which she had not heard before since his first return from America; while she said to herself:

"This is the girl whom my son loves and will choose for his wife;" and her heart warmed toward Star as it never had done before toward another outside of her own family.

After finding his sister and taking her back to Star and his mother, Lord Carrol sought Mr. Roosevelt and had a long talk with him, explaining to him, as he had to his dear one, the unfortunate circumstances which had conspired to separate them, and learning in return something of their life during the past fourteen or fifteen months.

After this he rejoined the trio of ladies—those three beautiful women whom he loved above everything else in the world.

“The ‘story’ that you were going to tell me, Archie, but did not, as you were called away to London, is told. I read it in your face to-night, and in that of the beautiful girl to whom you have introduced me. My boy, I think now that you will be your own dear self once more,” Lady Sherbrooke whispered, as he came and stood by her side, and his eyes, in reply, told her more than his lips could have done; but he asked, in a low, intense tone:

“Is she not rightly named Star?”

“She is charming; I have no fault to find with her personally. But her family?” she questioned, cautiously.

“Is all right also, mother mine. I will tell you all about it to-morrow.”

In a distant corner of the room Mrs. Richards and Josephine sat and viewed this meeting, bitterest envy rankling in their hearts.

The angry girl had sought her mother upon leaving the anteroom, and told her of Star’s presence there.

“I declare it is more than human nature can bear to be obliged to encounter her everywhere. And to think that such a miserable, insignificant little chit as she was when she came to us should win game after game from us. She is a proverbial checkmate, I believe,” Mrs. Richards said, complainingly. “But even if she does become Lady Carrol,” she added, “I shall take care that she does not outshine us. Thank fortune, we shall have a handsome income to flourish upon.”

“I hate her—I hate them both! and I wish I were *dead*!” Josephine cried, passionately.

When Mr. Roosevelt, Lord Carrol, and his party were about retiring, they encountered the Richardses in the great hall.

Mr. Roosevelt took no notice of them, although he would have greeted Mr. Richards had he been with them, and they guiltily avoided him.

The young lord bowed coldly, and would have passed on, but Josephine, in a sudden fit of desperation, laid her hand upon his arm, saying, in low, fierce tones:

“I give you joy of your chambermaid bride! But beware! You will not feel quite so jovial when all London rings with the fact that the proud Lord Carrol has married a common house-servant!”

“Miss Richards,” he returned, haughtily, “even such a statement of facts could not injure the fair, pure woman whom I have chosen for my wife; but allow me to say that if you are so ill-disposed as to publish anything of the kind, you will find, to your sorrow, that the shafts from

your venomous tongue will only serve to poison still further your own life."

"We shall see!" she sneered.

"You will find," he went on, as if he had not heard her, "that Miss Gladstone is so far above you, both morally and ³⁹⁶*socially*, that it does not lie in your power to do her the slightest injury."

"We shall see, my lord!" the maddened girl repeated, vindictively; but, without giving her time to say more, his lordship passed on to Star's side, and drawing her hand within his arm, led her away to her carriage.

The day came at last which was to decide Mrs. Richards' claim to the Thornton estates, and, according to appointment, she repaired to the office of Compton & Bailey, in the highest of spirits, dressed in the most magnificent style, and accompanied by Josephine, clad with equal richness, and her husband.

"Well, Mr. Compton, my probation is ended at last," she said, gayly, to that gentleman, as she entered, and greeted him with her most gracious manner.

"Ahem! I suppose we may say that it is," he returned, in a strangely embarrassed way.

"Well, then, I presume there is no need of further delay, and we can take possession of the late Sir Charles' property as soon as we choose," she remarked, too deeply engaged with thoughts regarding her own brilliant future to notice his manner.

"Ahem!" the lawyer repeated, an uneasy expression on his face; "I *did* expect that I could tell you to-day everything was all right and you could go down to Halowell Park as soon as you liked; but——"

"But what?" Mrs. Richards demanded, with some show of impatience. "It appears to me that you are somewhat mysterious this morning, when heretofore you have acknowledged my relationship to Sir Charles Thornton to be proved beyond a doubt."

"Yes, madam, you have clearly proved, it cannot be contested, that you were a relative of the late baronet's; but—I am sorry—it will be a great disappointment to you, doubtless, to learn at this late day that another party has put in a claim for the estate, as being the nearest of kin."

The lawyer heaved a sigh of relief when he had stumbled through this piece of ill-news.

"What?" almost screamed Mrs. Richards, reeling where she stood.

She had never even thought of such a calamity.

"There is no nearer relative living," she continued, with pale lips. "You yourself said you were convinced of that."

"And so I was, a month ago, madam; but I have been obliged to change my opinion since then."

"What—what has changed it?" she asked, trembling with fear and excitement.

It would be too dreadful now, when the prize was almost within her grasp, to lose it, and to be obliged to return poor and disappointed to America.

"You remember, perhaps," the lawyer said, avoiding meeting her eyes, for they were wild in their expression, "that I told you that Sir William Thornton—the late Sir Charles' father—had a younger brother, Albert by name——"

"Yes, but you said that he left home years ago to go as a missionary to some outlandish place, where he died," interrupted the anxious woman.

"Where it was *supposed* he died," said Mr. Compton, with significant emphasis.

"Did he not die?—is he living?—has he returned?" his client gasped.

"No; he died some years ago; but he left a child. That child is living, and has put in a claim for the estate."

"But you told me he left no issue——"

"It was all supposition, madam, since we could learn nothing to the contrary; but we have recently learned our mistake."

"He shall not have the property; he may be an impostor. ³⁹⁸I shall contest the point," Mrs. Richards said, with frantic vehemence.

"Ellen, do be reasonable," said her husband, sternly.

"Unfortunately for your peace of mind, madam, it is a point that cannot be contested," returned Mr. Compton; "and, if you will give me your attention for a few moments, I will explain it to you."

With a groan, Mrs. Richards sank into a chair, more wretched than she had ever been in her life.

"Your mother," began the lawyer, also seating himself, and motioning Mr. Richards and Josephine to do the same, "was half-sister to the late Sir Charles' mother. That made her half-aunt and you half-cousin to him. That relationship, however, would have been near enough to give you the property had no nearer claimant appeared. Sir William Thornton, the late Sir Charles' father, and Albert were own brothers; consequently, the child of Albert would be own cousin to the late Sir Charles, and being a descendent on his father's side, by far the nearest of kin. Have I made it clear to you?"

He glanced as he spoke at Mr. Richards, who nodded, while his wife covered her face and groaned aloud.

"Now," resumed Mr. Compton, "I will tell you, in as few words as I can, the story of this younger brother, Albert Thornton. He was quite a number of years Sir William's junior, and at an early age dissented from

the established church and religion of his ancestors, and insisted upon going as a missionary to Africa. This so enraged his father that he disowned him, charging him never to show his face inside his ancestral home again. Deeply wounded, but still adhering to his convictions of duty, he went to Africa, but was obliged to return to England again in the course of a couple of years, on account of failing health. He did not, however, present himself in the home from which he had been banished, for this neither his pride nor his wounded heart would allow him to do. He therefore settled in a distant county, where he had charge of a small parish at a merely nominal salary, during the remainder of his life. Not long after his return he married a gentle and lovely girl, and one child was born to them, who, recently seeing our advertisement for the nearest of kin to Sir Charles, has presented a claim for the estate."

"Who is this child?—where is it?—where did it come from at this late day?" questioned Mrs. Richards, who felt as if all the world was slipping away from her.

"Wait one moment and I will introduce you," the lawyer said, as, rising, he gently retired to his inner office.

He returned almost immediately with a lady on his arm. Mrs. Richards started to her feet and uttered a piercing scream the moment her eyes fell upon her.

The lady was Star Gladstone!

"That girl again!" shrieked Mrs. Richards. "You don't mean to tell me that *she* is the heir to Sir Charles Thornton's property?"

"Yes, madam, this young lady and no other; but I was not aware that you had the honor of her acquaintance," responded Mr. Compton, with some surprise, as he led Star to a seat.

"But her name is Gladstone——"

"Have a little patience and I will explain still further," interrupted the lawyer, who was beginning to be disgusted with one who gave way so to passion.

"Miss Gladstone tells me that she has been known by that name all her life; that until her eighteenth birthday she was not aware that she was entitled to any other. But her father left a package of papers at his death, containing a history of his life, with all the necessary proofs, but charged her not to open it until she was eighteen years of age. In this he related what I have already told you, and also the fact that when he was a child, his father, through the death of a relative, succeeded to the title and estates of the Thorntons of Devonshire, ⁴⁰⁰upon condition that he assumed the name. Such things happen often here in England, you know, as in the case of Lord Carrol, whom you are acquainted with. When the elder Mr. Gladstone, or Thornton, died, of course William, his eldest son,

succeeded to the baronetcy. Albert, the second son, upon his return and settlement in a parish of Derbyshire, gave his name as Rev. Albert Gladstone, and under this name married a Miss Chudleigh, who was also discarded by her family for wedding a poor dissenting clergyman—one who was deemed far beneath her socially, as no one suspected his connections with the Thorntons. After her death, and when Mr. Gladstone found that he also had not long to live, he said he could not reconcile himself to the thought of giving his orphan daughter to the care of those to whom he had been a stranger so long, although his own blood flowed in their veins; so he arranged to send her to a distant relative of his mother's in America, who agreed to take charge of her and her education for her sake. This last, however, Miss Gladstone has told me, and her residence in that country at the time of the death of the late Sir Charles, and her ignorance regarding her relationship to him, accounts for the fact that we have but just discovered her claim. Everything is as plain as black and white can make it. We have looked up the records, and find they correspond with the papers in her possession, and among which is a certificate of her parents' marriage, and one of her own baptism, together with other important documents; and now, I think, you cannot fail to perceive that Miss Gladstone, being Sir Charles Thornton's *own* cousin, is the nearest of kin, and we shall therefore be obliged to give her claim the precedence. I regret, madam," the lawyer concluded, in his blandest tones, "that we did not learn of this in season to save you the trouble and expense of such a long journey. However, I trust that you have reaped enjoyment sufficient from the trip to compensate you in a measure for your disappointment."

Mrs. Richards looked blankly from one to another of the occupants of that room, as if she could not, even yet, comprehend the magnitude of the calamity which had so unexpectedly overtaken her.

"I do not believe one word of it. It is all a piece of fraud to cheat me out of my rights," she cried at length, while her own blazing eyes threatened to annihilate the beautiful girl, her successful rival, who sat opposite with downcast eyes, and feeling really sorry, in spite of all that she had suffered at Mrs. Richards' hands, for her distress over this terrible defeat.

"Do not allow yourself to become unreasonable over the matter, madam, I pray. There has not been, I assure you, even the suspicion of a fraud," Mr. Compton said, his own eyes beginning to take fire at this assertion. "The papers are all there on my table; everything has been written out in the plainest manner, and copies made of all the records which go to prove what I have told you. You can examine them, if you choose; but there cannot be the slightest doubt regarding Miss

Gladstone's claim. She alone inherits everything belonging to the late Sir Charles Thornton."

"Oh, she has been the bane of our lives; she has ruined and upset every plan that we have made since the day when she first set foot in our house—since she came to us like the beggar that she was," sobbed the wretched woman, giving way utterly to her misery.

"Ah! then *you* are the woman to whom Albert Thornton confided his orphan daughter when he knew that he could not live?" said Mr. Compton, quickly, his keen mind at once grasping certain facts which Star, from a feeling of delicacy, had withheld from him, when, to her surprise, she learned that Mrs. Richards had also come to England to claim the Thornton estates.

"That has nothing to do with the case. She has *ruined* us, ⁴⁰²and that is enough to think about for one day, I should imagine," she retorted, angrily, and flushing.

"Ellen!" and Mr. Richards spoke very sternly; "you are as unreasonable as a child. Star has been kindly disposed from the first. It is *you* who have tried to ruin *her*—who have oppressed and sought to degrade her in a way that is a shame to you and your promises to her dead father. It is a bitter thing to be obliged to condemn my own wife thus publicly, but I cannot calmly listen to your calumniations of her, for, instead of being our ruin, she has been our salvation. Only this fall, when my business was tottering, and my reason with it—when I was upon the verge of bankruptcy—of self-destruction—I confess it with shame and sorrow now—*she* came to me like a beam of light and saved me from becoming both a bankrupt and a suicide. She gave me, or caused to be given to me, a check for ten thousand dollars, which set me upon my feet again. She spoke, too, such solemn, gentle words to me as I shall never forget, and which kept me from the horrible pit into which I was stumbling, and we owe all that we are and have to her. To go still farther back, you owe your life to her mother. Josephine was saved from a dreadful death by Star's bravery; and, instead of hating her because unforeseen circumstances have raised her to a high social position, we should rejoice that it is so. Star, my dear girl, you have at least one grateful heart in my family."

He went over to her side and put out his hand to her, though he was so deeply moved that it shook like a leaf, and she took it with streaming eyes, and wholly unable to utter a single word in reply.

What a wreck that heartless woman had made of his life, she thought. He was naturally a kind and tender-hearted man, and deserving of a better fate than had been his.

But his wife bridled angrily, losing all control over her tongue.

“I wish I had never set eyes on her face; and I wish your hand had been palsied before it ever took that ten thousand dollars from her. She came into our family and stole your heart from me by her arts and sly speeches; she wheedled out of Jacob Rosevelt the fortune that should have been mine; she tricked Josephine out of the man who should have married her—who *would* have done so but for her; and now she has come to steal the inheritance which ought to have been mine. I *hate* her, and I *curse* her from the bottom of my heart!”

“Then you are a thoroughly bad woman, and I am thankful that Sir Charles Thornton’s estate is to pass into more worthy hands. Much as I sympathize with and respect your husband, madam, I cannot permit my young client to be insulted in my presence, and I have the honor to wish you a very good-morning.”

Mr. Compton said this very spiritedly, his fine face flushing with indignation, his lips curling with contempt, while he walked to the door of his office and held it open, with such an air of stern determination that Mrs. Richards did not dare to disregard this very emphatic invitation to take her departure, and she walked wrathfully, but utterly crushed by her bitter disappointment, from the room.

CHAPTER XLIII.

“GOD BLESS OUR STAR.”

Yes, beautiful Star Gladstone was the heiress to Halowell Park, and all other property belonging to the late Sir Charles Thornton.

Upon reaching home after her trip to California, which had been one of great enjoyment as well as profit, she resolved to settle down to a cozy, quiet life for the remainder of the winter, and make Uncle Jacob as comfortable as she possibly could.

She was sitting in her own pretty room one morning, something as Mrs. Richards had sat in hers only a few weeks previous when she had discovered herself to be the heir to Halowell Park, but looking happy and smiling, instead of angry and discontented.

She had brought a pile of music up there to sort and arrange, it having been upset by the house-maid while dusting, and as she was looking it over, she came upon an old newspaper that had got mixed in with it.

She took it up as one often does, and ran her eye carelessly over its columns.

It happened to be the very paper which contained the notice of Sir Charles Thornton's death, and the advertisement for the next of kin.

Star started as her eye caught that name. Then she went over both paragraphs carefully.

“I do not believe but that he was the one of whom papa wrote in that package,” she murmured, thoughtfully. “It must be the same, for *he* was the owner of Halowell Park of Devonshire. He was papa's own nephew; there are no heirs, and—I wonder if I might not in some way be interested in this advertisement.”

With heightened color she arose, and going to a drawer in her dressing-case, drew forth that worn portfolio which we have seen before on several occasions.

Opening it, she took out those papers which she had read on the evening of her eighteenth birthday, and which had caused her so much agitation.

One of them contained a history of her father's life, as we have already stated, telling how his religious views had changed ⁴⁰⁵as he drew near manhood, and how he had desired to go to preach to the heathen; how this had angered his father, who, when he found he could not turn him from his purpose, drove him from his home, telling him never to set foot in it again; how he had gone to Africa full of holy zeal, but failing in

health, had been obliged to return and settle in a small parish of Derbyshire. Here he had met Miss Chudleigh, who at one time was visiting in the neighborhood, and she sympathizing with him in his views, they had soon grown to love each other, and felt that life would be nothing to them unless spent with each other. When, however, she had insisted upon marrying him in opposition to the wishes of her friends, she also had been discarded by them.

“You once questioned me about your name, my child,” he wrote, “and I told you that your grandmother had given it to you. I have sometimes feared I was harsh with you when you asked me about my family, but you understand now why, and forgive me if I seemed so to you. I loved my mother as I never loved any one else save my lost Annie and you, and had she been living, I should never have been so cruelly banished from my home, for I was her favorite child. She was a grand and noble woman, but there was some sorrow connected with her early life which I could never wholly fathom. I once, upon coming suddenly into her room, found her weeping over a portrait, and when I asked her the cause of her grief, she put it hastily out of sight. ‘My boy, I am foolish and wrong to grieve over the past,’ she said; ‘but I once lost a very dear friend, and sometimes feelings arise which I cannot wholly control. I want you to do something for me sometime,’ she added, trying to smile, ‘and that is, if you should ever marry and have a little daughter, you will call her Stella Rosevelt Gladstone.’ ‘I will call her anything you like,’ I answered, earnestly, and then she kissed me with trembling lips and said I was her ‘dear boy.’ This is how you came by your name, my little Star. Stella was my dear mother’s name; ‘Rosevelt,’ I have grown to believe, was one that was sacred to her.”

Then there was more about his family relations—about his father and brother. He said there were very few of his kin living; he knew of only one, now that his brother was gone, and that was his only child, Sir Charles Thornton, of Halowell Park, but he had no family; he probably believed that he—Albert Gladstone Thornton—was dead, as everybody else did, and so he had concluded it best to send her—Star—to America, to the care of Mrs. Richards, who had promised to care for her, and who, he felt, would be true to her trust for the sake of the debt which she owed her mother.

Before he had died he charged her, when giving her the package, to guard it as a sacred treasure, and not to open it until the stated time, and she had promised to do as he wished.

After Star had read this paper through, she took up the others and went carefully over them; and these were certificates and records, all of which went to prove the truth of what he had written.

Evidently the thought had never occurred to him that Sir Charles would die unmarried and childless, and that *she* would own and reign in the home from which he had been banished; for there was no mention of any such thing, and no desire expressed that she should ever seek to cultivate the acquaintance of her rich cousin.

When she had been through them all, she gathered them up, together with the paper in which she had seen the advertisement, and carried them below to Mr. Rosevelt, told him something of her suspicions, and asked him to examine them and see if he thought she would be likely to inherit the Thornton property.

He did look into them carefully, and felt convinced that Star stood next in line to Sir Charles.

He was deeply touched upon reading her father's account of his mother, and his own early love.

Star had never shown it to him before. She had not liked to do so for several reasons, deeming it, for one, a sort of sacred trust from her father, and thinking also that it might sadden her kind friend.

"I cannot understand why, when her husband had been so kind and patient with her, under what must have been such trying circumstances, he should have been so harsh and unloving toward his boy for a mere difference of opinion," he murmured, thoughtfully, while thinking of poor Albert Thornton's banishment from home.

"Little girl," he said to Star, "there is, I believe, a good deal in this for you, and we must sail for England immediately," and Star felt her heart leap within her.

England was Lord Carrol's home.

Then her lips had curled with scorn at her own folly, but she agreed at once to do whatever Mr. Rosevelt advised, and in a week they were again crossing the broad Atlantic.

Upon seeking an interview with Compton & Bailey and laying their case before them, they were gratified to learn that, although other claims had been filed, Star was the nearest of kin who had yet appeared to them.

The eminent lawyers at once set themselves to work to look up the case, found all the records to correspond with those in her possession, and finally pronounced her to be the heir to the Thornton property.

Star felt greatly surprised and troubled upon learning that Mrs. Richards was one of the claimants, for she had no desire to contest any question with her, or to appear to triumph over her in any way. She simply wished to let her alone—to drop her entirely out of her life.

When the day came round that was to decide the important question for the expectant woman, Mr. Compton insisted, much 408to

Star's annoyance, that it was necessary for her to meet her, and the rights of the true heir to be established in the presence of all parties.

She felt a real pity for the wretched woman when the lawyer led her out to confront Mrs. Richards and her family, for she was unwilling to cause even an enemy pain, while it did indeed almost seem as if she was destined to checkmate every move in their life; but every one, even herself, who knew the circumstances of the past, could but acknowledge that their punishment was a just one.

The days, since the meeting and happy reconciliation of Lord Carrol and Star, had been full of joy and contentment.

She did not, however, tell him of her expectations regarding the Thornton property, but when the time appointed to meet Mrs. Richards arrived, she asked him to accompany Mr. Roosevelt and herself to Mr. Compton's office upon a little matter of business.

He, with them, remained in the inner office during the lawyer's interview with his claimants, and the door being slightly ajar, they could hear all that passed in the other room.

Lord Carrol was greatly astonished at what he heard, but he was even more so when Mr. Compton came in and led Star forth to present her as the heiress to that large estate.

"I am almost afraid to approach you, my lady of Thornton. I begin to fear you may assume some new character at any moment, and soar so far beyond my reach that I shall lose you entirely," he said, half in jest, half in earnest, when, that evening, he came to see her in her own room in St. James square.

"You know I told you I was glad that you won me when I was a poor, obscure little maid," Star answered, slipping her hand confidently into his.

"I feel perfectly sure of your love," she added, "and yet I am not *sorry* that I can come to you now as an equal. I shall not be sorry to have the *world* say of you that you have chosen ⁴⁰⁹wisely," she concluded, while her glowing eyes and smiling lips told that, for his sake, she exulted in her new position and wealth.

"What the world might say of you, under any circumstances, would not trouble me," he answered, gravely. "But I, too, am glad that I won your heart when you had nothing, if it secures to me your unbounded trust. I do not know either," he continued, smiling, "as I should have had quite as much assurance in approaching Sir Charles Thornton's wealthy heiress; and yet," with a proud uplifting of his handsome head, "while conscious of my own honor and rectitude, I have no need to fear to approach any woman whom I might love."

Star was standing by his chair, and she bent and touched her lips to his forehead as he said this. She was very proud of this grand, true man, who had won her to be his wife simply because he loved her.

But in the midst of her joy she could not help feeling something of sadness and pity for Josephine and her disappointed hopes.

It was no light thing to have loved and lost such a man as this, and she would gladly have comforted her had it been in her power to do so.

“Uncle Jacob,” she said, more timidly than she was in the habit of addressing him, the next time she was alone with him, “I shall have so much money, now that I am to be mistress of Halowell Park, and—and when Archie takes me,” she added, with a burning blush, “that I wish you would make another will, and give your fortune, or a part of it at least, to your ‘nearest of kin.’”

“You are my nearest of kin,” he said, briefly.

“I know what you mean,” she replied, affectionately; “our hearts *are* surely akin; but—I really am *very* sorry for Mrs. Richards and Josephine, not to mention poor Mr. Richards, ⁴¹⁰who has had such a hard time of it; and perhaps they would feel more kindly toward me if they thought I did not care for so much money, and truly I do not—I never can use it all.”

Jacob Rosevelt looked at her with tears in his eyes.

“My darling,” he said, with emotion, “I believe you have the heart of a saint, but I cannot alter my will—everything I have belongs to you; but I leave you free to do whatever you choose with it. If you ever find people in need and wish to help them, give them what you like; but I shall never break the seal of my will. Child,” he added, tremblingly, “you have been all the world to me; and more than this, you have helped me to find hope for the world to come. I know that you will have a great deal of money without mine, but it shall be yours nevertheless; I know that it will not be used selfishly, and I cannot leave it in better hands.”

He bent down and touched her forehead with his lips, and then left her, but her heart was filled with a song of praise.

“You have helped me to find hope for the world to come,” he had said; and there never had been a sweeter message sent in answer to prayer, she thought.

For a long time, she had noticed, he had been more respectful whenever the name of the Deity had been uttered in his presence, while, when he had accompanied her to Sabbath services, he had listened attentively, even reverently to what was said.

Looking back to that dark night on the angry waters, when she had first met him, and remembering his sneers at her trust in the “All Father,” and his bitter, skeptical retorts, she was surprised at the change that had

gradually come over him; and now, to her amazement, he had confessed to a "hope" for eternity.

It was the one drop too many in her cup of joy, and it instantly overflowed in happy, thankful tears, and in a low-voiced pean of gratitude.

A month, Lord Carrol said, was all the time that he could allow his fair bride-elect to prepare to become Lady Carrol.

"But I have so much to do!" Star objected, with crimson cheeks.

"Then you must increase your forces," he answered, with a fond smile. "I know that it is 'etiquette' to let the lady name the day, but considering all things, I think I ought to have that privilege. Darling, we have been separated so long that I do not feel like living without you a day more than is actually necessary. My mother wants you to come to her in Belgrave Square, and remain as her guest, while she and Vivien will assist about the wonderful trousseau, which they consider indispensable for the occasion under discussion."

It was of no use for Star to make objections, for they were every one overruled, and it was at length decided that Lord Carrol should have his way, and she went to Belgrave Square for the intervening month.

Mr. Meredith was cordially urged to remain in London until after the wedding, and as Grace had been sent for to act as bride-maid, and a pair of clear gray eyes had earnestly seconded the appeal, he could not refuse.

He bore this "blighting" of all his previous "hopes" with wonderful equanimity, however, and ere the eventful day arrived that was to make Star a bride, he had won a promise from lovely Vivien Sherbrooke that at the end of another year she would become his wife.

"Fickle!" did I hear some fair reader ejaculate in a tone of contempt?

Well, perhaps he was; but then when he had been so heart-broken over Star's rejection he did not know that there was a Vivien Sherbrooke in the world.

We are always disappointed, often unreasonably so, when we cannot get what we want, and perhaps his passion for our heroine was not quite so intense as he had imagined it to be. However, be that as it may, Lord Carrol's fair sister had convinced him that

"Taking the year together, my dear,
There isn't more cloud than sun."

And he had concluded to spend the remainder of his life basking in the sunlight of her presence.

Mrs. Richards, with her family, lost no time in returning to America after this crushing disappointment.

They could not remain and face the people to whom they had proudly boasted of their future greatness, nor could they bear to look upon Star's happiness and triumph over them; while, besides all this, they were greatly cramped in purse, after the extravagant outlay which Mrs. Richards insisted was necessary for people with their expectations.

Mr. Richards was very much depressed, for, to say nothing of the money which they had spent, he feared the worst from his long absence and neglect of business.

He went to see Star and Jacob Rosevelt before they sailed; he could not leave without bidding them farewell, and assuring them of his gratitude and good-will.

They received him most kindly, and he spent a pleasant hour with them.

As he took Star's hand at parting, he bent down and kissed her fair, upturned face, while great, regretful tears rolled down his cheeks.

"I am sorry to lose you, dear," he said; "but I know you will be happy, as you certainly deserve to be, and may Heaven bless you in your new life. I shall never forget how much I owe you—how you saved me by your kindness, and I know you will think of us all more kindly than we deserve."

He did not give her time to reply, but turning, grasped Mr. Rosevelt's hand, and then was gone.

A year later she heard that he was dead—that he died suddenly, after struggling hard with business and business troubles and that his family had been left in very reduced circumstances.

Through Ralph Meredith she caused a handsome sum to be invested, the income of which they were to enjoy while they should live, and she never saw or heard from them again.

St. George's church, Hanover Square, was crowded upon Star Gladstone's bridal morning, and "no bride so fair" had passed beneath its aristocratic arches for many a year, was the verdict which all Belgravia pronounced as it watched her leave the altar and move down the spacious aisle leaning upon the arm of her noble husband.

Her dress was of Lyons satin, and one of Worth's most elegant productions. The lace which adorned it was the finest and costliest which far-famed Brussels could produce, and the veil "a perfect marvel."

The bridal wreath was of delicate, feathery clematis, and was fastened to her head and veil with a set of five beautiful diamond stars, the gift of Jacob Rosevelt.

Grace Meredith and her brother presented a pair of elegant ear-ornaments to match; Lady Sherbrooke a necklace and tiara of pearls, and—time would fail me were I to enumerate all the costly gifts which

were showered upon this lovely bride. There were six bride-maids, and as many “best men.” Jacob Rosevelt gave Star away to the man whom he believed to be worthy of her in every respect, and felt as if he were indeed giving up his own and only child, although she had told him she could never consent to be separated from him.

They were to spend a couple of months at Carrolton, Lord Carrol’s country seat, whither upholsterers and decorators had been sent, as soon as the wedding had been decided upon, to make everything fresh and attractive for them.

Of course Mrs. Blunt, that much “mistaken” but honest and affectionate creature, was indispensable at this time, and she was made about as happy as it is possible for a mortal to be in this life by Star’s assurance that she should be a fixture in her household as long as she should live.

After the two months at Carrolton they were to go to Halowell Park for a season, and take a look at the home of the Thorntons.

There was to be no stereotyped tour. Star said she had traveled enough for the present, and would much prefer to settle down to quiet home life—perhaps by another year they might feel like making a trip to the Continent.

Lady Sherbrooke had already grown to love her new daughter very dearly.

“It is well that I do love her,” she said, tearfully, to Vivien, when the grand wedding was over, the guests all gone, and they were left by themselves, “if I must lose you, as I expect to, before very long; but if I had searched the world over I could not have found a fairer, sweeter wife for my son. Heaven bless our Star! She bids fair to prove a guiding light in Archie’s home.”

CHAPTER XLIV. FAITH'S TRIUMPH.

"Star!"

"Yes, Uncle Jacob."

"The night has almost come."

"The *dawn*, you mean, dear; do not call it night, for truly I believe it is the break of day for you."

"You are right; I should not call it night. But always remember, dear, and let the thought comfort you when you come to miss me, that *your* hand has guided me through the darkness, pointing me ever toward the light of a better world."

The speaker paused, for he was very weak.

Jacob Rosevelt lay upon a luxurious couch in an elegant apartment of Lady Star Carrol's beautiful home, and looking his last upon earth.

Everything that wealth, and love, and care could do had been done for the dear old man whom she loved so fondly; but now, after three years of such peace and content as once he had never thought to enjoy, he was dying.

Star, who, in a spotless white wrapper, sits beside him, has grown a trifle matronly in her appearance, a little rounded and fuller in figure, and there is something more of dignity in her bearing; but she has the same star-like beauty—she is not one whit less lovely or less deserving of her name than when we last saw her on her bridal morn.

A year of almost unalloyed happiness passed after that event, and then there was born a fine heir to the Carrol estate—a boy, of whom his father was very proud, and who at once became the pet and pride of the whole household.

Uncle Jacob, with this little one folded within his arms, or sitting crouching upon his knee, with Star fondly attentive to his every want, and Lord Carrol to lean upon in his old age, felt as if he had attained as nearly to perfect happiness as any one could do in this world.

But during the third year after their marriage he had gradually but surely failed, until, to the great grief of all, they were obliged to acknowledge that he had not long to live.

This was the first great sorrow of Star's wedded life; but she strove to bear it cheerfully, at least in Mr. Rosevelt's presence, resolving that no mourning or repining should cloud the little time that remained to him to live—that there should be nothing but peace, and a looking forward to the

great change as simply the sweeping aside of a misty veil and an entrance into something more blessed and beautiful than earth could give.

Now the crisis had come, and the old man, his wan face turned toward the fading light of a glorious day, felt that his strength and senses were slipping away from him, and told the constant watcher by his side that the “night had come.”

“No, I ought not to have said that,” he repeated, after a few moments of rest, while a smile parted his pale lips; “the night is past, and you, dear one, have been my guiding star in the midst of its deepest gloom. I did not have much faith in a better future until I knew you; you set me to thinking that night on the angry deep, when you told me you ‘had been taught to trust our Heavenly Father,’ and that ‘one could hardly have much faith in one’s self at such a time as that.’ Yes, your simple trust in your Father’s faith, your pure and gentle life, my Star, has led me to God, and without a fear I resign myself into His hands; before another day dawns I shall have entered into my rest, and the Sun of Righteousness will shine upon me.”

“Oh, Uncle Jacob,” Star said, her voice full of unshed tears, but with a holy awe shining in her beautiful face, “you have never talked so plainly to me—you have never opened your heart like this to me, and I am so thankful to you for speaking such precious words to me before——”

She stopped; her trembling lips could not frame the words to complete the sentence.

“Before I leave you, never more to look upon your dear face in this life,” he said, with a tender smile on his lips, while the light of faith grew brighter in his eyes. “Yes, dear, it is so. We both know it, and why not speak of it calmly, as of a journey, during which we should be separated only for a little while. I shall go first, my darling, but the veil that will hide us from each other is dropping very softly and gently. You will not grieve for me, my child?”

“No, no, Uncle Jacob; only for myself, who will be so very lonely without you.”

But Star could not quite keep back the quiver from her voice as she said this. He noticed it, and put out his thin hand to clasp it.

“Be comforted, my darling, with the thought of what you have made the last years of my life—a season of peace and content. Remember always that without *you* I should have groped on in darkness until my soul would literally have gone out into the ‘night.’ But now, as I have said, I have no fear. No; a bright vision rises up before me; I seem to see just beyond the ‘great white throne’ of which you read only last Sabbath, and where sits the form of Him who has taken from me all the guilt of sin and unbelief. It

is Jesus, the Lamb of God, and *you*, my beloved, by the gentle influence of your beautiful faith, have led me thither.”

Star bent down and kissed the pale hand clasping hers, and which was growing cold even then, while the tears which she could not restrain fell hotly upon it.

“I know that I am dying,” he went on, more weakly than before; “I know that this chill which I feel creeping over me, benumbing my senses and dimming my sight, is death. I know that soon my breath must cease, and that the King of Terrors will cut the cord which binds me to earth and all I love here. But there is no terror in the thought, for the faith which you have taught me points me to the ‘radiant vistas of a world divine,’ where perchance I may find among the ransomed throng a spirit who was once kindred to my own. Ah, my darling, dry your tears, and remember that, in spite of this dissolving frame, *I am whole!* for the healing hand of Christ hath touched me, while your life, passing in its brief transit over mine, has been the instrument of it all.”

Is this a sad scene with which to close my story?

Is it *sad* to see the fruits of a beautiful life, and to learn how one faithful soul led another home to heaven and God? Will any one call such a triumph as the passing away of Jacob Rosevelt *sad*?

No. At least it did not appear so to those who witnessed it.

It was a hallowed room where Star sat, a little later, and gazed upon her dead—upon that brow which had settled into such tranquillity—upon that restful, upturned face, which wore a smile “calm as a twilight lake,” and upon which “God’s full-orbed peace was shining,” transfiguring it with something of the radiance that had enraptured the fleeting soul.

But she would not grieve for him; for, although she should never cease to yearn

“—for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that was still,”

she knew that, in that far-off world “where the weary are at rest,” it was “well with him.”

And when they laid him away in the family vault at Halowell, where, too, lay the moldering form of her whom he had so loved in the days of his earlier manhood, she did not murmur, for she felt that he had left behind him a wealth of faith, and love, and trust that would glorify all her own after-life, and she found herself repeating, with one of our sweetest poets:

“Do men die thus? And is it this to die?”

All through the years that came and went in her beautiful home, of which she was the chief charm, she carried the memory and influences of that last hour of Jacob Rosevelt’s life, and it seemed to be an added link in the golden chain that bound her soul to their common God.

The thought of it was like a strain of heavenly music, making her life rich with melody. It was like a breath from the flowers of Paradise, perfuming all around her.

Her husband worshiped her—reverently, as a gift from the Divine Hand; her children “sat at her feet and learned of her,” and, rising up, “called her blessed;” while all who knew her likened the influence of her lovely example, the luster and beauty of her life, to the “transit” of some bright “star.”